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SPENSER'S LEGEND OF HOLINESS AND THE MORAL VIRTUE TRADITION:

SOURCES AND ANTECEDENTS AS AIDS IN READING

BOOK ONE OF "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

by

PATRICIA ANN GARTENBERG

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## Preface

In an article published in 1926 H. S. V. Jones, then the leading authority on Spenser, lamented that "no one seems to have traced the ethical tradition which leads up to the Faerie Queene." More than forty years later, Jones' statement still holds true. Convinced that Spenser's sources and antecedents must hold important clues to a proper reading of the poem, I started out to trace the moral virtue tradition in which the poet based his allegory -- only to find that Book One alone provided problems enough for a single study of this kind. Controversy abounded. There was no agreement among critics as to what Spenser meant his first book to say or do. One group of commentators would make the Legend of Holiness an allegorization of Catholic doctrine; another group an allegorization of Calvinistic views on the nature of man. Still other scholars suggested that Book One did not belong to The Faerie Queene proper; first because Holiness was not a moral but a theological virtue, second because the preponderance of religious ideas in this book set it apart from the other five books, making it a "theological prologue" to the others. Few if any critics seemed willing to take Spenser on his own terms and to read the book as an allegory depicting man's struggle to attain perfection in Holiness.

It seemed to me, therefore, that a real contribution to Spenser scholarship could be made if the relation of Holiness to the moral virtue tradition were clarified once and for all. Then one might understand why Spenser treated Holiness as a moral virtue, and why he chose this virtue as the first and, by implication, perhaps the most important in his scheme. Beyond this, through noting where Spenser employed traditional concepts, where he synthesized, and where he was original, one might be able to see Book One, in itself and in relation to the whole poem, in a new light.

Two critics in particular suggested the approach I have taken. Robert R. Ramsay in his 130 page "Introduction" to the EETS edition of Skelton's Magnyfycence, a Moral Play (1908) showed how Skelton broke new ground in dramatizing the traditional conflict between the vices and virtues for the soul of man. Up until Skelton's time this conflict signified the archetypal one of good versus evil. In Magnyfycence, says Ramsay, Skelton set the conflict as between prudence and folly, for success in this world rather than salvation in the next. Skelton "secularized" his allegory in still another way. To the traditional dramatis personae of Christian allegory he added Aristotelian ideas. For example, grouped with Magnificence, which is a specifically Aristotelian virtue, are Measure and Felicity, two other classical conceptions. Ramsay's observations regarding Skelton's combination of classical and Christian materials seemed to me also applicable to Spenser.

The second critic who influenced my approach was also, peculiarly enough, a writer on Skelton. In Skelton's "Magnyfycence" and the Cardinal Virtue Tradition (1965), William O. Harris reviewed the tradition in which Magnificence evolved in order to define the virtue as it was represented by Skelton. Harris concluded that sixteenth century ethical ideas were essentially derived from a Christian-Stoic synthesis of four cardinal virtues which was further enriched by the addition of ideas of Aristotle and his commentators. Skelton--and Spenser too, he adds in passing--drew heavily from this mixed tradition in fashioning their works on the virtues. Just as Harris examined the history of Magnificence as a virtue and only then commented on Skelton's play, so I would trace the course of Holiness through time and then apply the knowledge gained in reading the legend of Holiness, as Spenser called the first book of The Faerie Queene.

This dissertation, though not formally, falls into four parts: one

chapter of background on twentieth-century studies of Spenser's sources for the moral virtues; three chapters on the role of Holiness in the moral virtue tradition from Plato to Spenser; three chapters examining the allegory of Book One; and a concluding chapter summarizing Spenser's achievement. The reader may find the first four chapters heavy going. They are, nevertheless, essential to the purposes of this study, which -- in view of the disagreements which surround Book One of The Faerie Queene -- I have tried to set in a firm foundation of historical research.

I must acknowledge a scholar's debt to the late Rosemond Tuve, whose "desire to understand better Spenser's use of the virtues in the Faerie Queene" led to discoveries and insights which have proved both helpful and suggestive. To Josephine Waters Bennett, Spenser scholar extraordinary, and my mentor, goes the deepest gratitude for her guidance, kindness and, especially, her patience. She has been to me and to many other students the Well and Tree of the knowledge of Spenser from which we have drawn our nourishment and inspiration.

Grateful acknowledgment must also be made to the following: Abingdon Press for permission to quote from Clyde L. Manschreck's Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer, copyright 1958; Clarendon Press for permission to quote from Paget Toynbee's translation of The Letters of Dante (2nd edition), copyright 1966; Indiana University Press for permission to quote from Raymond Himelick's translation of The Enchiridion of Erasmus, copyright 1963; Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes for permission to quote from Rosemond Tuve's article, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices: Two Fifteenth Century Lines of Dependency on the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in JWCI, XXVI (1963), 264-330;

and Studies in English Literature for permission to quote from Harry Rusche's article, "Pride, Humility, and Grace in Book I of The Faerie Queene," in SEL, II, No.1 (Winter, 1967), 29-39.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Twentieth-Century Studies of Spenser's Sources for the Moral Virtues

Rosemond Tuve, looking back over this century's studies in Spenser's use of sources for the moral virtues, sees only "the sorry spectacle of the last fifty years of scholarship."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in one of her few slips from charitable regard for her fellow critics, she speaks scathingly of the "infelicities" uttered in print by at least four of them.<sup>2</sup> While there may be some truth in her view, it is a truth gained from hindsight, and as such does not constitute a fair evaluation of all the contributions in this century. In the field of scholarly research, nothing is wasted. Each article or book, even if off the mark, is an approach to better understanding or certainty. The chaff and grain are winnowed together, and what is of value is gathered up and stored. The process has been employed in regard to Spenser's use of sources in The Faerie Queene. All those who took the poet on his own terms and tried to square the allegory with the moral philosophy of "Aristotle and the rest" contributed to an understanding of the poem; likewise all those who aired their uncertainty and confusion over seeming discrepancies in the poet's intentions expressed in the Letter and the finished product. Similar credit must be given to those who suggested other sources, besides Aristotle, for the virtues. Only with these studies at our disposal can we sort out and discard errors, keep the real insights, and hopefully go on to examine the moral virtue tradition (or traditions) Spenser made use of in his poem.

The controversy over Spenser's citation of "Aristotle and the rest" as sources for his virtues is limited to the twentieth century; there is little commentary on this subject until the 1900's.<sup>3</sup> It appears that seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century readers accepted Aristotle

as the fountain of moral philosophy and let it go at that. Why then the sudden interest in Spenser's sources? It may be, as Sears Jayne suggests, that we are now cognizant of "the abyss which lies between the epistemological view of the modern reader and the ontological view of the Renaissance writer."<sup>4</sup> In this post-Christian era, it is difficult to imagine the culture of sixteenth-century England; where moral philosophy was an important subject in the school curriculum; right and virtuous conduct the theme of numerous treatise and conduct books; the pursuit of moral perfection stressed in sermons and manuals of devotions as the way to salvation; and "the inculcation of morality . . . the chief purpose and justification for poetry."<sup>5</sup> Only by recognizing that morality permeated all aspects of Elizabethan life, that literature was viewed then as the mirror of what might and ought to be, and that Spenser set out to fashion a noble, virtuous generation and posterity, can we appreciate what was attempted in The Faerie Queene.

There is, of course, another reason for this century's interest in Spenser's sources. Modern readers know little of the moral philosophy commonplace to the poet and his contemporaries. The citation of "Aristotle and the rest" sends them to their Loeb or Oxford editions of the Greek philosopher. They find in these texts little to aid them in their understanding of The Faerie Queene. Then again if they wish to find out about "the rest," they do not have the resources necessary for the research. Scholars (who are readers' best friends) have pursued these difficult tasks. In this century alone dozens of them have tackled the problem of Spenser's sources and have supplied much valuable information and insight. It all began in 1906 when one scholar had the audacity to suggest that Spenser's source was not Aristotle and that, worse, perhaps the poet did not know Aristotle's Ethics.<sup>6</sup> In response to these allegations, several

scholars came to Spenser's defense and strove mightily to match the number and nature of Spenser's virtues with those in Aristotle's treatise. A third group struck out into another area. Suspecting that "Aristotle and the rest" might be a synecdoche for commonplace moral philosophy as it was understood in the sixteenth century, they tried to trace the ethical tradition leading up to The Faerie Queene. Yet among the scholars of this last school there was not complete agreement as to what or whom "the rest" might allude.

J. J. Jusserand in his article, "Spenser's 'Twelve Private Morall Vertues as Aristotle Hath Devised'" (1906), initiated the controversy by questioning those sections of the Letter to Raleigh in which Aristotle is cited as the poet's source for the moral virtues. Spenser had written:

. . . I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in twelue private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised, the which is the purpose of these first twelue bookes. . . .

So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deedes of Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke. But of the xii. other vertues, I make xii. other knights the patrones, for the more variety of the history: Of which these three bookes contayn three. The first of the knight of the Redcrosse, in whome I expresse Holyness: The seconde of Sir Guyon, in whome I sette forth Temperaunce: The third of Britomartis a Lady knight, in whome I picture Chastity.

Why, Jusserand asks, has no one expressed doubt as to the validity of this claim? His answer: "Critics seem to have felt like the humblest

students; unwilling to contest or confess (ignorance), they say little or nothing; so that in many minds the twelve virtues of Aristotle continue to hold their ground."<sup>8</sup> Jusserand is not one of these critics. A careful reading of Aristotle's Ethics, he insists, will show that Spenser's virtues in their number and in their nature are not drawn from Aristotle's Ethics. Nowhere in Aristotle's treatise is there any definite number. It is possible to manipulate the philosopher's scheme to come up with nine, ten, eleven, or thirteen virtues. According to Jusserand, the number most often found in Aristotle is ten, "one of which, however, has no name, and another (magnificence) is only the same as the next, but practiced by the very rich, instead of by the moderately rich man. These virtues are: Courage; Self-control or Temperance; Liberality; Magnificence (that is, the liberality of the very rich); Magnanimity; a nameless virtue midway between ambition and total indifference to ambition; Mansuetude; Truthfulness; Jocularitas; Friendliness (which is not friendship)."<sup>9</sup> Aristotle also discusses Shame (lat. verecundia) and Self-Control, but refrains from designating them moral virtues. Two other virtues are examined in addition to those already mentioned. Justice, Aristotle believes, is not to be viewed as a separate virtue, but as a combination and condensation of them all. Without it there is no virtue. As for Friendship, the philosopher recognizes that it is necessary for life and happiness; he refrains, however, from designating it a virtue. Thus, Jusserand would accept any reading of the Ethics which posits a scheme of nine, ten, eleven, or thirteen virtues. Since no amount of juggling can produce the number twelve, he must insist that Spenser is incorrect in citing a tradition of twelve moral virtues devised by Aristotle.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the six virtues illustrated by Spenser in The Faerie Queene have very little in common with Aristotle's virtues. Holiness certainly is not an Aristotelian virtue. Chastity might be considered under Shame

(vericundia), but Shame is not a virtue according to Aristotle; neither is Friendship. Justice is treated separately rather than as the perfection of the rest. Courtesy, by modernization, might correspond to Friendliness, but only Temperance is a true Aristotelian virtue. Jusserand can only conclude that the section of the letter citing Aristotle "is misleading, every word of it. There is no definite list, Aristotle's number is not twelve, and the virtues he studies are far being the same as those forming the subject of the Faerie Queene."<sup>11</sup>

This is a harsh indictment of the poet. Jusserand, however, explains that Spenser in other parts of the letter cites exalted models (Homer, Virgil, Ariosto), which he does not follow in the poem. He goes on to suggest a "less-exalted" source than Aristotle for Spenser's virtues: Lodowick Bryskett's treatise, A Discourse of Civill Life; containing the Ethike part of morall Philosophie (London, 1606), in which the number for the virtues is twelve. This list was made up by Spenser's companion in Ireland from a number of sources, including Cinthio's Dell'allevare et ammaestrare il figliuoli nella vita civile (1565) and Piccolomini's Della Institutione morale di tutta la vita dell'uomo nato nobile e in citta libera --two popular expositions of Platonic and Aristotelian ideas. The ethical scheme of Bryskett began with the four traditional virtues, "Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, and Prudence; from which four are also derived (as branches from their trees) sundry others to make up the number twelve, and they are these ensuing, Liberalitie Magnificence, Magnanimitie, Mansuetude, Desire of Honor, Veritie, Affability, Urbanitie."<sup>12</sup> If Spenser did use Aristotle, it was Aristotle as found in the moderns Cinthio, Piccolomini, or Bryskett, not in the Nicomachean Ethics, Jusserand concludes.

The first half of Jusserand's article must be acclaimed a real contribution to Spenserian scholarship. In questioning the accuracy of the

poet's citation of Aristotle as his model, in pointing out the discrepancies in nature and number of the virtues, in suggesting that we look elsewhere for the poet's sources, Jusserand opened the door to a controversy which is still with us today. And even more important, the scholarship that his article provoked injected new life into Spenserian studies.

The second part of his essay, however, is not as valuable, since he fails in it to apply the same critical apparatus to Bryskett's list as he did to Aristotle's. Consequently, several important questions are not raised. Are the four traditional virtues in Bryskett or Piccolomini the same in nature as those treated by Spenser? Justice and Temperance are the same in name, but are they the same in nature? Is Prudence to be equated with Holiness, and Fortitude with Constancy? Of the eight other virtues in Bryskett's list only Magnificence is recognized as a Spenserian virtue. There is no Chastity, Friendship, or Courtesy in the Discourse. And finally, can we presume that Spenser consulted a treatise that was not published until several years after his death?<sup>13</sup>

Lilian Winstanley, one of the first scholars to defend Aristotle as Spenser's source, dismisses Jusserand's doubts in a footnote.<sup>14</sup> The poet's citation of the philosopher is correct, she declares, since both deal with thirteen virtues. Spenser mentions twelve to which Miss Winstanley would add Magnificence for a total of thirteen. Aristotle, in her reading, examines eleven in his principal list and adds two later on in the treatise; namely Courage, Temperance, Liberality, Magnificence, Highmindedness, Gentleness, Truthfulness, Wittiness, Friendliness, Modesty, Righteous Indignation, plus Contenance and Justice. She finds more evidence for the poet's use of the philosopher in that both treat Chastity twice: the poet under Temperance and Chastity, the philosopher as part of Temperance and of Contenance.<sup>15</sup> Jusserand's second objection to the Letter, that the virtues

of Aristotle are quite unlike Spenser's in nature as well as number, is also answered rather facilely by Miss Winstanley. If one realizes that Spenser was "far more of a Platonist than an Aristotalian . . . however much he might model himself on Aristotle," then one can accept the Letter as an accurate representation of the plan of the poem, she argues.<sup>16</sup> Her analyses of the poet's sources for his virtues, however, indicate an equal debt to the two philosophers.<sup>17</sup>

<u>The Faerie Queene</u>	<u>Platonic</u>	<u>Aristotelian</u>
Book I Holiness derived from	Moral Courage	--
II Temperance derived from	Temperance	Temperance Continence
III Chastity derived from	Ideal and noble Love	Temperance Continence
IV Justice derived from	Friendship	Friendliness
V Justice derived from	--	Justice Righteous Indignation
VI Courtesy derived from	--	Truthfulness Gentleness

Miss Winstanley asserts that Holiness is Plato's Moral Courage, the true foundation of the virtues essential to them all. Possessing it "a man . . . is able to guard against evil or compass good, and . . . will not fail in temperance, justice, or holiness" (Winstanley's paraphrase of the Socratic idea expressed in the Protagoras).<sup>18</sup> Spenser's Temperance seems to her more Platonic than Aristotelian; "Aristotle shows a disposition to limit his term to mean temperance in physical pleasures, but in Plato the word means a true balance and poise of the whole nature, moderation in all things, in the passions of the mind and the desires of the heart no less than in the pleasures of the body. Now it is in this wider, Platonic sense that Spenser interprets the virtue."<sup>19</sup> Then she defends the poet's placing the Legend of Chastity after the Legend of Temperance. Just as

Aristotle treated Continnence twice, so does Spenser, in part of Book Two and in all of Book Three. But even Miss Winstanley must admit that Spenser's ideas about Chastity are more Platonic than Aristotelian. To Spenser Chastity signified ideal and noble love, a love which, in Winstanley's words, "inspired to purity, and was one of the greatest safeguards of virtue . . . a perpetual inspiration to all great deeds . . . a spur to honor and the motive of glory. Spenser's Chastity is, in fact, as he himself declares it, one of the noblest of all virtues, because it spiritualises the entire nature and exalts all the energies of the body, both physical and mental to a higher plane."<sup>20</sup>

Miss Winstanley sees a similar combination of Aristotelian and Platonic elements in the virtues examined in the second installment of The Faerie Queene. Spenser's Friendship is an amalgam of the ideas of both philosophers. The fifth Spenserian virtue, Justice, is derived from Aristotelian ideas on the subject, namely what is right and what is fair. (For some reason, Plato's ideas are not mentioned.) Courtesy is a chivalric idea and therefore has no true equivalent in the Greek. Miss Winstanley adds, however, that Aristotelian Truthfulness and Gentleness could have a place in Spenser's treatment of Courtesy.

Her study of the poet's sources is important for two reasons: she tried to take Spenser on his own terms and to see where, when, how, and why he used Aristotle. In this respect she corrects Jusserand, who bluntly dismissed Aristotle as a possible source. Second, she saw that Spenser could claim Aristotle as his model, and still feel free to dip into other materials at his disposal. Miss Winstanley goes only so far as to include Plato in the poet's sources, but in that admission, she joins Jusserand in opening the door to studies of "the rest."

Before the studies of "the rest" were to be pursued in earnest, there

was one last effort to link irrevocably Spenser's virtues with Aristotle's in the Ethics. In two articles (1918-1919) and a book (1918), Professor W. F. De Moss set out to rebut Jusserand's arguments: that the Letter citing Aristotle as the source for the number and the nature of the virtues only misled the reader; that while Spenser probably had studied Aristotle, he owed far less to him than he would like us to believe.<sup>21</sup> After a careful examination of the Letter, the six books of The Faerie Queene, and the Ethics, De Moss concluded that Spenser had followed Aristotle in the treatment of the moral virtues. Both poet and philosopher recognize thirteen virtues. Here, of course, he echoes the conclusion of Lilian Winstanley. But De Moss, an American scholar, seemingly was unaware of the work of the English editor of Spenser. If he had compared his list with hers,<sup>22</sup> he would have seen that they had read Aristotle differently.

<u>Winstanley</u>	<u>De Moss</u>
1. Courage	Courage
2. Temperance	Temperance (Self-control)
3. Liberality	Liberality
4. Magnificence	Magnificence
5. Highmindedness	Highmindedness
6. Gentleness	The mean concerning ambition
7. Truthfulness	Gentleness
8. Wittiness	Truthfulness
9. Friendliness	Wittiness
10. Modesty	Friendliness or Courtesy
11. Righteous Indignation	Modesty or Shame
12. Continnence	Justice
13. Justice	Friendship

In answer to Jusserand's stricture that the nature of the virtues was

quite different in the poet and the philosopher, De Moss maintained that of the thirteen virtues examined in the Ethics, Spenser completed an examination of six of them in The Faerie Queene.<sup>23</sup>

<u>Spenser</u>	<u>Aristotle</u>
Book I Holiness derived from	Highmindedness
II Temperance derived from	Temperance Continenence
III Chastity derived from	Temperance Continenence Shame
IV Friendship derived from	Friendship
V Justice derived from	Justice
VI Courtesy derived from	Friendliness

In regard to Jusserand's doubts as to the "virtuous nature" of Temperance (Self-Control), Shame or Modesty, Friendship, and Justice, De Moss quotes from the last sentence of Book V of the Ethics, where the discussion of the moral virtues ends: "This then may be taken as a sufficient description of Justice and the other moral virtues."<sup>24</sup> Spenser must have shared this view, De Moss contends, since four of his six books deal with these qualities or virtues.

Though De Moss argues cogently and at length, one feels that his attempt to fit Aristotle's conceptions precisely into Spenser's scheme, or vice versa, cannot be successful without some "Procrustean operations."<sup>25</sup> Winstanley's shorter and sometimes confusing analysis of Aristotelian and Platonic ideas in the poem seems more suggestive of Spenser's method.

In rebutting Jusserand, De Moss in an almost off hand fashion, makes two suggestive comments on the reading of Spenser's allegory:

1. In Spenser's development of any given virtue . . . an episode is of very great importance. It is mainly by means of the episode that Spenser's discussion of the virtues is carried on.

2. Spenser makes it unmistakably clear that each episode in the Faerie Queene represents some phase of the virtue under discussion; the author is 'never astray' . . . . Moreover, Spenser does not intend that his readers shall misunderstand him. "By certaine signes here set in sundry place (II, Proem, st. 4) he aims to see to it that the reader never is astray. And among the most helpful 'signes' are the very illuminating comments of the author oftenest at the beginning, but sometimes in the middle of a canto.<sup>26</sup>

These insights of De Moss appear again fifty years later as cornerstones in the arguments of such Spenserian scholars as Alpers, Roche, and Tuve.

Viola B. Hulbert in her dissertation, "Spenser's Twelve Moral Virtues 'According to Aristotle and the Rest'" (1927) attacked the methods of Winstanley and De Moss as subjective and unsound, and their conclusions as untenable.<sup>27</sup> To insist on thirteen moral virtues in Aristotle's scheme was to show ignorance of the ethical tradition passed down from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Using H. W. Chandler's A Chronological Index to Editions of "Nichomachean Ethics" and of Works Illustrative of Them from the Origins of Printing to the Year 1799 (Oxford, 1878) and haunting the libraries of England and Europe, Mrs. Hulbert was able to examine some seventy of one hundred commentators in the four-hundred extant editions. Her investigations made clear that from the thirteenth century through the sixteenth, there was "a tradition not unbroken, but persistent" of twelve moral virtues "according to Aristotle and the rest."<sup>28</sup> The "rest" alludes to the numerous commentators on the master's Nichomachean Ethics. Thomas Aquinas was the first to derive the mystical number twelve from Aristotle (Book 2, chapter 7) by including two kinds of Justice. (Mrs. Hulbert, for

some reason does not support her statement by quoting from the Summa, Book II, question 60, article 5.)<sup>29</sup> The number and nature of the virtues became commonplace after Thomas' treatment, the tradition being broken only by Cajetan, who in an emendation (1522) reduced the number of virtues to eleven by citing Justice once. The most popular editions of Aristotle in the sixteenth century, Lefevre's commentary (seventeen editions extant) and his digest (thirty-five editions extant), keep the number twelve. Mrs. Hulbert doubts that Spenser made much use of these texts of Aristotle by "the rest," that is, the commentators: "One finds, therefore, in all commentaries up to Spenser's time a consistent interpretation of the Aristotelian virtues--an interpretation which bears little resemblance to that of the virtues of the Faerie Queene, except the number twelve. If Spenser were consciously intending to diverge from the traditional nomenclature and order of presenting the Aristotelian virtues, it seems possible that he would have clearly stated his intention in the introductory letter."<sup>30</sup> Since he did not, Mrs. Hulbert can only surmise that Spenser, like students before and after him, remembered little more than the main points of his college lectures, in Spenser's case, the names and number of the virtues. She offers as proof of the poet's ignorance the obviously non-Aristotelian elements in all Spenser's virtues. Even Temperance, which may seem at first to be Aristotelian, "proves on investigation to be inspired not by Aristotle's temperance, from which it differs radically, but by temperance, one of the cardinal virtues."<sup>31</sup> She is willing to excuse Spenser's mistake in light of the fact that Cambridge, during the poet's residence and after, stressed theology and relegated Greek and Greek philosophy to a secondary position. She concludes: "If Spenser's lecturer on the Nichomachean Ethics, like Melanchthon, intertwined the Aristotelian

virtues with the Decalogue, one wonders that he remembers the little he did."<sup>32</sup>

Viola Hulbert's important study stands as an example of how exhaustive research which seeks to recapture a tradition can throw light on a problem or elucidate a puzzle. This fine piece of scholarship was seen by many as the last word in the Letter to Raleigh controversy; In truth it was the impetus for other scholarly inquiries, for if Hulbert could claim that Spenser did not base his examination of the moral virtues on "Aristotle and the rest," then her readers might pose the obvious question: If not Aristotle, then what or whom did the poet use as his source? Surely a poem of some thirty thousand lines, years in preparation, did not spring Minerva-like from the imagination of the poet?

Hulbert's subsequent studies of Spenser's sources present an example of what happens when a scholar allows her biases to interfere with her reasoning. In an article published three years after her dissertation, "A Possible Christian Source for Spenser's Temperance" (1931), she sought once again to prove Spenser unfamiliar with Aristotle's Ethics and the many commentaries on it--this time in his treatment of Temperance.<sup>33</sup> She could not let stand one critic's labeling of the poet's moral philosophy in regard to this or any other virtue as "medieval Aristotelianism."<sup>34</sup> In her researches she had turned up a notebook kept by Edward Brerewood, a contemporary of Spenser's who attended Oxford. In what were obviously lecture notes on the Ethics, Brerewood expanded the discussion of Temperance by including materials from other philosophers for amplification, contrast, and illustration.<sup>35</sup> It was an attempt "to reconcile the Aristotelian concept of the virtue with temperance, regarded as one of the cardinal virtues, and with temperance as it is treated by Seneca, Cicero, Macrobius and other

philosophers. The result does not differ much from Aquinas' treatment."<sup>36</sup> Hulbert suggests that Spenser attended similar lectures at Cambridge, where Aristotle was all but lost in the copious commentary. That would account for the poet's unfamiliarity with the text of Nichomachean Ethics. She is so intent in charging Spenser once again with ignorance that she fails to see the broader and more important implications of her discovery: a clue to Spenser's method of examining the virtues. The poet, like Edward Brerewood, could cite Aristotle as his source and still feel free to amplify, illustrate and contrast, using ideas found in Cicero, Seneca, Macrobius, the Fathers of the early Christian Church, Aquinas, Hooker, Melancthon and others. Was it not possible that Spenser, when he cited "Aristotle and the rest," was referring to those men who wrote on moral philosophy?

Professor W. L. Renwick thought so. Judging that "the attempts that have been made to discover the source of Twelve Virtues in Aristotle and in his commentators have all been unsuccessful," he suggests we look elsewhere for Spenser's sources, as the poet adhered to no one system of philosophy but "attempted rather an exposition of the general consensus of the best ethical doctrine."<sup>37</sup> He notes a certain Platonic coloring in many episodes of The Faerie Queene, but suspects it is by way of fashion, rather than fundamental, a way of synthesizing Greek ideals and Christian doctrine as found in the Italian neo-Platonists and the French Pléiade. Spenser, he declares, seems to have much more in common with the Roman poet Lucretius, who like Spenser was haunted by the mutable nature of all things under heaven; and with Cicero, the Roman philosopher, who was the favorite of the sixteenth century Humanists.

The Faerie Queene, with much in it of de Natura Deorum, is the de Officiis and de Finibus of the Renaissance, deriving the elements of a complex civil and personal ideal from the opinions of many philosophers, aiming at stability and the proper distribution of rights and duties in an uncertain world, with a backward glance at the pristine virtues of the

past and yet a wide outlook on the universe, preaching the search for 'what order may be, what it may be that is seemly and fitting, a measure in speech and action,' observing man's relations with God, with his fellows, and with the state.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to Cicero, Plato, Aristotle, and Lucretius, Spenser drew freely from Seneca, especially for Book VI of The Faerie Queene, the Bible for Books I and II, the Book of Common Prayer for Book III, and Calvin. Renwick also mentions many other sources, as yet unexplored in Christian Humanist, Renaissance, and Protestant writings. Recognizing the magnitude of the poem, he pays Spenser this compliment: "All in all the poem is the most complex ideal that any poet ever attempted to express"; therefore, it is best appreciated "through a rough grasp of his peculiar mixture of sources."<sup>39</sup>

Renwick's chapter on Spenser's philosophy must be considered a seminal work, one in which the poet's eclecticism is made manifest and many suggestions put forward as to his sources.

In 1926, just one year after Renwick's study of Spenser's philosophy, H. S. V. Jones ventured to give a name to the great body of ethical writings drawn upon by the poet; he called it the "medieval Aristotelian" tradition, or more correctly, the medieval Christian-Aristotelian tradition.<sup>40</sup> It flowed into the Renaissance in the writings of the Peripatetic school, "from Aristotle with Thomas Aquinas and Melanchthon as the chief expositors of Catholic and Protestant Europe."<sup>41</sup> (A second stream of tradition flowing from the Stoic school, from Cicero's De Officiis and St. Ambrose's De Officiis Ministrorum is also cited by Jones as contributing to commonplace morality, but not commented upon at any length.)<sup>42</sup> It was the stream of medieval Aristotelianism that found its culmination in The Faerie Queene. The Aristotle mentioned by Spenser in the Letter to Raleigh is not the ancient Greek, but the textbook Aristotle commented upon and "christianized" by Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and the Scholastic schoolmen; the Aristotle later "protestantized" by Hooker and Melanchthon. Professor

Jones, like Renwick before him, limits himself to outlining "the ethical tradition which leads up to The Faerie Queene"; he makes no attempt to test his conclusions in light of the episodes in the poem.<sup>43</sup>

Rosemond Tuve has described this scholarly controversy over Spenser sources, begun by Jusserand and continued by Winstanley, De Moss, Hulbert, and Jones, as a "sorry spectacle."<sup>44</sup> It should be obvious by now that she is wrong in her evaluation. In twenty-two years (1906-1928), this group of scholars examined the Letter to Raleigh; argued for or against Aristotle as a source; investigated the possible role of "the rest" (Aristotle commentators from Aquinas to Melanchthon); suggested other possible sources for Spenser's moral philosophy. Most importantly, three scholars (Jusserand, Renwick and Jones) outlined ethical traditions, albeit three different traditions, that Spenser may have used for the sources of his virtues. This, I would suggest, is no small accomplishment. Nor is the work of the next thirty years, which is also included (if by implication only) in Tuve's blanket castigation of twentieth-century scholarship dealing with Spenser's virtues.

The controversy having blazed from 1906 to 1928 subsided somewhat in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. It was stoked about once a decade until Tuve brought it back to a full blaze in her book Allegorical Imagery (1966). The important contribution in the 1930's was Janet Spens' book on the Faerie Queene (1934).<sup>45</sup> It was her contention that the Letter described the finished product, the poem, but did not accurately record the process of composition. The original plan she theorized was Neo-Platonic in tendency; it had as its theme that commonplace from sermon-literature: the struggle of the soul against the deadly sins. The hero Prince Arthur was to struggle, persevere, overcome, and in the end (Galahad-like) be rewarded with a

vision of the Faerie Queene. Here is Miss Spens' description of the original plan for the poem:

. . . Prince Arthur belonged to the original shorter poem and was the centre around which it was built. The poem was to consist of eight books of eight cantos each and Prince Arthur's quest of the Faerie Queene was its main theme. As the poem was a moral allegory the Faerie Queene must have been equivalent to the Good or the Heavenly Beauty, and Prince Arthur must be the soul. Seven of the books were to be devoted to the conquest of the seven Deadly Sins by the hero and the last was to describe Prince Arthur's realization of his vision.<sup>46</sup>

In the first four books Spenser was able to carry out the plan: He set Holiness against Accidie, Temperance against Avarice, Chastity against Luxury, Friendship against Wrath. Something happened at this juncture, and Spenser turned from an allegory of the Seven Deadly Sins and the soul's pursuit of Goodness, to an allegory based on the virtues expounded in Aristotle's Ethics. In this reconstruction, Miss Spens suggests obliquely, Spenser may have damaged his poem: Arthur does not fit into the Aristotelian scheme; modest and chivalrous, he is not a 'magnificent' man. With him relegated to a minor role, the exploits of the other knights become the center of interest; as a result, the Prince's link to Faery Queen is tenuous at best. Moreover, Spens contends, the philosophy of Aristotle was alien to the genius of a poet who was a Platonist. Trying to illustrate the ethical scheme of the Peripatetic school hobbled Spenser's imagination and resulted in much pedestrian poetry.

Josephine Waters Bennett in her book, The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene" (1942), dismissed Miss Spens's theories on the construction of the poem and offered her own, based on a thorough-going examination of internal evidence. Spenser's narrative had been revised and re-arranged in the ten years preceding publication of the first installment in 1590. The poet had made several starts: "the search of Sir Thopas-Arthur for the Faery Queen; the creation of her court with its Order of Maidenhead; and finally, the

formal illustration of the virtues by the twelve knights of her court."<sup>47</sup> But whose virtues did he treat? Not Aristotle's, argues Mrs. Bennett in her chapter, "The Illustration of the Virtues." "In fact, not one of Spenser's virtues can be fitted into Aristotle's list without Procrustean operations."<sup>48</sup> Books I, II, and V, she asserts, were definitely planned as illustrations of the virtues Holiness, Temperance, and Justice--three of the four 'cardinal' virtues derived from the conflation and synthesis of Platonic, Stoic, and Christian sources. "This ethical scheme was commonplace to medieval and Renaissance morality. It had been expounded by both Platonic and Stoic philosophers and taken over into Christian ethics, and as a system it was much more widely known than Aristotle's more elaborate and indefinite scheme."<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Bennett traces the development of this tradition from Plato, who initially named four of the principal virtues (Wisdom, Temperance, Justice, and Courage), to Cicero, Ambrose, Macrobius; to the "Pseudo-Seneca" of Martin Brecara and Dominicus Mancinus; to the numerous ethical treatises and conduct-books of the sixteenth century (several of which are described in detail).<sup>50</sup> The popularity and viability of this virtue scheme was further enhanced by the linking of the character of Queen Elizabeth to these four virtues in pageants, books, portraits, letters, and speeches.<sup>51</sup> It is these virtues, Mrs. Bennett insists, and not Aristotle's, that Spenser celebrates in The Faerie Queene. "The cardinal virtues are fundamental. The expansion of the list to twelve and the mention of Aristotle are late and superficial additions."<sup>52</sup> Any expansion probably followed the procedure outlined by J. J. Jusserand: the four principal virtues Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude, with their sub-parts or branches also virtues.<sup>53</sup> Spenser, in sum, was drawing from this commonplace tradition in his illustrations of the virtues. Books I, II, V, VII treated the cardinal four; Books III, IV, VI could be branches, or sub-virtues.

Mrs. Bennett's chapter on "The Illustration of the Virtues" is the fullest, most suggestive treatment yet of the ethical tradition leading up to The Faerie Queene. One might think it would have inspired scholars to test these conclusions by examining the episodes to see if they were poetic versions of commonplace ideas on moral philosophy and ethics. It did not. For twenty years there was almost complete silence on the subject.<sup>54</sup>

In the 1960's the subject was opened up once again in several books and two articles. This new research lent support to the conclusion of Professors Bennett, Renwick, and Jones; that Spenser had cited Aristotle as his source, while he borrowed freely from the great popular tradition which recognized four cardinal virtues and their various sub-parts, also virtues (making up if necessary the Aristotelian twelve). Curiously, these new proofs appeared in books and articles which did not deal directly with Spenser's work. Pearl Hogrefe in The St. Thomas More Circle (1959) devotes several pages to tracing the evolution of ethical ideals culminating in the Christian Humanism of the sixteenth century. She imagines the Ciceronian and Macrobian schemes of four principal virtues and their sub-parts gradually merging into one body of materials which had been and would be, even further Christianized as it passed from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance. The actual synthesis takes place in Peraldus' (Guillaume de Perrault) treatise Summa de Vitiis and Summa de Virtutibus (1261), the source Hogrefe posits for the religious instruction manuals which were to shape the ethical beliefs of Christians for several centuries.<sup>55</sup>

William O. Harris, tracing the cardinal virtue tradition in order to place correctly the virtue Magnificence as portrayed in Skelton's morality play Magnyfycence, arrives at the same conclusion as Hogrefe, Bennett, and the rest. Sixteenth century ethical ideas were essentially derived from a Christian-Stoic synthesis of four cardinal virtues (Prudence, Temperance,

Justice, and Fortitude), which was further enriched by the addition of Aristotle and his commentators. (Even Aquinas recognized the cardinal four as basic to any treatment of the virtues.) Spenser's readers, Harris feels, would have understood his citation of a scheme of twelve moral virtues "as Aristotle hath devised" to mean that tradition of deriving twelve virtues from the cardinal four.<sup>56</sup>

Lastly there is Rosemond Tuve, who in two long articles and one book,<sup>57</sup> contributed much to our knowledge of textual and iconographical treatments of the virtues in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance--and to our understanding of Spenser's long poem. Her investigations were prompted, she tells us explicitly, "by a desire to understand better Spenser's use of the virtues in the Faerie Queene--their structural role, inherited conceptions of them which affected their allegorical power, oddities or puzzles elucidated by knowledge of habitual uses and sources."<sup>58</sup>

As so often happens in scholarly inquiry, some of her discoveries were the result of fortuitous occurrences. The one described in Part One of a two part article, "Notes on the Virtues and the Vices: Two Fifteenth-Century Lines of Dependency on the Thirteenth and Twelfth Centuries," was a scholar's dream come true. While gathering material for a book on the allegorical tradition of the virtues and the vices, she found in the Bodleian Library manuscript of Christine de Pisan Épître d'Othéa (Laud Misc. 570, date 1450) an unidentified French treatise on the four cardinal virtues. The contents seemed familiar. She recognized the anonymous fifteenth-century work as a selected translation of parts of John of Wales' thirteenth-century treatise, Breviloquium de virtutibus. In addition, she recognized a striking similarity in the iconographical treatment of the vices and virtues in this anonymous French work and another French treatment of the cardinal virtues by John de Mansel in his Fleur de Histoires, first printed

in 1457 and again in 1467. When the three manuscripts were read together, it became evident that these two fifteenth-century writers, working independently, used John of Wales' Breviloquium de virtutibus (thirteenth century) as their source.<sup>59</sup> John had broken new grounds in his treatment of the virtues, and these men were employing his definitions and distinctions at the end of the fifteenth century! For example, John begins his discussion of Justice with the Ciceronian conception promulgated in De Officiis of Justice as Severity, Justice as Liberality. When he comes to enumerating sub-divisions or parts, he switches to Macrobius' list in In Somnium Scipionis (Macrobius kept the sub-parts Religio and Pietas of Cicero's De Inventione and added Innocentia, Amicitia, Concordia, Affectus, and Humanitas). Tuve noticed that John made one important change in Macrobius: he substituted Humilitas for Humanitas as the seventh part. His two late fifteenth-century translators followed suit; they used his definitions, distinctions, and borrowed his exempla, as compilers of advice to princes, confessional manuals, conduct books, and iconographers, had been doing for two-hundred years.<sup>60</sup>

Miss Tuve presents these lines of dependency as proof of the popularity, vitality, and longevity of the tradition of four principal virtues and their parts, fashioned from a synthesis of Ciceronian and Macrobian schemes. This heritage of classical and Christian definitions, distinctions and exempla in literature, theology, and art should suggest that "the medieval years were not one single-voiced witness to the importance of the Prudentian psychomachia, or dumbly awaiting the spread of the Ethics."<sup>61</sup> Nor was the often-cited Pseudo-Seneca, with its abstract definitions, moral sententiae, and its stress on moderation as influential as claimed. What was passed into the Renaissance was a number of traditions. Tuve would like to dispel the misconceptions and set the record straight:

When a Renaissance writer uses the virtues, students turn with one accord to the Nicomachean Ethics; when an anonymous glossed treatise turns up in medieval vernacular materials, a first step among most students is to see what version it may be of 'Seneca'--that is, of a widespread pseudo-Senecan treatise on the four cardinal virtues attributed early enough to Martin de Barga to be under his name in most modern catalogues. Yet, in each of these periods, medieval and Renaissance, there was not one Greek-or-Roman stream carrying a tradition of the virtues, but four at least (the fourth, Aristotle, shows up more in vernacular or popular contexts after Nicole Oresme's fourteenth-century translation, and in Latin treatments from the time of Albertus Magnus, markedly of course after St. Thomas). The Ciceronian and the Macrobian tradition merged and held their extreme popularity with firmness, and since they were the ground for very many well-known, much-taught, and well-distributed treatments in summae and compendia they were also firmly Christianized, and spread abroad in succinct form<sup>62</sup> to be used by later men well out on the fringes of 'learning.'

It should be pointed out that in the title to Tuve's article there is an allusion to a twelfth-century source, namely the Moralium dogma philosophorum of Guillaume de Conches (1080-1154), one of the philosopher-poets of the school of Chartres, who was the source of John of Wales' Breviloquium and just about every other treatise or manual. Guillaume's encyclopedic work served Alanus of Insulis (Alain de Lille) in his Anticlaudianus and De Virtutibus and de Vitiis et de Donis Spiritus Sancti (1160), and Peraldus in his Summa de Vitiis et Virtutibus (1261), two men whose works did much to promulgate virtue lore. The latter's Summa was the source for Frere Lorens Somme le roi (1279), the most popular of all virtue treatises in the vernacular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Brought to the 'fringes of learning,' it influenced numerous devotional, confessional, and conduct manuals, and the poets Chaucer and Gower.<sup>63</sup> It was the great tradition of four cardinal virtues and their seemingly innumerable subparts (the Ciceronian-Macrobian-Christian synthesis) along with the Pseudo-Senecan and Aristotelian streams, which passes into the sixteenth century and is drawn upon by its poets, philosophers, and theologians. Tuve concludes: "the multiplicity and subtlety we find in Spenser and his

contemporaries (that is, in their treatments of the virtues) rests back upon a long history of examination, differentiation, and fusion."<sup>64</sup>

Part II of Tuve's article deals with yet another source of materials on the vices and virtues: iconography. Once again one discovery led on and on to a wealth of new insights and conclusions. This time Miss Tuve was examining a manuscript copy of Lorens' Somme le roi which contained "fifteen gorgeous illuminations."<sup>65</sup> The first oddity she noticed was the inclusion of an iconographical treatment of the four cardinal virtues (in the eight illumination) when there was no systematic treatment of these four virtues in her copy. Even more surprising was the space given to the illustration of another series of virtues (plates 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15), each one depicting the personification of a virtue nourished by a gift of the Holy Spirit, which enabled it to overcome a personified opposing vice:<sup>66</sup>

<u>Plate</u>	<u>Gift</u>	<u>Virtue</u>	<u>Vice</u>
9	Timor domini	Humility	Pride
10	Pietas	Amistie	Envy
11	Scientia	Equite	Ire
12	Fortitudo	Prouesse	Sloth
13	Consilium	Misericordia	Avarice
14	Intellectus	Chastity	Luxury
15	Sapientia	Sobriete	Gluttony

This series of seven virtues was not as expected the "cardinal" four and the "theological" three; rather it was an illustration of the virtues as gifts of the Holy Spirit (grace) expounded by Augustine in his sermon on the Beatitudes, and of the opposing vices expounded by Gregory. More research into the literature and arts of the Middle Ages made clear that

this series of virtues, more often than the familiar three-four, opposed the Seven Deadly Sins. When one views the iconography, the reason is almost obvious. The seven gift-virtues in human terms can be seen in the struggle with the vices. The same cannot be said of the struggles of Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, where the oppositions are less dramatic.<sup>67</sup>

<u>Sins</u>	<u>Virtues</u>
1. Pride	Faith
2. Wrath	Charity
3. Covetousness	Justice
4. Lust	Temperance
5. Avarice	Hope
6. Envy	Fortitude
7. Sloth	Prudence

Moreover, the Gift-Virtue series eliminates the splitting of virtues into "theological" and "moral" categories; all virtues are "spiritual" in nature; they are "the consummations or perfections of the operation of the Gifts which bring nearer to perfectness our first acts of virtue."<sup>68</sup> Here is the ultimate Christianization of the virtues as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and Spenser understood it. In the allegory of salvation imaged in the struggles of virtues and vices, grace is necessary as the warder-off of vice, but more importantly as the initiator and perfection of all human actions.

That this set of seven Gift-Virtues was unknown and unexamined in analyses and criticism of later literature (especially in regard to Spenser and The Faerie Queene) "may have caused certain warped and inadequate interpretations."<sup>69</sup> Tuve did not go into detail in this article but promised a thorough examination of this general matter and its consequences

in another place.

The effort to correct or supplement "warped and inadequate interpretations" of The Faerie Queene culminated in her monumental study Allegorical Imagery (1966), the final report of her researches into the virtue-vice tradition in the literature and arts of the Middle Ages. Only here, after many more years of evaluation and thought, does she make known her conclusions. (The two articles describe her discoveries without applying them to literature.) Of all the virtue traditions passed down from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance--she had suggested there were at least five--the seven gift-virtues scheme was the most widely disseminated and the most influential on later literature. Moreover, she would make an educated guess: "the odds are heavy that if an Elizabethan were asked to name the virtues, he would get as far as his memory served on this set, not those 'four cardinals' and 'three theologicals' we think of as so conventional."<sup>70</sup>

How far we have come from "Aristotle and the rest" and the idea of a single source! This history of twentieth-century studies in Spenser's use of sources should disabuse anyone of the notion that such scholarship was "a somewhat sorry spectacle." Far from it. All the studies, from Jusserand's to Tuve's viewed for their cumulative effect, could be acclaimed a sterling achievement. Now we have some idea of the wealth of traditions and materials Spenser could draw on for his illustrations of the virtues. Armed with knowledge of these resources in ethical treatises, literature and the arts, we can examine episodes in the individual books and describe the poet's use of his materials--his outright borrowings, his syntheses, his original inventions. Thus the late Rosemond Tuve's desire may be fulfilled: "to understand better Spenser's use of the virtues in the

Faerie Queene--their structural role, inherited conceptions of them which affected their allegorical power, oddities or puzzles elucidated by knowledge of habitual sources."<sup>71</sup>

In this dissertation I will examine the greatest puzzle of them all, the virtue Holiness. What is its history? Plato makes Holiness a virtue in some of his dialogues, usually a fifth virtue added to the traditional four: Wisdom, Temperance, Courage, and Justice. Little is said about Holiness by Plato, however. A number of Spenserian scholars have therefore claimed that the poet's first virtue is actually Wisdom under another name; others have found Spenser's Holiness closer to Platonic Moral Courage. There is no mention of Holiness in Aristotle, but De Moss and other scholars have equated it with the virtue Highmindedness examined in the Nichomachean Ethics. Most seem to agree that Holiness must be viewed as a Christian virtue but, as we have seen, in all the Christian sources available to Spenser, there is no comprehensive treatment of Holiness as a virtue. Yet Spenser confidently opens his long poem on the moral virtues with Holiness leading the rest. What tradition then was Spenser following? Or what ideas and whose ideas was he synthesizing? Or was he entirely original? Why did he choose the Knight of the Red Cross as the "Patron" of Holiness? And what is to be made of Redcrosse's companion Una, whose identity seems to change from episode to episode? Is she Prudence, Moral Courage, True Religion, Ecclesia, or all four? Or is she Dante's Lady Wisdom or the iconographers' Madonna of Humility with her lamb? Commonsense answers of educated guesses will not solve allegorical puzzles or oddities, Tuve warns us; for they "are notoriously dangerous when figures are symbolical, as are naturalistic, genre-picture explanations of details, and not only because 'natural (to us) logic' is a poor guide. Meanings generally come from some source, where the idea supplies the appropriateness,

and no adjective is less accurate than 'fanciful' for these connections that are so seldom the result of individual fancy or private association."<sup>72</sup> Only knowledge of the moral virtue tradition in regard to Holiness can provide some illumination.

The questions posed above arise upon reading only the first episode in the first canto of Book One. There are many other puzzles in the other episodes. But beyond these there is another consideration: what answer can be made to those critics who view the Legend of Holiness as a "theological prologue," something better placed outside the poem proper?<sup>73</sup> That, of course, is the same as asking, Why start with Holiness?

In the chapters that follow I hope to throw light on many of the problems that Book One of The Faerie Queene gives rise to. I begin with a detailed examination of the role of Holiness in the moral virtue tradition as it evolved to the time Spenser began to write his poem.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 142.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 131, footnote 47. Tuve names H. S. V. Jones, W. F. De Moss, Viola Hulbert, and F. M. Padelford and suggests that they are "the merest few out of a long line of succession" of critics.
- <sup>3</sup>A check of all the "Aristotle" references listed in the "Index" to the Variorum makes this point clear. See The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, C. G. Dodge, F. M. Padelford et al., (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1932-1957), IX, 548. (Hereafter this work will be cited as Variorum.) One of the few exceptions is Thomas Keightly's "Plan of the 'Faerie Queene.'" Notes and Queries, Series IV, IV (1869), 211-12.
- <sup>4</sup>"Scholarship in the Renaissance, English Nondramatic Literature," Renaissance News, XVII, No. 2 (Summer, 1964), 99.
- <sup>5</sup>Josephine Waters Bennett, The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), p. 216.
- <sup>6</sup>J. J. Jusserand, "Spenser's 'Twelve Private Morall Vertues as Aristotle Hath Devised,'" MP, III (1905-6), 373-83.
- <sup>7</sup>Variorum, I, 167-68.
- <sup>8</sup>Jusserand, 373
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., 375.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., 373-75.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., 376.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., 380. Jusserand calls the four principal virtues "Platonic ones." Actually, those named by Bryskett are the Ciceronian, Stoic, or Cardinal four. For Bryskett's discussion of the virtues see A Discourse of Civill Life: containing the Ethike part of moral Philosophie Fit for the instructing of a gentleman in the course of a vertuous life (London, 1606), pp. 214-279. The list quoted by Jusserand may be found on p. 214.
- <sup>13</sup>Jusserand (p. 379) accepts Bryskett's story: Spenser, when called upon to participate in a dialogue on the moral virtues, refuses to enter the discussion because he had already "undertaken a work tending to the same effect which is . . . under the title of a Faerie Queene, to represent all the morall vertues." See Discourse, p. 26. But Jusserand fails to see important implications in the passage he cites. Spenser, of course, could not have been influenced by the Discourse which was published in 1606, but Bryskett was most likely influenced by the ideas of his friend Spenser. Therein lies the value of Bryskett's work: it illuminates Spenser's approach to his subject. Bryskett describes the poet's designating one knight to be the "patron," "defender," or "protector" of each virtue and

then arranging against the virtue's champion "the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beate downe and overcome" (pp. 26-27). Bryskett also is suggestive in regard to Spenser's use of sources. He speaks of earlier writers in the moral virtue tradition who did not simply follow Aristotle or Plato "but gathering from both, and from other excellent writers beside" (pp. 31-32) compiled their treatises. Another key point for anyone interested in Spenser, and especially Book One of The Faerie Queene, is made by Bryskett. Before the actual examination of the vices and virtues, Bryskett and his friends discuss the virtues necessary to a king's son. In his summary, Bryskett links Religion, Prudence, Wisdom and Truth as the first matter or virtue, followed by Justice, Temperance and Fortitude (p. 86). This may suggest some rationale for Spenser's choice of Holiness as a primary virtue.

<sup>14</sup>"Introduction," The Faerie Queene, Book II (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1914), p. lii.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. lii.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. lii.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. liii-lix. Miss Winstanley omits any discussion of Justice in Plato. She also declines to discuss Courtesy as a virtue because it is a chivalric conception not found in the Greek philosophers. She admits Aristotle's Truthfulness and Gentleness may have influenced Spenser's views.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. liii.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. liv. Winstanley's definition of Temperance is not in accord with the usual Aristotelian one: Temperance is the middle way between excess and defect.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. liv-lv.

<sup>21</sup>"Spenser's Twelve Moral Virtues 'According to Aristotle,'" MP, XVI (1918), 23-28, 245-70; The Influence of Aristotle's "Politics" and "Ethics" on Spenser (Chicago, 1918). I have not seen the book.

<sup>22</sup>This list is made up from Winstanley's discussion, p. lii, and De Moss' first article, pp. 25-26.

<sup>23</sup>This list is my schematization of De Moss' discussion pp. 31-38.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>25</sup>Mrs. Bennett's description of all such attempts at reconciling Aristotle's and Spenser's virtues. See Evolution, p. 219.

<sup>26</sup>De Moss, 29-30.

<sup>27</sup>University of Chicago Abstract of Theses, Humanistic Series, V, 479-85. Mrs. Hulbert in the title of her dissertation and in the Abstract insists on "twelve moral virtues according to Aristotle and the rest." This, I feel, is a distortion or misreading of the Letter to Raleigh: Spenser

speaks of twelve moral virtues "as Aristotle hath devised." The phrase "according to Aristotle and the rest" is used in reference to the virtue of Magnificence. See Variorum, I, 167-68.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 481.

<sup>29</sup>Hulbert should have enumerated in her Abstract the twelve virtues found in the Summa II which Thomas had culled from the Ethics, II, vii.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 483-84.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 484.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 484. Rosemond Tuve's researches summarized at the end of this chapter (pp. 24-31) suggest that is exactly how the virtues were discussed in handbooks, confessionals, and imaginative literature. The contexts were many besides the Decalogue: Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Seven Virtues, the Pater Noster, the Apostle's Creed, etc.

<sup>33</sup>SP, XXVIII (1931), 184-210.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 205. Hulbert is questioning the conclusions of Professor H. S. V. Jones in "The 'Faerie Queene' and the Medieval Aristotelian Tradition," JEGP, XXV (1926), 283-98.

<sup>35</sup>This commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics was written in 1586 and published in 1640. The complete title reads: Tractatus Ethici sive Commentarii in aliquot Aristotelis libros ad Nichomachum.

<sup>36</sup>SP, XXVIII (1931), 204.

<sup>37</sup>Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1925), pp. 174, 158.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 175, 161.

<sup>40</sup>"The 'Faerie Queene' and the Medieval Aristotelian Tradition," JEGP, XXV, (1926), 283-298.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 287. Cf. Renwick's citation of Cicero as an all-important influence on Spenser's philosophy, quoted on p. 14 of this dissertation; and Mrs. Bennett's recognition of Cicero and Ambrose in Evolution, p. 219.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 284. He does bewail the fact that "no one seems to have traced the ethical tradition which leads up to the Faerie Queene."

<sup>44</sup>Allegorical Imagery, p. 142. See also p. 131, footnote 47. Though she takes Jones, De Moss, Hulbert, and others to task, she makes no mention (blame or praise) of Renwick's seminal work. No discussion of Spenser's sources is complete without it.

<sup>45</sup>Spenser's Faerie Queene (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1934).

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>47</sup>Bennett, p. 52. For her conclusions on the actual order of composition, see Chapter Eighteen, pp. 231-244.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 219-24.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 224-26.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>53</sup>Mrs. Bennett, pp. 229-30, credits Jusserand with recognizing this procedure. She points out, however, that "Spenser's list does not agree with Bryskett's any better than it does with Aristotle's."

<sup>54</sup>Ernest Sirluck in "The Faerie Queene, Book II, and the Nichomachean Ethics," MP, XLIX (1951), 73-100, briefly reviewed the controversy surrounding Spenser's use of Aristotle without coming to any conclusions, except his own: Book II is a poetic version of the Ethics. He too fails to mention Renwick's work.

<sup>55</sup>The St. Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and Their Impact on Secular Drama (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), p. 78.

<sup>56</sup>Skelton's "Magnyfycence" and the Cardinal Virtue Tradition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 59-64.

<sup>57</sup>"Notes on the Virtues and Vices," JWCI, XXVI (1963), 264-330, and JWCI, XXVII (1964), 42-72.

<sup>58</sup>"Notes," I, 264.

<sup>59</sup>Besides similarity in iconography, the two fifteenth-century works showed "a remarkable intermittent similarity in the series of definitions and comments, and in the choice and order of exempla. . . ." I, 265.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 265-268. Miss Tuve does not credit John of Wales with the synthesis of Ciceronian and Macrobian schemes. She would credit Guillaume de Conches (1080-1154), whose Moralium dogma philosophorum influenced other writers. Cf. Pearl Hogrefe, p. 78, who credits Peraldus (thirteenth century) with the synthesis.

<sup>61</sup>"Notes," I, 298.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 267-68.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 267-69, 273

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>65</sup>"Notes," II, 43. Miss Tuve reproduces several of them in this article and again in her book Allegorical Imagery.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 44. I have constructed this chart from Miss Tuve's text.

<sup>67</sup>These oppositions between the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Virtues (the cardinal four and the theological three) are taken from a list of medieval correspondences compiled by Professor Sears Jayne.

<sup>68</sup>Tuve, II, 44, is quoting from St. Bonaventure (thirteenth century). She finds similar ideas in Bonaventure's predecessors: Hugh of St. Victor, John of Salisbury, and Alanus.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>70</sup>Allegorical Imagery, p. 81.

<sup>71</sup>"Notes," I, 264.

<sup>72</sup>"Notes," II, 58.

<sup>73</sup>Graham Hough, A Preface to "The Faerie Queene" (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1962), p. 138: "It is a theological prologue to a poem whose main existence is on a different plane."

## CHAPTER TWO

### Holiness in the Moral Virtue Tradition from Plato to Spenser

Spenser's unself-conscious references to Aristotle suggest that his exposition of the virtues will be traditional in form and content; that is, like other writers in the moral virtue tradition, he will select a number of familiar virtues, treat each one separately and at considerable length, incorporating as he wishes materials on any specific virtue from the works of his predecessors. His originality will be found in his art. As poet he will overgo other expositors of the moral virtues in expressing well, perhaps best, what others had often thought. Such is not the case, however, in regard to the virtue of Holiness. There is no specific systematic treatment of this virtue in the work of "Aristotle and the rest."<sup>1</sup> Holiness is not one of the Platonic four, Aristotelian twelve, Ciceronian or Stoic four, cardinal four, theological three, or one of the seven virtues emanating from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Where then did Spenser find material for his first virtue? In ancient, scriptural, medieval, and Renaissance treatises, literature, and art, he found inherited conceptions of Holiness and other ideas inextricably linked to it. Holiness (or Piety) was a virtue according to Plato; a concept not unknown to the Stoics; the moral imperative of the people of Israel; a measure of moral perfection and the necessary condition for salvation of Christians; and one focus of the sixteenth century debate on the nature of man. Moreover, the virtue, recognized from the beginning as an attribute of God, in time became synonymous with moral perfection in man, and under it all virtues could be subsumed and linked. Into this vast body of traditional material Spenser dipped for his first virtue. He extracted what he needed and shaped it to his own ends. (I have no doubt that his knowledge was

encyclopedic.) His originality lay in his amalgamation and synthesis of traditional materials in a new whole--a brilliantly conceived and executed allegory of Holiness. This virtue's evolution in the moral virtue tradition is outlined here.

## I. Holiness in Greek and Roman Writings

Holiness enters the moral virtue tradition in the dialogues of Plato, often as a fifth virtue added to the ubiquitous Platonic four: Wisdom, Temperance, Courage, and Justice. An attempt is made to define it in the Euthypro (9-14), but fails. Socrates' "pupil" speaks of Holiness or Piety as that which is dear to the gods, namely praying and sacrificing. Socrates suggests that Holiness then is a part of Justice.<sup>2</sup> Similar discussions of the place of Holiness among the virtues are found in the Meno and the Protagoras (329-331). In the former it is designated a virtue, but no more is said of it; in the latter it is mentioned as one of the five kinds of virtue or knowledge of which wisdom is chief. Once more, Socrates suggests that Holiness is a part of Justice.<sup>3</sup> The most important specific mention of Holiness in Plato, for Spenser and all who have written about the virtues down through the centuries, is found in the Theatetus (176). Socrates exclaims:

Wherefore we ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can; and to fly away means to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like him, means to be holy, just, and wise. But, O my friend, you cannot easily convince mankind that they should pursue virtue or avoid vice, not merely in order that man may seem to be good, which is the reason given by the world, and in my judgement is only the repetition of an old wives' tale. Whereas the truth is that God is never in any way unrighteous--he is perfect righteousness; and he of us who is most righteous is of all things most like him. Herein is seen the true cleverness of a man and also his nothingness and want of manhood. For to know this is true wisdom and virtue, and ignorance of this is manifest folly and vice. All other kinds of what might seem wisdom or cleverness, such as the wisdom of<sup>4</sup> politicians, or the wisdom of the arts, are coarse and vulgar.

Here is the foundation for the conception of holiness in the moral virtue tradition. More than a virtue delineating man's duties to God and other men, it is an attribute of the moral perfection of God. Man aims to become like God, that is to be holy, and to participate in divine life through the pursuit of knowledge and virtue. As a result, the ethical ground and end of human endeavor for Plato is a movement upward from earthly things to eternal essence, to assimilation to God.<sup>5</sup> Perfection is held out to man as an ideal.

Spenser could not find a similar description or definition of Holiness in Aristotle's Ethics--despite volumes of supposed evidence to the contrary.<sup>6</sup> The section of that treatise on the moral virtues deals with the psychology of social behavior, not metaphysics.<sup>7</sup> Highmindedness or Magnanimity may be Aristotle's idea of absolute moral perfection, the crowning achievement of man's heroic struggle to become that which he is: potentially perfect in virtue through cultivation of the rational principle.<sup>8</sup> But Aristotle's chief moral virtue is not the equivalent of Plato's Holiness. There is a suggestion, however, in the section of the Ethics dealing with the intellectual virtues, similar to the idea of ascent and assimilation in Plato. Aristotle describes a movement upward, A "dilation" to a state of contemplation, which he deems the highest activity of mankind; he associates the activity with Wisdom, for him the chief attribute of the deity.<sup>9</sup> Later writers in the tradition, including Spenser, conflate the Platonic and Aristotelian ideas, making holiness and wisdom synonymous; or they make Wisdom the chief virtue and subsume all other virtues, including Holiness, under it.<sup>10</sup>

Cicero chose to follow the latter method in his synthesis of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic views on moral philosophy. (It should be mentioned that the Greek Stoics, Zeno and Chrysippus, in systematizing Plato's

writings on the virtues supplied short epigrammatic definitions of the Platonic four, leaving out mention of that sometimes fifth virtue Holiness. Cicero inherited and employed these definitions which had become stereotyped, along with those of Panetius, his immediate source.)<sup>11</sup> The usual virtues are expounded in depth in his writings, but there is no specific treatment of Holiness. In De Inventione the Platonic conception of holiness is blended into Religio and Pietas, sub-parts of the virtue Justice: "Religio is that which brings men to service and worship a higher order of nature which we call divine; Pietas the feeling which renders kind offices to one's kin and country."<sup>12</sup> In De Natura Deorum another distinction is made: "Piety is justice toward the gods. . . . Holiness is the science of divine worship."<sup>13</sup> In the De Officiis, however, he seems to fuse Platonic ideas on holiness (expressed in the Euthypro, Protogoras and Theateus) into a definition of Wisdom, to him the princeps of virtues: "wisdom is knowledge of things human and divine which is concerned also with the bonds of union between gods and man, and the relationship of man to man. Man's first duty is the search after wisdom and truth."<sup>14</sup> Here, Cicero makes Wisdom the chief virtue and subsumes Holiness under it as a sub-part, rather than as a sub-part under Justice. Hence we may say that Cicero regarded Holiness as a virtue, though he did not fix its place in relation to the traditional four. Whether subsumed under Justice or Wisdom, it is linked by him to Religion and Piety and yet distinct from them.

Cicero's shifting divisions, distinctions, and definitions of man's moral duties to the gods and men held firm for centuries and were passed down to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance--for the most part unchanged, if enlarged upon--in such reworkings as the In Somnium Scipionis of Macrobius (sixth century), the Moralia Dogma Philosophorum of Guillaume de Conches (eleventh century), the De Virtutibus et de vitiis Donis Sp. Sancti

of Alain de Lille (eleventh century), the Summa De Vitiis and the Summa De Virtutibus of Peraldus (thirteenth century), in the most popular and influential treatise of all, the Somme de Vices et Vertues, or Somme le roi, of Frere Lorens (thirteenth century and after), and in the favorite textbook in continental Europe in the sixteenth century, Erasmus's and Melancthon's collaboration on the De Officiis.<sup>15</sup> Such was the influence of Cicero's writings, especially the De Officiis, that one critic has remarked: "There is probably no ancient treatise which has done more than his De Officiis to communicate a knowledge of ancient morality to medieval and modern Europe."<sup>16</sup>

While Holiness as a specific virtue may have been absorbed in traditional schemes (remember Plato himself first proposed placing it under Justice), the Platonic idea of holiness as growth in virtue, ascent and assimilation to God was never discarded. It gained currency in two schools of thought, the Roman Stoics and the Neo-Platonists. The term "moral goodness" or "moral perfection" now covered the ideas once contained in the term Holiness.<sup>16</sup> For the Stoics, the state of perfection was achieved by living according to Nature's laws (that is, according to perfect reason and godliness) and by self-discipline and ascetic practices.<sup>17</sup> The Neo-Platonists reiterated the creed of their namesake: the supreme end of man is assimilation and likeness to God which is attained through virtue. But Plotinus (third century A.D.), the chief expositor of the group, went far beyond Plato in his attempt to make the Greek morality "rival Christianity in its spirituality."<sup>18</sup> To Plotinus perfection in the four virtues was only the first step in the process of ascent; the second was the purification of the soul from all earthly interests; the third was contemplation of the divine and assimilation.<sup>19</sup>

We may conclude that Spenser could have found no specific treatment

of the virtue Holiness in ancient Greek and Roman writers on the virtues (nothing like the explications of Wisdom, Temperance, Courage and Justice, or their Stoic counterparts Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice). He might have observed that from the beginning Holiness was considered a virtue; and more importantly that as an attribute of God it was linked to moral perfection, absolute Goodness, Wisdom, Justice, and Truth; to Nature, Reason, and Religion. Above all he would have encountered in Plato and others the conception of Holiness as ascent or flight from the things of earth to the things of the spirit; as growth in virtue through self-knowledge and the use of reason, to assimilation to God and contemplation. In another chapter we shall see how all these originally "pagan" concepts are incorporated into Spenser's allegory of that seemingly Christian virtue Holiness.<sup>20</sup>

## II. Holiness in Judaic and Early Christian Writings

The ideal of holiness permeates the Old Testament. The authors of Judaism did not speak of holiness as a virtue in the Greek sense, though with the pagan ancients they conceived it as an attribute of the deity. When used in regard to men, the term described a process of becoming and a resultant state; that is, men living in accordance with the laws and statutes of the Holy One could grow in holiness, or could be considered holy.<sup>21</sup>

Initially holiness is the greatness and glory of Yahweh (Deut. 5:24; Is. 1:4 and 6:3) demanding worship, and then imitation, obedience, and love from the individual and the nation (Deut. 7:6-11).<sup>22</sup> The commands are repeated as a seemingly endless refrain in that section of Leviticus known as the Code of Holiness:

Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy (19:2).

Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you. (20:7-8)

The ethical imperatives of these commands are repeated in many places and made specific in such writings as Psalms 50 and 51. Holiness does not manifest itself in offering sacrifices or in ceremony, but in keeping the statutes. Those who steal, commit adultery, slander, or practice deceit can expect the wrath of God, who will literally tear the transgressors to pieces (Ps. 50). "A broken and contrite heart" and "sacrifices of righteousness" (Ps. 51) alone can restore the holy relationship between Yahweh and his people, which under the new covenant is to be internal, spiritual, and personal (Jer. 31:31).

There were many other Old Testament writers besides the prophets and psalmists who interpreted holiness ethically; who made it the conditioning factor in the relation of man to God, and the relation of man to other men.<sup>23</sup> The word was synonymous with righteousness, the term used to describe God's character and commands (just as in Plato's Theatetus). However, nowhere in the Old Testament was holiness considered simply as a virtue. Rather, all virtues, all goodness aspired to or attained by men could be subsumed under it.

This ancient conception of holiness as moral likeness to God is the foundation for New Testament writings, with one striking difference.<sup>24</sup> Christ never claims holiness for himself, never reiterates the commands of the Code of Holiness in Leviticus (19:22): "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." Instead he admonishes men to imitate the perfection of the Father: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48)." Once again holiness and moral perfection (as attributes of God and as possible attributes of man) are synonymous. But whereas the old covenant is grounded upon an awe-inspiring fear and love of an

omnipotent God, the new covenant stresses "a filial relationship of obedient and trustful love (pietas)."<sup>25</sup> Christ offers himself as an example of "this perfect moral sonship, [in] the consecration of all his powers and opportunities to the worship of God, and the realization of His gracious purposes in history."<sup>26</sup> St. Paul describes Christ's mission: "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:18), and through this sacrifice "perfected for ever them that are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). From this time onward, "all virtue comes under the category of what 'is fitting among-saints' or is fitting in the Lord."<sup>27</sup> After the entrance of Christ into history as recorded in the Scriptures, holiness is demonstrated by its divine exemplum Christ; specifically as it consists of humbleness of mind (humility), obedience, fidelity.

In the writings of Paul and John holiness comes to mean "not so much the perfection of man's life as to its precondition--dedication to God and adoption by him";<sup>28</sup> its manifestation is love, love of God and love of men. Paul, conscious that he was preaching a new ethics, struck out at previous prescriptions for men's perfection as "Greek foolishness."<sup>29</sup> All efforts of self-realization through the use of reason and the pursuit of wisdom were bound to end in failure because their ground was not Christ. It was Christ's sacrifice (the supreme expression of God's love) which "perfected for ever those that are being sanctified" (Heb. 10-14). To believe this, to act upon this, to cooperate with the merits of this sacrifice was for Paul the only true wisdom. Holiness, then, had its place in Paul's new ethics which would procure for man everything the ancients hoped for, and then again, much more.<sup>30</sup> For the Christian the supreme good or goal of life would be salvation, which guaranteed him union with God and eternal happiness; the means of attaining this end would be an

unswerving faith in Christ, the imitation of His virtues, and loving service to Him and to all men.

Nevertheless, Paul and John recognized the limitations of unaided human nature in the lifelong struggle for perfection. The spirit of man was willing, but the flesh was often weak. Allowances had to be made for lapses brought about by human frailty and depravity, and hope held out for rescue and regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit. Renewal of the initial dedication, growth in virtue, and progress toward the goal of ultimate perfection would come through the Spirit's gift of grace increasing man's faith and strength. Paul had a vision of this heavenly grace being poured down till "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). John in his first Epistle also entertained the idea of a perfect man: one who has achieved complete holiness through "the deliverance of the soul from the guilt, power, and even presence of sin through its perfecting in holy love."<sup>31</sup>

In the New Testament then we find an additional conception of holiness grafted on to the centuries old (Greek, Roman, Judaic) idea of holiness as moral likeness to God manifested in an ever more perfect condition of virtue. Paul and John envision another path to perfection paralleling and joining the first: man struggles with the help of heavenly grace to overcome sin, to root out vices and to replace them with virtues (what "is fitting among saints" or "in the Lord").<sup>32</sup> This is what John meant by God's perfecting man in holy love.

To appreciate Spenser's allegory in Book One of The Faerie Queene is to appreciate how much of the essence of the New Testament is worked into the fabric of the legend of Holiness--right along with the Platonism and Stoicism. Holiness is imaged as growth in virtue and ascent to wisdom,

as struggle with evil and rooting out of vices, rescue after lapse, regeneration, and sanctification. In such a synthesis the reader must re-examine the pagan and Christian teachings on the possibility of human perfection; on wisdom and true knowledge; on the nature of man and the role of reason; and such Christian concepts as humility and obedience, fidelity and perseverance, faith and grace as they are related to Holiness.

With the compilation of the New Testament, holiness takes a commanding position in the moral virtue tradition. But it is not a virtue so much as it is a condition of soul. Moreover, it is a term used to describe a process of growth toward moral perfection, or the resultant state.<sup>33</sup> It is the whole of which the individual virtues are part. Thus were the moral virtues treated by Apostolic Fathers of the first and second centuries, who exhorted the believers in Christ to be a holy people, members of a holy church, directed by the Holy Spirit. Like Paul, they stressed the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity as necessary for perfection and salvation. But they came in time to realize that these three theological virtues while necessary for a higher spiritual life dedicated to the service of God, were not applicable in the worldly affairs of men.<sup>34</sup> So as guidelines to a holy life they promulgated Paul's list of virtues found in Colossians 3:12-15: "mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness and charity--and they added virtues of their own. Clement of Rome added repentance, sobriety, self-control, fear, and peace; Clement of Alexandria (who admired the Greek philosophers and at the same time feared contamination of the new religion) added Christian valor, temperance, wisdom, endurance, decorum, and self-restraint; Origen, who saw holiness as a state achieved by few men, stressed self-denial and perseverance.<sup>35</sup> So while Faith, Hope, and Charity (especially Faith

without which there could be no true knowledge or virtue) maintained their roles in Christian life, a number of new moral virtues were added to the lists of the moral virtue tradition. As "Christian" virtues, however, they could be subsumed under Holiness.

There was further expansion of the tradition when the classical virtues (Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic) were adapted into Christian schemes by Basil, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and by Gregory of Nazianus, the Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries; and when Ciceronian (Stoic really) definitions, divisions, and ideas were adapted by Ambrose for his De Officiis Ministrorum (ca. 370).<sup>36</sup> This work will serve as an example of how the best in ancient ethical wisdom was assimilated in Christian treatises. Prudence, defined by Cicero as knowledge of truth, for Ambrose is knowledge of God, God's laws, and God's mysteries. Justice, which in Cicero had Religio and Pietas as its first two parts, in Ambrose is manifested in altruism and charity; courage in fortitude and patient endurance; temperance in humbleness, gentleness, patience, and modesty. In addition to these cardinal four and their many sub-parts, he adds the virtues charity, chastity, humility, truthfulness and friendship.<sup>37</sup> Thus the classical virtues are Christianized by re-definition and by the addition of specifically Christian virtues as sub-parts. Writers on morality now had at their disposal a greatly expanded list of virtues from which they could borrow freely and produce their own schemes. No problem presents itself when all agree that moral perfection, which is holiness, is the goal of life.<sup>38</sup>

In time, this stress on moral perfection, along with the absorption of numerous other ancient philosophical ideas into Christian ethics, produced a situation long feared by early Fathers--contamination of the faith by pagan ideas. Men came to espouse a "Christian stoicism," a form of

"natural holiness" first promulgated by Pelagius in the first quarter of fifth century.<sup>39</sup> According to this monk, man through free exercise of his will and the aid of God's grace could reach a state of moral perfection in this world. Augustine attacked this rationalistic conception of holiness as heretical because it "lays stress on sympathetic goodness rather than on holiness that is mediated through faith, rejects both atonement and regeneration, and conflicts with the normal Christian consciousness of sin and grace."<sup>40</sup> Like Paul, he castigated all such beliefs in the power of human reason to effect moral perfection and assimilation to God as "Greek foolishness." Man's best efforts in "the cultivation of ethical virtues lead to Stoic pride and insensibility."<sup>41</sup> Christian teachings, Augustine insists, must augment and rectify pagan ethics. For him, the central fact of history is the Incarnation. It is the downward movement of a personal God to man (first through merits of Christ, and then through grace bestowed through the Holy Spirit) that prompts man's ascent and aids in his achieving final perfection. Man could only proceed so far upward on reason alone. So in opposition to the Pelagian heresy, Augustine reiterated Christian teaching on the nature of man as it is affected by Original Sin; stressed the need for "the free, indispensable, supernatural, prevenient, and irresistible grace of God" in the process of regeneration; reminded Christians that the goal of life was salvation, and moral perfection the means; and most importantly, insisted on the Church's role as the dispenser of sacraments which poured the necessary and saving grace into the soul.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to codifying the Pauline doctrine on the role of faith and grace in the life of man, Augustine made an important specific contribution to the conception of holiness and to the moral virtue tradition. Taking the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-9) and the first seven Beatitudes, and linking them to the gifts of the spirit in Isaiah (Is. 11:2-3 of

Vulgate), he made vivid and concrete the doctrine that grace is essential for growth in holiness.<sup>43</sup> He envisions the infused love of God poured into man as the seven streams of a holy life. These gifts of grace nourish virtue, overcome sin, and allow man to partake of Christ's holiness. Then again, the seven gifts of virtues could be imaged as a ladder of perfection reaching from heaven to earth, from the City of God to the city of man. God's love as grace descends upon man, man's love of God as virtue ascends. The movement upward begins at the bottom rung with the gift of Fear of the Lord, which manifests itself as the virtue of Humility overcoming the vice of Pride. The top rung of the ladder is, of course, Wisdom; only here it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, not a virtue.<sup>44</sup> (In the sixth century Gregory, enlarging upon Augustine's treatise, pictures "the gifts as special aids to the Christian in his war against evil" and furnished appropriate portraits of the enemies, namely the vices or the Deadly Sins.)<sup>45</sup>

Augustine's contributions to the moral virtue tradition and to Spenser are on a level with those of Plato, Aristotle, and Paul. Many of his ideas (often codifications of other men's writings) are recognizable in the allegory of Book One of The Faerie Queene:

1. Holiness as the goal of man's moral and spiritual life.
2. A scheme of virtues to be pursued and vices to be shunned if holiness is to be attained.
3. Virtue as a kind of love; virtues as "right" loves.
4. The importance of faith, grace, and the sacraments to a man of holiness.
5. The role of Ecclesia, or the Church in man's social and spiritual life.
6. The feebleness and frailty of man's nature.

7. The possibility of man's ascent to God upon the ladder of perfection in virtue.

### III. Holiness In Medieval Treatises, Literature, and Art

By the seventh century the main elements of the moral virtue tradition had been set. The ethical wisdom of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and the rest was revered and repeated, usually in treatises containing a Christianizing commentary. In other instances the writings of these ancients were reworked as Christian treatises. Witness Ambrose's De Officiis and the Pseudo-Seneca.<sup>46</sup> The tradition between 600-1500 is rightly termed "Christian" as it consisted of Christ's teachings interpreted by the Apostles Paul, Peter, and John, by the early Greek and Latin Fathers, and codified by Augustine. The classical materials on the virtues were absorbed and synthesized in the ethics of the new faith. The results of all these additions and admixtures were the numerous schemes of virtues to be pursued, and the equally large number of vices to be shunned, if perfection were to be attained and salvation won.<sup>47</sup>

Little was added to the tradition between the seventh century and the end of the eleventh. Happily, however, no part of the ethical wisdom of the western world was lost during these so-called Dark Ages. When a wealth of new treatises began to appear at the middle of the twelfth century,<sup>48</sup> it became apparent that the method of acquiring moral perfection (holiness) rested in the commonplace: overcome vice and grow in virtue, with the two aspects always joined. These medieval writers on the moral virtues, while following and enlarging upon these ideas found in traditional classical and Christian materials, sought as all writers do, to make their materials new and relevant by shifts of emphasis (many of which Spenser incorporated into his legend of Holiness). Moreover, they poured the old

wine of ethical wisdom into new bottles: the struggle for a holy life was dramatized in imaginative literature and art.

The most important new emphasis is focused upon the virtue Humility, which becomes a key element in the pursuit of holiness. It takes its place beside or leading the ubiquitous theological three and cardinal four, and as the first virtue nourished by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Before the era is ended, Humility will be proclaimed the root of all virtues and the conqueror of the vice Pride, root of all depravity.<sup>49</sup>

This virtue's rise to prominence and its link to Christian Holiness could have been predicted. In the Old Testament it was a quality cited as praiseworthy and necessary; in the New Testament, it is an attribute of Christ demanding imitation by man. According to Matthew (11:29) Christ Himself said: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart (i.e., humble)." Paul speaks of Christ's mission: "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:18). In another place the Apostle links humility and the other Christian virtues to holiness: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering" (Col. 3:12). The early Fathers followed Paul in recommending the virtue. Ambrose added it to the Ciceronian four. Augustine called it the first virtue nourished in man by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Gregory codified the position of Humility as the opponent and conqueror of Pride. Prudentius, in the most famous depiction of the struggle of the virtues and the vices, allegorized the conflict between Humility and its opposite, Pride.<sup>50</sup>

In the Middle Ages the virtue Humility finds its way into expositions of the Platonic, Ciceronian and Macrobian schemes, all the while maintaining and strengthening its position as key virtue in the pursuit of holiness

and salvation. Alain de Lille (ca. 1160) in his exposition of the four cardinal virtues (actually a synthesis of the Ciceronian and Macrobian schemes) adds Humility as the tenth part of Fortitude.<sup>51</sup> John of Wales (thirteenth century) in his Breviloquium makes a more significant change: he substitutes Christian Humilitas for Macrobian Humanitas as the seventh part of Justice.<sup>52</sup> Compilers of virtue materials continued to make this substitution right up to Spenser's time. It was Thomas Aquinas' exposition of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (in Summa Theologica 1a 2ae 68.2) which guaranteed once and for all Humility's place in the tradition. In his treatise Humility is promulgated as the root of all virtues, the fruit of the first gift; the Virgin Mary is seen as its supreme exemplification. Thomas, of course, is repeating Augustine's views on the virtue and commonplace materials on its link to the Virgin, expounded by Conrad of Hirsau (twelfth century), by Hugh of St. Victor (thirteenth century), and in numerous iconographical treatments of the virtues.<sup>53</sup>

A striking example of the rise of Humility to prominence among the virtues is found in the nineteen illuminated manuscripts of Prudentius' Psychomachia produced from the ninth through the thirteenth centuries.<sup>54</sup>

Professor Tuve found that in all of them the artists assign Humility a commanding place as the virtue which overcomes Pride, the root of all evil. In the first crude depictions she is an impersonal allegorical figure identified by a banderole. In a twelfth-century manuscript, as a knight in full armor, she leads a phalanx of virtues against Superbia or Pride. After the identification of Humility with the Virgin, the iconographers portray her as the Madonna of Humility carrying her lamb, who alone can overcome deadly Pride.<sup>55</sup>

Later, the Virgin figure is used to represent the other Gifts of the Spirit--Pity, Knowledge, Strength, Counsel, Understanding and Wisdom in

Isaiah 11:2-3--in addition to her identifications with Faith, Grace, the Soul, and Truth. The wisdom figure is a conflation of materials in the Book of Proverbs of the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation of the New Testament. From the latter source also comes another conception important to Spenser, the Virgin as Ecclesia, or the true Church, through whom grace is brought to man. In this role she is the opponent of the beast whose seven heads represent the Seven Deadly Sins that she will triumph over, through the power of the Seven Gift-Virtues.<sup>56</sup> Spenser's genius is his ability to bring together and synthesize all these commonplace conceptions in one figure, Una.

As the virtues and vices were never treated separately in a Christian treatise, the prominence of Humility in the moral virtue tradition guaranteed a similar position for its adversary, Pride. And as Humility was more than a virtue--it was the root and stock of a holy life--so Pride was more than a vice. In the words of Chaucer's Parson, "Of the roote of thise sevene synnes, thanne, is Pride the general roote of alle harmes" (l. 387).<sup>57</sup> Interestingly enough, writers on the virtues often devoted more space to the delineation of Pride than to that of Humility.<sup>58</sup> In Peraldus's Summa de Vitiis et Virtutibus (1261), in Frère Lorens' Somme le roi (1279), and in the English version of the latter, The Book of the Vices and the Virtues (c. 1350), Pride is denounced at length as the most terrible of the vices, for in succumbing to it man repeats the first or original sin. And like Adam, he destroys again the holy covenant between man and God. "He breaks first fellowship and order," according to these writers, by Untruth, Despite, Presumption, Ambition, Vainglory, Hypocrisy, and Pusillanimity. These are the seven branches of Pride from which spring more than twenty twigs.<sup>59</sup> The first of these branches, Untruth or lack of truth,<sup>60</sup> manifests itself in villainy, madness and reneging faith.

Another branch, Vainglory, is cited as the last enemy of the man of holiness. This foeman usually turns out to be a mere bladder, the common figure for man's pretensions. Still other branches are Hypocrisy and Pusillanimity, the latter of which often leads to despair and eventually to suicide. Spenser adroitly weaves these offshoots of Pride into the allegorical fabric of Book One of The Faerie Queene. The brothers Sans foy, Sans joy, and Sans loy may be said to represent the three-part branch Untruth, or lack of troth. The giant Orgoglio, whom Arthur vanquishes in Canto Eight, turns out to be no more than a wind-filled bladder. Despair appears in Canto Nine as the wily tempter of the Knight of the Red Cross. The poet is perfectly conventional in enlarging his allegory to include the cohorts of Pride, who comprise the traditional phalanx of vices ready to waylay the virtuous man, and in placing Pride in the cart directing the procession of the Deadly Sins.<sup>61</sup> In each instance Spenser follows conceptions and ideas found in medieval and Renaissance treatises, conduct books, and iconography.

It should be noted here that while Spenser synthesized many commonplaces about the moral virtues and vices, he did not make the archetypal struggle between Humility and Pride the axis of his allegory in Book One. He kept Pride with its cohorts as the root vice but substituted Holiness for Humility as the root virtue of the man seeking perfection. The reasons for this important, interesting, and original substitution will be discussed in Chapter Four.

But Spenser's handling of the virtues and the vices is not linear and simple. Like other writers in the moral virtue tradition, he is capable of blending one conception with another, and even one virtue into another, so that the effect of his exposition is cumulative. In the words of one

critic, "Movement and growth are thought of as processes which have for their first end not self-fulfillment but the achievement of design and are concerned less in terms of evolution than of pattern."<sup>62</sup> And Rosemond Tuve compares the process of the poem to one of exfoliation.<sup>63</sup> The explanation, if not justification, of Spenser's method perhaps lies in the fact that the virtues are not entirely discrete categories but aspects of the same moral field. Thus Pride is linked to Untruth (error, ignorance, hypocrisy) because one of its manifestations is infidelity or the breaking of troth, and Humility is linked to Truth because the acquiring of true knowledge of self leads to the opposite of Pride and manifests itself in troth and fidelity.<sup>64</sup> In the Middle Ages, exposition after exposition revealed the truly organic connections which bound the virtues together as components of a perfection to which man might aspire, and centuries before Spenser's work these relationships were allegorized in imaginative literature ranging from simple moral exempla to sophisticated courtly mythologies, romances, and morality plays. (I must thank Rosemond Tuve for supplying much of my knowledge of these texts.)

The Regina story in the Dialogues of Creatures (a fourteenth-century compilation of old tales)<sup>65</sup> contains a famous exemplum of the fidelity demanded of every man and woman who would be holy. "There is a Fissh called Regina for she ruleth herself very well. A water serpent called Idrus havynge many hedes cam upon a time to this Fissh and sayde. O Regina most faire to me before all other fisshes, thow art . . . most interly beloved. And therefore I wyl be knytte unto thee . . . in holy matrimony." Regina replies, "That may not be. For it is not convenient (i.e., fitting)." The serpent leaves "with confusyon."<sup>66</sup> The instruction reads: "Every Crysten man shoulde soo answer to the Devyl/ when he temptith hym/for he is the olde serpent more subtyle than any thing lyvynge. . . . And

therefore thus shulde every creature say unto him. Go thow fro me/for thow art not of my kynde. Nor thow arte noon of them that shal be sawyd. And if thow doo thus he cannot abyde."<sup>67</sup> Regina is the soul, the fish of many heads Satan. The soul's refusal of union and the reason given suggests that it has true knowledge of itself. It was made by God for God; it is his child and heir, and as such, owes and must give its allegiance to him alone. "This conception of man, as a creature whose property it is to be salvationis capax, who belongs to the kind that may be delivered from the ravishment of death and united to a heavenly original whence it sprang, is a conception of man which is of central importance to the question of allegory."<sup>68</sup> In more sophisticated courtly materials like the Epitre de Othea by Christine de Pisan the same idea of allegiance which manifests itself as fidelity and the keeping of troth (here in chivalric terms meaningful to a court audience) is imaged in allegorizations of classical myth.<sup>69</sup>

In this collection of tales, the characters of classical myth are seen as medieval knights and maidens, their actions as pertaining to chivalry. Christine as reader and guide appends to each story in her text a "Glose" and an "Allegorie." She maintains a double reading throughout; the Glose is moral allegory of virtuous action, the Allegorie is its spiritual significance: the ultimate meaning for human life in terms of the soul and its salvation.<sup>70</sup> Her treatment of the Perseus and Andromeda legend will serve as an illuminating example.<sup>71</sup> (We might bear in mind that Spenser used this legend in Book One of The Faerie Queene in connection with the knight's aid to Una and the rescue and restoration of her parents.) On a moral level the characters and actions figure forth the man who by virtue of his strength and courage goes to the aid of those in distress and rescues them. On the spiritual plane, "Andromeda is his soul which he

will deliver from the enemy of hell by conquering sin (in himself, of course, so that this Andromeda, like the other 'maiden ' may return to her parents). The Pegasus which carries 'lesperit chevalereux' is a Good Name since he desires to please God, for he must have no hint of vainglory, and his good angel who carries him through dangers here will make a good report of him when his guerdon . . . is finally to be enjoyed amid the singing companies of Paradise."<sup>72</sup> Later, in another fable, Christine, using the Jason and Medea story, reiterates the idea. Jason serves as a prototype of the man who forgets wherein his true allegiance lies and is guilty of arrogance, ingratitude, infidelity, and untroth.<sup>73</sup> Once again, infidelity and untroth are cited as the root cause of man's fall from grace, and fidelity and troth (faith and truth) are held up as the way to human moral perfection and heavenly salvation. This key idea promulgated as a commonplace for centuries finds its way into Book One of The Faerie Queene, where Una teaches men "her discipline of faith and verite."

The same conceptions of fidelity and truth as keys to a holy life were also found in that genre which more than any other influenced the character of The Faerie Queene, namely the allegorized medieval chivalric romance. The Vulgate Cycle stories, Queste, Mort Artur and Lancelot in French, and Malory's reworkings of them in English, were a "sort of 'historicall fiction' naturally amenable to be read as a 'continued Allegory or darke conceit' though primarily 'historicall' and delighting."<sup>74</sup> The knights of the fellowship, Galahad, Lancelot, Percival, Gawain, and the rest pledged fealty to their lord Arthur. All adventures were undertaken in his name out of worship and love. Unfaithfulness, the breaking of troth, resulting in loss of fellowship, was to be avoided at all costs. Read allegorically, the pledge is the covenant made between God and man, one based on man's knowledge of his life's purpose and end. The knight's quest figures forth man's pursuit of moral perfection ending in complete holiness, or again,

the soul's struggle for salvation, ending in the beatific vision. The loss of fellowship through infidelity could be read on one level as the cutting off of man from the community of those seeking attainable moral virtue (man's true 'kind'); and on another level as the soul's loss of salvation and the beatific vision.<sup>75</sup> What was most striking in these allegories of holiness, and what probably appealed so much to Spenser's sensibility that it became the framework of The Faerie Queene, was the implicit goodness and validity of man's quest for moral perfection, and the beauty of holiness and virtue.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, the allegorized struggle for holiness found its way into the popular medieval drama or morality play. The early English playwrights from about 1400 to 1520 gave dramatic form to the conceptions found in works of the moral virtue tradition, emphasizing the life and struggle of the vices and the virtues, and leaving more or less implicit or devoid of fanfare the eventual triumph of the virtuous on the path to holiness.<sup>77</sup> In these plays, as in Spenser's long poem, a vice is brilliantly depicted in its myriad of forms, sometimes as personifications and stock characters, again as flesh and blood tempters of men. There is of course in nearly all these plays the traditional set piece of the Seven Deadly Sins, and the complication of the action by focusing on the individual vice's cohorts. For example, seven "false" jurors--Wrong, Sleight, Doblness, Falsehood, Ravyne, Deceit and Perjury assault Understanding in the play Wisdom.<sup>78</sup> Here and in other plays we find the predecessors of nearly all Spenser's enemies of Holiness, namely, Duessa, Archimago, Orgoglio, Sans foy, Sans joy, Sans loy, Ignaro, Despair--and all the stock repentance figures in Spenser's House of Holiness.<sup>79</sup> However, the virtuous characters are often left in shadow except for pertinent details of mystical significance. Spenser

of course, follows this tradition: Redcrosse is known by his arms, his cross, and his name, Una by her veil, donkey, lamb, and beauty; Arthur by his shield.<sup>80</sup> As for the plot of these plays, it was always the same. The key scenes were man's temptation and fall (often repeated several times), and his rescue, repentance, and restoration. Much time was given in these dramas (as it was in Spenser's poem) to a dramatization of the process of repentance and regeneration.<sup>81</sup> Emphasis was placed on the need for Christian faith and truth (Fides and Veritas), and for saving grace and the sacraments dispensed by the church. The ending was predictable. The protagonist overcame the vices, usually after many setbacks (peripeteia abounded) with the help of the virtues. Yet there is a feeling here, as in Spenser, that virtue and holiness are ever in peril in this world. New troubles, new incarnations of evil, ever await man, who must therefore forever be on guard.<sup>82</sup>

As the foregoing discussion has shown, Holiness held an important position in the moral virtue tradition from its ancient beginnings. When Spenser chose his first virtue, he did not intend his allegory to be limited to "purely Christian," "medieval" or "theological concepts" as some scholars contend; rather, the poet fashioned the legend of Holiness from the materials of the moral virtue tradition as ancient as the Greek philosophers and the Hebrew prophets, and as current as the sixteenth-century debate on the possibility (or impossibility) of man's attaining holiness. Spenser's beginning his poem with an exposition of the virtue Holiness suggests his interest in the controversy; moreover, the complexity of the allegory in Book One, with its emphasis on the need for faith and grace, and the feebleness and frailty of unaided human effort--superimposed upon the certainty of Platonic ascent to perfection--suggests a most

thoughtful working out of the problem. After examining the role of Holiness in the sixteenth century, it will be possible to comment on Spenser's use of the tradition in Book One--on his outright borrowings, his syntheses, his originality--against the poet's own background.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For Spenser's references to Aristotle and to "Aristotle and the rest" see his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh in Variorum, I, 167-168.

<sup>2</sup>The Dialogues of Plato, trans. Benjamin Jowett, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), I, 317-25.

<sup>3</sup>Jowett, I, 265-301; I, 153-157.

<sup>4</sup>Jowett, III, 275.

<sup>5</sup>See I. F. Burns, "Holiness, Greek" in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908-1927), VI, 741-43; Henry Sidgwick, Outlines of the History of Ethics for English Readers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), pp. 22-51; Edwin Hatch, The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 139-170; Irwin Edman, Ed., The Works of Plato (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. xlv-xlv; Basil Willey, The English Moralists (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1964), pp. 20-53, 107-118.

<sup>6</sup>See Chapter One of this dissertation, pp. 6-10.

<sup>7</sup>Willey, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>Nichomachean Ethics, Book IV, Chapters 2-4, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), pp. 379-89.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Book X, Chapters 6-8. See also Willey, p. 31, for a use of that Spenserian idea of "dilation." Willey speaks of man's efforts "to dilate the soul to godlike proportion."

<sup>10</sup>I use a capital only when designating a specific virtue such as Holiness or Wisdom; the lower case for the idea, the state, the process, etc.

<sup>11</sup>See the unpublished thesis (Mt. Holyoke, 1941) of Catharine Haines, "The Four Greek Virtues from Socrates to Bonaventure," pp. 20-24. Chrysippus (c. 280-204 B.C.) is credited with giving the "standard" definitions:

1. Prudence: knowledge of good and evil.
2. Temperance: knowledge of what to choose and what to reject.
3. Justice: knowledge of distributing to each according to his deserts.
4. Courage: knowledge of what to fear and what not to fear.

Zeno's list can be found in Plutarch's De Virtutibus Moralia, 441B.

<sup>12</sup>De Inventione, trans. H. M. Hubbell, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 329-30.

<sup>13</sup>De Natura Deorum and Academica, trans. H. Rackham, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 167.

<sup>14</sup>De Officiis, trans. Walter Miller, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913), p. 157.

<sup>15</sup>I have traced the transmission of Cicero's works on philosophy in J. E. Sandys, A History of Classical Scholarship (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1903-8), and in R. R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries: From the Carolingian Age to the End of the Renaissance (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). Also helpful were Rosemond Tuve's two articles, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices: Two Fifteenth-Century Lines of Dependency on the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in JWCI, XXVI (1963), 264-303, and XXVII (1964), 42-72, and her chapter, "Allegory of Vices and Virtues," in Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 57-143.

<sup>16</sup>Sidgwick, p. 95.

<sup>17</sup>See Sidgwick, pp. 98-108, for a summary of Stoic and Neo-Platonic ideas.

<sup>18</sup>Haines, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup>The Virtues in Enneads, trans. Stephen McKenna (Boston: Charles T. Branford, 1949), I, 30ff. Plotinus designated the Platonic four at the first level simply as "civic virtues."

<sup>20</sup>And I hope to prove that some critical assumptions about Spenser's first virtue are untenable: Holiness is a "purely Christian" virtue (Padelford and Woodhouse); Holiness is a "medieval" virtue (Greenlaw); Book One is a "theological prologue" to The Faerie Queene (Hough).

<sup>21</sup>See O. C. Whitehouse, "Holiness, Semitic" in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, 751-759; and "Sanctification" in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1928), pp. 884-885.

<sup>22</sup>All scriptural quotations are from the Authorized Version (King James), unless otherwise noted.

<sup>23</sup>See Is. 6, Is. 1:10-17, Is. 5:18-23; Amos 5:16-21-27. Many other references are given in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics and in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible. See n. 21.

<sup>24</sup>For New Testament and Christian conceptions see R. H. Coats, "Holiness, New Testament and Christian" in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, 743-750, and Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 886-86.

<sup>25</sup>Coats, VI, 744. This pietas is different from the pietas of Plato and Cicero, who used the term to describe man's duty to his fellow man.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 744.

<sup>27</sup>Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, p. 885. The biblical quotations are from Eph. 5:13 and Col. 3:18.

<sup>28</sup>The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1966) has excellent notes and clarifications. The quotation is found in the New Testament section, p. 299, note "b" to I Cor. 10; also of interest is note "a" to

I Cor. 13 on p. 305; "Love is the only eternal virtue . . . and will only be perfect in the vision . . . when God gives his lovers what he has promised."

<sup>29</sup>This is my manner of describing Paul's attitude toward pagan philosophers' celebration of the rational power as expressed in I Corinthians and elsewhere. Paul in I Cor. 1:23 envisions the wisdom of Christ and his message appearing to pagans as foolishness or madness.

<sup>30</sup>I Cor. 2:9.

<sup>31</sup>Coats, VI, 745.

<sup>32</sup>Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, p. 885.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 884.

<sup>34</sup>Haines, p. 60.

<sup>35</sup>Haines, pp. 60-63, contains a summary of the contributions of the early Fathers to the virtue tradition.

<sup>36</sup>See Haines, pp. 79-82, for a discussion of the Greek Fathers; for Ambrose's contribution to ethics and morality see F. Homes Dudden, The Life and Times of St. Ambrose, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935).

<sup>37</sup>Dudden, II, 502-54.

<sup>38</sup>Whether Spenser read these early Christian writers on the moral virtues is not a consideration. Their ideas became an integral part of the tradition passed into the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

<sup>39</sup>Pelagianism was denounced by the Roman Catholic Church in 416 A.D.

<sup>40</sup>Coats, VI, 746.

<sup>41</sup>Willey, p. 33, is paraphrasing The City of God, Book XV, Chapter 25.

<sup>42</sup>Coats, VI, 746-47. He also makes the point: "From Augustine sprang the medieval conception of sacramental holiness. . . ." (p. 747)

<sup>43</sup>St. Augustine: Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount with Seventeen Related Sermons, trans. Denis J. Kavanagh in The Fathers of the Church, XI (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 19-199.

<sup>44</sup>See Chapter One, pp. 23-25, of this dissertation for a discussion of the Gift-Virtues. See also Adolf Katzenellenbogen, Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art: From Early Christian Times to the Thirteenth Century, tr. Alan J. Crick (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1964), Part I, Chapter III: "Man's Arduous Ascent to God (The Ladder of Virtue)," pp. 22ff.

<sup>45</sup>See "Holy Spirit, Gifts of" in New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), VII, 99. Gregory's list is found in Moralium Liber, XXX, l. 45.

<sup>46</sup>Platonic ideas about the virtues survived in writings of Cicero, Stoic ideas in the Pseudo-Seneca. Aristotle's Ethics disappeared in the early Christian era, was recovered in the thirteenth century and translated into Latin by Albertus Magnus, and commented upon by Aquinas; in the fourteenth century it was translated into the vernacular (French) by Nicholas Oresme ca. 1375. To Dante and to Spenser, Aristotle was the father and source of material on the moral virtues.

<sup>47</sup>Christian morality, of course, went far beyond "ethics" as we employ that term today. As Willey puts it (p. 35): "morality demanded compliance with divine will supernaturally revealed and sanctioned." To prevent confusion, it is best to keep in mind Ernest Curtius's observation in European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 528-29: "up to the sixteenth century there was no categorization of materials into moral philosophy, theology, religion, or ethics. Everything relevant to the human experience and addressed to how man should live was considered 'ethical wisdom.' It is we who divide the traditional materials into secular, religious, humanistic."

<sup>48</sup>See Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp. 59-38, where Guillaume de Conches' Moralium dogma philosophorum (ca. 1150) is cited as a source for many Latin and vernacular treatises on the virtues.

<sup>49</sup>See Katzenellenbogen's Allegories of the Vices and Virtues in Medieval Art for the evolution of this virtue to a position of prominence.

<sup>50</sup>In the Psychomachia, written early in the fifth century. See Prudentius with an English Translation, trans. H. J. Thomson, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), I, 274-343.

<sup>51</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 443.

<sup>52</sup>Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices," I, 267.

<sup>53</sup>See "Holy Spirit, Gifts of," New Catholic Encyclopedia, VII, 99-101.

<sup>54</sup>See Katzenellenbogen, pp. 1-13, and plates 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 8B.

<sup>55</sup>Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices," II, 59-60.

<sup>56</sup>Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, eds., Edmund Spenser: Books I and II of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Odyssey Press, 1965), pp. 5 and 23.

<sup>57</sup>"The Parson's Tale," The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 239.

<sup>58</sup>For example, in "The Parson's Tale" eighty-four lines are given to a discussion of Pride, nineteen to Humility. It should be noted that many authors besides Chaucer exhibited a fascination with the Deadly Sins. See Langland in Piers Plowman (Section 9V.9 ff. in all three recensions) and Gower in Confessio Amantis (Books 1-6 and 8).

<sup>59</sup>The Book of the Vices and Virtues; a Fourteenth Century English Translation of the "Somme le roi" of Lorens d'Orléans, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS, 217 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 10.

<sup>60</sup>See Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp. 120-25, for truth-troth connection.

<sup>61</sup>See Samuel Chew, The Pilgrimage of Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 79, for his praise of Spenser's pageant of Pride and the other sins: "by far the finest and most memorable of all treatments in art and literature." See also figure 88 for a graphic rendering of Pride in a cart driving the other vices.

<sup>62</sup>Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 107.

<sup>63</sup>Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices," I, 303.

<sup>64</sup>See Book of the Vices and Virtues, pp. 10 ff., and Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale" (l. 476), where Humility is described as "a vertu thurgh which a man hath verray knoweleche of hymself, and holdeth of hymself no pris ne deyntee, as in regard of his desertes, consideryne evere his freletee."

<sup>65</sup>According to Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 4, the Dialogues was still available in an English edition printed in 1535 (STC 6815), and was reworked by Lodge in his Catharos (1591). There is a handsome modern facsimile edition of this popular work; see Dialogues of Creatures Moralised: Being Ancient Fables, Curious to the Philologer, Interesting to the Lover of Natural History, and Helpful to the Moralist (Kentfield, Calif.: Allen Press, 1967).

<sup>66</sup>"Dialogue XLV: Regina, A Scalie Fish and Idrus, A Water Serpent." There are no page numbers in the text.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 17, makes this commentary on the Regina story.

<sup>69</sup>The discussion of Christine's work is also from Tuve's Allegorical Imagery, here pp. 33-43. Miss Tuve's book is invaluable in that it seeks to answer key questions of those interested in Spenser: How did sixteenth-century man read and enjoy works deemed allegorical? Were certain definitions and distinctions medieval in origin passed down to sixteenth-century writers and readers? For an English version of Christine's allegorizations, see The Epistle of Othea to Hector of the Boke of Knyghthode: Translated from the French of Christine de Pisan With a Dedication to Sir John Fastolf, K. G., By Stephen Scrope, Esquire, ed. George F. Warner (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1904).

<sup>70</sup>Christine de Pisan's reading of allegory is unlike the traditional "four-senses" of scriptural interpretation, the literal, the allegorical, the tropological, and the anagogical expressed in the popular distich, "Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, / Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia," and best explained by Dante in his letter to Can Grande:

the first meaning is that which is conveyed by the letter, and the next is that which is conveyed by what the letter signifies; the former of which is called literal, while the latter is called allegorical, or mystical. And for the better illustration of this method of

exposition we may apply it to the following verses: 'When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.' For if we consider the letter alone, the thing signified to us is the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt, in the time of Moses; if the allegory, our redemption through Christ is signified; if the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified. And although these mystical meanings are called by various names, they may one and all in a general sense be termed allegorical. . . .

See Dantis Alighierii Epistolae: The Letters of Dante, tr. Paget Toynbee, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 199.

<sup>71</sup>The Epistle of Othéa to Hector, pp. 15-6.

<sup>72</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 36.

<sup>73</sup>The Epistle of Othéa to Hector, p. 56.

<sup>74</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 36. See also her chapter on the romances, pp. 335-436.

<sup>75</sup>The reading here follows Christine de Pisan and Rosemond Tuve.

<sup>76</sup>This is the reason for Miss Tuve's and my own love of Spenser and our desire "to illumine the reading of" his great poem.

<sup>77</sup>Robert Lee Ramsay, "Introduction," Magnyfycence, a Moral Play, EETS, ES, XCVIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), pp. xxxvi, clxxix. Ramsay's essay on the moralities is invaluable to anyone interested in the moral virtue tradition.

<sup>78</sup>"Wisdom" can be found in The Macro Plays, eds. F. J. Furnivall and A. W. Pollard, EETS, ES, XCI (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), pp. 35-74.

<sup>79</sup>Some precursors of Spenser's characters are Doblones, Deceit and Falsehood in Wisdom (Duessa); Ignorance in The Four Elements and Mundus and Infans (Ignaro); and Despair in Mankind and Mary Magdalene (Despair). See also Ramsay, p. xxix, on repentance figures as "agents of reformation."

<sup>80</sup>Chew, p. 134.

<sup>81</sup>Edwin Greenlaw, "A Better Teacher Than Aquinas," SP, XIV (1917), 214.

<sup>82</sup>Chew, p. 74, makes this important point: Hercules battling the Hydra can suggest more than virtue's victory over the Seven Deadly Sins; namely, that "when virtue has achieved some success still new troubles and new travails are sown by envy."

## CHAPTER THREE

### Holiness in the Sixteenth Century

If in the preceding chapter we seem to have circled around the virtue of Holiness and to have spent much time examining the parts subsumed under it and their oppositions -- all of which help to delineate the virtue -- it is because Holiness had evolved into something more than a virtue. It was the beginning and the end of man's aspiration toward perfect moral life; it was understood to be the ground of all human actions. With all this implicit, there was no need to reiterate Holiness' role. As a result the term was used infrequently in medieval treatments of the virtues.<sup>1</sup> Not so in the sixteenth century! Holiness is really and explicitly a sixteenth-century pre-occupation. In 1503 a most succinct and optimistic prescription for its attainment is published.<sup>2</sup> Within twenty-five years, when Renaissance and Reformation ideas collide, the pendulum swings to the other extreme and a debate arises as to the possibility of man's ever becoming holy. Many of the major figures of the time, including Erasmus, Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin involved themselves in this controversy.<sup>3</sup> And it was Edmund Spenser, poet, who in Book One of The Faerie Queene, would have the century's last word on the subject.

Erasmus at the beginning of the century, like all interested Christians was caught between two forces: a growing secular humanism which envisioned a possible moral perfection through the use of reason and will, really an ethics not dependent on the sanctions of organized religion; and a religion which preached a moral perfection or holiness predicated upon the imitation of the virtues of Christ, but seemingly dependent upon attendance at religious services, dietary regulations, money offerings, rote prayer, and worship of the saints. Erasmus, like Petrarch, *Salutati*

and other Humanists, tried to reconcile the classical humanist ethic and the "Christian" ideal of holiness in a synthesis embodying the best of each: the possibility of a meaningful life outside the religious orders.<sup>4</sup> In 1503 he published the Enchiridion Militis Christiani, his prescription for the Christian-humanist ideal of "a simple piety strengthened by classical learning but devoid of scholastic theology."<sup>5</sup> One scholar regrets that "this little book was not first written in a modern European language; it might have ranked beside the early masterpieces of the Renaissance."<sup>6</sup> It was, nevertheless, one of the most popular books of the century, going through some eight Latin editions between 1514-1518, appearing in an English translation in 1518, and then in Czech in 1519, German in 1520, Dutch in 1523, Spanish in 1526, and Polish in 1585.<sup>7</sup>

Erasmus with typical understatement would have the reader believe that he is simply reiterating the principles for perfect piety, for right and ethical living, as they are expounded in ancient philosophy, the Gospels, and the early Fathers of the Christian church. The genre is familiar too: a letter of instruction and encouragement to a friend in the style of Demosthenes, Aristotle, Cicero, and Paul.<sup>8</sup> As the title suggests, his modest synthesis of 2000 years of ethical wisdom was to be viewed as a small weapon in the already formidable Christian arsenal (necessary because the armor described by Paul was sometimes doffed, and the body left vulnerable to assault; hence a small dagger always at hand could be invaluable).<sup>9</sup> Or if one wished the Enchiridion could be "a handbook for a Christian soldier allegorically understood, that is, for a Christian fighting for Christ against the devil."<sup>10</sup> Despite all protestations of simplicity, it contains nearly all the key ideas found in the Adages (1500), the Colloquies (1519), the Praise of Folly (1511), and other writings of Erasmus. Moreover, this ethical treatise is an all-important

part of the moral virtue tradition in that it is a true synthesis of ethical wisdom from Plato to the sixteenth century; and secondly because in it (as in Spenser's poem) holiness is explicitly cited as the foundation of a Christian's moral life.<sup>11</sup>

Yet for all its far-ranging scope, one is struck by the seeming ethical simplicity of the Erasmus treatise. "He preaches throughout a simple piety . . . compatible or even identical with simple philosophical morality."<sup>12</sup> As holiness is the key to growth in moral perfection, he has no difficulty in linking the Old Testament command, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) and its New Testament counterpart, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), with the Socratic-Platonic-Aristotelian admonition, "Know thyself." The end man must seek is perfect holiness, the means, according to Erasmus, true knowledge of the self and the actions demanded by that knowledge. The philosophers, notably Plato, and the Apostles, especially Paul, supply man with all he needs to know of his own nature, of the nature of the deity, and the relationship between human and divine life.<sup>13</sup> "Erasmus stresses that man is composed of a soul and a body. The body is akin to the animals, is pleased with visible objects, and has a downward tendency. The soul, on the other hand, is akin to the divine and has an upward tendency. 'It despises things that can be seen; for it knows that they are perishable, it seeks things which truly are, which always are; being immortal, it loves things immortal.' In discussing the contrast between reason and passions, Erasmus cites Plato's Timaeus and Phaedo and tries to harmonize Plato's distinctions with those of St. Paul, the inner and outer man, the spirit and the flesh. Perfect piety consists in the effort to proceed from visible to invisible things."<sup>14</sup> That such an ascent was possible Erasmus never doubted. In the Enchiridion, he optimistically charts the course.

He counsels his knight: "Only seize with a stout heart upon the principle of the perfect life and press forward in your purpose. Never yet has the human spirit failed to accomplish something it ardently demanded of itself."<sup>15</sup>

This is the optimism of a humanist. Any man (even the debauched knight who is the recipient of Erasmus' advice) can become perfect by making war with himself and battling against his own vices. Virtue is possible if man will use his reason to foster proper attitudes and habits (suggested in the section "Rules for Christian Living"), and even more importantly, imitate Christ whose "nature is virtue itself, as well as the parent and author of all virtue."<sup>16</sup>

The simplicity and cogency of Erasmus' exposition of the holy life, his emphasis on the power of reason, along with his optimism regarding the possibility of those outside religious orders achieving perfect piety, appealed to the Christian Humanists who saw Erasmus as their spokesman; and it disturbed many men, including Luther, who suspected Erasmus was following Plato rather than Paul. The "purer" Christianity the latter group sought could not admit this contamination by pagan philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Both groups, however, recognized the Enchiridion as something more than a simple plea for a revitalized Christianity; it was a radical and possibly subversive document. Striking by its absence was any reference to the great minds of the Middle Ages, to Thomas Aquinas and the other Scholastics. Striking also was a lack of emphasis on the usual pre-requisites and concomitants of holiness: the seven sacraments, the seven Gifts of the Spirit, the seven Deadly Sins, the seven parts of the Pater Noster, the Creed, the Decalogue, etc. And yet the ideas are all there; only they are not separate, compartmentalized, numbered, divided, sub-divided, or quibbled over.<sup>18</sup> They must take a subordinate position while the Pauline doctrine

is stressed: Holiness is of the spirit rather than in the letter; one is holy, one is Christian inwardly. The roles of religion, of ceremony, rituals, and regulations Erasmus plays down. Even the sacraments are valid and viable only if they affect the spirit of man, enabling him to root out every vice and embrace every virtue. Men charged with inculcating these truths have led their congregations into the same error as befell the Jews, misconstruing ceremonial piety, outward and material, as true holiness. Erasmus saves his most bitter barbs for those of the clergy who appear outwardly holy, yet inwardly are guilty of all the vices of the flesh; or again those in Holy Orders who have become cold, embittered, harsh, gloomy, and lacking in those virtues demanded of a Christian on the path to holiness, namely charity, love, patience, long-suffering, goodness, kindness, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, purity.<sup>19</sup> Such men have failed in their mission to fashion a holy people and to establish a truly Christian community. The message of Christ in the Gospels, of Paul, and of Augustine, has been lost, according to Erasmus, in ceremonialism and superstition. Only by once again stressing the ethical orientation of religion and preaching the gospel--all men are called by God to a holiness and perfection which manifests itself in every action as love--can Christians, religious and lay, be deemed worthy of Paul's designation of "a community of saints":

And do not tell me, presently, that charity consists of frequent church attendance or genuflecting in front of the images of saints or burning candles or repeating a specified number of little prayers. God is not impressed by such routines. Paul calls it love to raise up one's neighbor, to consider all men as members of the same Body, to think of us all as being one in Christ, to rejoice in the Lord because of your brother's good fortune as much as your own, to remedy his misfortunes as if they were your own. Admonish him gently when he errs, teach the benighted, lift up the fallen, console the downcast, aid the person in difficulties, assist those in need, and devote all your wealth, zeal, and effort to this one end above everything else: serving, in Christ, as many people as you possibly can. Just as He was neither born for Himself, nor lived for Himself nor died for Himself, so we should be devoted to the welfare of others, not to our own.<sup>20</sup>

Erasmus' call to a heroic Christian life as it is lived among men reflects the highest ideal of the sixteenth century. It is fitting that so great an epoch should begin with Erasmus and end with Spenser.

In his views on Christian life Spenser is closer to Erasmus than to other sixteenth-century figures.<sup>21</sup>

1. Both stress Holiness as the goal of living; both envision man "perfected" in moral virtue.
2. Both espouse the Platonic idea of growth to perfection through education and habituation. They believe virtue can be learned, that man can move upward from flesh to spirit. This optimism is held with full knowledge of man's weak nature, his defeats and humiliations.
3. Both agree on the poet's role as a teacher of men. Erasmus praised allegory as the vehicle best suited to teach delightfully: "a poetic tale read allegorically may be more fruitful than an account from the sacred books where you content yourself only with the rind."<sup>22</sup>
4. Both recognize the scriptural sanctions of morality and the need for the ethical orientation of religion.
5. Both possess an encyclopedic knowledge of the moral virtue tradition.

The last point is most important, for while we recognize Erasmus' knowledge of the Greek and Latin authors, of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers, of the Neo-Platonists of the third century and of Renaissance Italy, we do not extend similar credit to Spenser. In dealing with Holiness, for example, Spenser is viewed as limited to "Aristotle and the rest," which is taken to mean the Greek philosopher and his commentators. It is Erasmus who is considered capable of synthesizing Christian morality and

the ethical wisdom of the ancients. The Enchiridion militis Christiani can be presented as a proof of the Dutch scholar's erudition: it contains many ideas and conventions of the moral virtue tradition on the subject of Holiness from Plato to the Christian Humanists of the Renaissance. Few people, however, recognize that the same encyclopedia knowledge is found synthesized and allegorized in Book One of The Faerie Queene.

The poet's wide knowledge of traditional materials on the virtues should come as no surprise: he received a fine classical education at Cambridge and then spent ten years preparing the first installment of The Faerie Queene.

Spenser, in choosing to treat the virtues, was forced like Erasmus into taking a side in the Renaissance-Reformation debate on the nature of man.<sup>23</sup> To intimate that one could "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous or gentle discipline"<sup>24</sup> is by implication to voice a great "yea" to the question of man's possible perfectability, to follow the lead of Erasmus and the other Humanists.

Though there is agreement between the English poet and the Dutch scholar on most points, it is obvious that Spenser also found fuel for his allegory of holiness in other contemporary writers. The poet, writing more than eighty years after the publication of the Enchiridion, could not have the same vision as Erasmus writing at the beginning of the century--and before the Reformation. The handbook published in 1503 was only the opening speech in the great debate. Rebuttals by Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, which questioned whether any real holiness was possible without divine aid, had to be weighed by anyone attempting an exposition of the moral virtues.<sup>25</sup> That Spenser did consider them and come to some conclusion about their claims is evidenced in the allegory of the first book. All three Protestant reformers helped fashion the Legend of Holiness.

One of the great confrontations of the century, ironically enough, involved Erasmus and Luther.<sup>26</sup> The latter castigated the Enchiridion as being more Platonic than Christian,<sup>27</sup> for Erasmus had emphasized the role of reason and the will, held out the possibility of attaining perfect piety, and suggested that after a lifetime of strenuous moral effort man might merit salvation. Luther could not share Erasmus' optimism for man's rising even higher than the angels in sight of God.<sup>28</sup> Such ideas reminded him of the Greek foolishness warned against by Paul and Augustine centuries ago. Man, the German theologian contended, was a "slave to sin," forever falling lower, impotent to rise from the morass of depravity.<sup>29</sup> No holiness was possible to such a creature--unless he was first justified in the Lord. And then it was the Lord's generous gift of grace which initiated sanctification and brought it to fruition. It was upon this point that Erasmus had counseled wrongly in the Enchiridion and elsewhere. The Dutch scholar, Luther insisted, did not distinguish between sanctification and justification, and as a result gave man some credit in willing and in achieving his own moral perfection and salvation. Even to countenance such an idea was to invite damnation.<sup>30</sup> In opposition to all such error, Luther would preach

the more religious conception of a joyous present certainty of individual salvation as a result of the direct personal relationship of childlike faith in the Father who has opened His loving heart to us in Jesus Christ, and won our unswerving trust by the free forgiveness of our sins. In such a system, sanctification, so far from being a stage in the process of justification, issues from justification as its necessary obverse; for there is no other or further holiness possible to the Christian than that of faith, which is simply the continual daily approbation, not of forgiveness only, but of God Himself in Christ, as the source of the believer's peace, power, righteousness, and good works.<sup>31</sup>

This conception of holiness is a truly radical one, for it undercuts significantly two-thousand years of writings in the moral virtue tradition, wherein holiness or moral perfection is the ground of human endeavor,

"a state to be increasingly realized, and ideal to be pursued to the end."<sup>32</sup>

The promulgation of this key Lutheran doctrine is found in the writings of Phillip Melanchthon, especially in the various editions of the Loci Communes (1521-1555).<sup>33</sup> This work, cited by Luther as "worthy of being placed in the Canon,"<sup>34</sup> contained a two-fold thrust for a purer Christianity: a theology and an ethics based solely on the Scriptures and an attack on Aristotle and other expounders on moral philosophy and ethics, from the ancient Greeks, to the medieval Scholastics, to Renaissance humanists like Erasmus--really upon all who would uphold the role of reason and the will in the pursuit of virtuous perfection. Here is a summary of his attacks:

When Christian ethics is based on philosophy and entrenched in human traditions, the Christian suffers a double Babylonian captivity. Philosophy adulterates law, sin, and grace; law becomes expediency, sin becomes simple deviation and grace becomes human merit, for philosophy knowing nothing of the unfathomable sinfulness of man's heart supposes that man can become virtuous without the assistance of God.

Man of his own free will cannot perform a genuinely virtuous act.

All human acts are sinful no matter how virtuous they appear.

Reason may advise some good, but the emotions are more powerful Hence it does not follow that to know is to do. Since sin pertains to man's inner being--his heart, his emotions and not simply to external acts, it is foolish to say that one is free to do good works and thereby merit the grace of God.

So-called human and philosophical virtues are really only the shadows of virtues for they proceed out of the cesspool of self-love. Man cannot truly love God for to love God for the sake of argument, virtue, or utility, is not really to love God but to love self in an oblique manner. To speak of doing "moral" works to merit righteousness is but to fabricate blasphemies and plunge men into spiritual darkness.

Faith and love are works of God, not nature, and love necessarily follows faith.<sup>35</sup>

It is ironic that Melanchthon, who was hailed as the Father of Humanism, should attack ancient and contemporary writers on the virtues. But he

did so when convinced that "Luther was right in upholding Scripture alone as the true source of the Christian faith."<sup>36</sup> In later editions of the Loci, however, he tempered his attacks on Aristotle and philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

It was his humanism which led to this change of heart. In attempting to create a theology based solely on the Scriptures and to defend Luther's positions (especially in matters of determinism and bondage of the will), he was forced into a constant examination of the Old and New Testaments and philosophical treatises. The break between himself and Luther came over the question of determinism, the belief that men are not free or able to accomplish anything that God has not willed. Melanchthon could find no scriptural sanction for this belief; in the end he termed it another form of Stoic fatalism. This change of position found Melanchthon estranged from Luther (they were later reconciled), condemned by Calvin, accused of synergism (cooperation between man and God in the achievement of salvation), and damned for having departed from the pure teachings of the Reformers and following Erasmus.<sup>38</sup> Caught in the cross-fire of the Reformation, he considered leaving Germany and taking up residence in England. He did not go but sent his disciples Dryander and Bucer, who won distinction as teachers of Aristotle and the rest at Cambridge. In addition, Melanchthon assisted English Bishops in formulating the tenets of the Anglican religion and the English Prayer Book. In 1559, Queen Elizabeth directed university scholars to read Melanchthon "to induce them all to godliness."<sup>39</sup> Ten years later Spenser found himself studying under that royal decree.

Melanchthon's influence on Spenser has not yet been studied in any great detail. The reason may be that it is difficult to link the man who once disparaged philosophical prescriptions for moral perfection and the idea of human perfection itself with the poet who sought to synthesize the whole body of ethical wisdom in yet another prescription, one which began with the quest for holiness. Spenser is more often linked to Melanchthon's

contemporary, John Calvin, author of the Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536).<sup>40</sup> However, there is little that is original in the French theologian's work. He repeated Luther's and Melanchthon's views on the sinfulness, depravity, and impotence inherent in human nature, but not their strictures on philosophy and the virtues, which he classed as part of the temporal order. Such human excellences, he allowed, "lack the root of true godliness, and in no way possess the character of spiritual righteousness, such as alone is truly well-pleasing to God."<sup>41</sup> In the Institutes, one of the sixteenth century's most popular books, he promulgated what has been called an "intensive holiness which should consist not simply, as Luther so breezily had taught, in the free and loving service of all men which results from the joyous experience of the Divine forgiveness, but rather in the reverent obedience to God's commandments and the observance of 'such legitimate worship as is prescribed by the law' of God."<sup>42</sup> It is this kind of holiness that Calvin prescribes as the basis for Christian character and the true life-goal of the Christian elect. (His rules for holy Christian living are like those of Erasmus.)<sup>43</sup> God has called man to Himself. The man who answers the call, who perseveres in the union through faith, obedience and cooperation with grace, can be said to be holy. Holiness, in Calvin's sense, is not a virtue, nor a process, nor a resultant state. Rather, it is a term derived from the most ancient of scriptural usages, one describing the covenant or sacred bond of union between God and man.

The influence of the Protestant teachings of Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin on Spenser's allegory of Holiness cannot be denied. Side by side with the Platonism and the Christian Humanism, there is in Book One "a real sense of the sinfulness of man, the bankruptcy of human life and the all important conception of grace not so much entailing a perfection of

nature, but a new start."<sup>44</sup> To some readers, the Red Cross Knight in the dungeon of Orgoglio is the image of fallen, helpless man, a prisoner of his own nature, a veritable slave of sin. All the battles, all the experiences on the plain and in the caves lead nowhere; his good intentions are thwarted, wasted, and soon forgotten; he is not ennobled in any way by the experiences. It is his faith which seeks him out and initiates his rescue at the hands of grace. He has not merited salvation by his actions. And yet the love and care are freely bestowed. What follows the rescue is the regeneration of a "fraile, feeble, fleshly wight"<sup>45</sup> not the perfection of a noble man. Only after proper repentance is the knight capable of virtuous action in the form of good works. When Book One is read in this manner, that is, with emphasis on the Protestant elements in the allegory, it becomes obvious that the virtue sought by the questing knight is not earned through his efforts; holiness is impossible without faith and grace. (But another reading of the same events is possible and I will propose it in the next chapter.)

Spenser's genius as an allegorical poet lay in his ability to incorporate contemporary Protestant doctrine (which made for many dramatic elements in the narrative) into the Legend of Holiness, without in any way undercutting or contradicting the basic Platonism of the vision. In a Spenserian synthesis, optimism for man's progress to perfection and holiness is held with full knowledge of the difficulty of the task. Man cannot make the ascent alone. Religious faith and grace are necessary. In Spenser, however, it is the individual's struggle--his trials, lapses, and eventual triumph in the pursuit of holiness--which fascinates and forms the core of the allegory. For the poet sensed that Plato in the Theatetus (176) first came to the truth of human experience: men "ought to fly away from earth to heaven . . . and to fly away means to become like God, as far as this is possible and to become like him, means to be holy, just,

and wise. . . . For to know this is true wisdom and virtue and ignorance of this is manifest folly and vice."<sup>46</sup>

In once again linking Spenser and Plato, we have come full circle in the description of the evolution of the ideal of holiness in the moral virtue tradition. In the preceding chapter, we have traced the growth of the conception as a virtue, a process of becoming, and a resultant state. Holiness is a virtue in Plato and an excellence not unknown to Greek and Roman Stoics. In Judaic writings it is the moral imperative of the chosen people. It becomes the goal of Christian living in the Gospels and in the Epistles of St. Paul; the prescription for its attainment is systematized in the Church Fathers who subsumed all the virtues, classical and Christian, under its mantle. In the Middle Ages, in treatises, the graphic arts, and literature, it is sometimes a virtue, but more often the goal of perfection reached after ascending the ladder of virtues and beating down the vices. Then in the sixteenth century, holiness becomes an element in the great debate in which Renaissance Humanists' ideas on the nature of man, his possibility for moral perfection and holiness (as espoused by Erasmus) collide with those of the Protestant reformers Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin. The ideas of both camps are absorbed and synthesized by Spenser.

It can be argued, however, that in the debate on the nature of man, Spenser leaned toward the view of the Humanists and Neo-Platonists. The intention of the author as expressed in the letter and in the poem suggests that he believed it possible for man to be perfected in virtue. Into the allegory of Holiness, he incorporates the ideas of life as warfare, the heroic struggle for perfection, growth in the true knowledge of virtue through trial and suffering, and the gradual ascent from fleshly to spiritual things, culminating in the Platonic or beatific vision. But once again, it should be pointed out, that while Platonic ideas may provide

the frame for Book One of The Faerie Queene, Plato is no more the source for Spenser's allegory, than are "Aristotle and the rest," or than is Erasmus or Calvin. To insist as some critics have done recently that the Legend of Holiness is "a poetical version of the third book of the Institutes, and illustrates all the fundamental principles of Calvinism"<sup>47</sup> is absurd. Just why such a conclusion as to sources is untenable has been suggested above. Spenser had 2000 years of the moral virtue tradition to draw upon for his virtue; his conception of Holiness is a synthesis of the whole tradition--it cannot be reduced to a single source or school.

In the next chapter I will suggest how the poet fashioned a unified and coherent allegory of holiness by selecting and synthesizing elements from his encyclopedic knowledge of materials in the virtues--and I hope to offer evidence for the conclusion that while there may be nothing original in the materials of Book One, the effect is profoundly original.<sup>48</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Book of the Vices and Virtues, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS, 217 (London, 1942), the English version of Lorens' Somme Le Roi, contains few explicit references to holiness. On p. 20 there is mention of "the best men, the men in holynesse"; on p. 119, in a discussion of the relationship of the Gifts of the Spirit to holiness, it is said that the first gift Dread or Fear helps man flee evil, while the other six gifts make him do well; on p. 186 vainglory is cited as the last battle for the man who "has gone up to the holy life of perfectness."

<sup>2</sup>Erasmus' Enchiridion Militis Christiani.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Two, footnote 47 of this dissertation for evidence that this debate would have been considered "ethical" or "moral," and not only "theological."

<sup>4</sup>See The Renaissance Philosophy of Man, eds. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 4-7.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Erasmus from an Italian Perspective," in Renaissance Quarterly, XXIII, No. 1 (Spring, 1970), 7. This article contains a discussion of the Enchiridion and the Praise of Folly in the light of Renaissance Platonism and Christian humanism.

<sup>6</sup>Mann Phillips, Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance (London: English Universities Press, 1949), p. 46; cited in The Essential Erasmus, ed. John P. Dolan (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Dolan, The Essential Erasmus, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>See Isocrates' Ad Demonicum, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Cicero's De Officiis, and Paul's epistles to individuals and communities.

<sup>9</sup>Enchiridion = small weapon, dagger; handbook, manual.

<sup>10</sup>Kristeller, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>All references to Erasmus' treatise are from The Enchiridion of Erasmus, tr. Raymond Himelick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963). See p. 199 where Erasmus sums up the intention of his work: "Monasticism is not piety but a way of living useful or useless in proportion to one's moral and physical disposition. For my part, I neither urge you into it nor dissuade you from it. This only I suggest: that you not define holiness by what you eat, by ritual, or by any visible object, but by these principles we have been discussing." The "principles" are elsewhere defined as those of "satisfactory living with others which the ancients call 'ethical'" (p. 55); "the perfect life" (p. 71); "perfect piety" (p. 101).

<sup>12</sup>Kristeller, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Holiness in all times and all places encompasses man's relationship with the divine. See O. C. Whitehouse, "Holiness, Semitic," in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, VI, 751.

<sup>14</sup>This is Kristeller's summary of the argument of the Enchiridion. See p. 10 of article cited in n. 5.

<sup>15</sup>Enchiridion, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 58. "The Rules for a True Christian Life" are found on pp. 83-200. Himelick's divisions cover twenty-two rules, plus suggested remedies for specific sins.

<sup>17</sup>See Himelick's "Introduction," pp. 22-26.

<sup>18</sup>For example, see Enchiridion, p. 47, where Erasmus stresses the need for Christian weapons by "anyone who is going to fight those seven nations of the Canaanites, Kenizzites, Amorites, Perizites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites--that is to say, when he has to fight the whole cohort of sins, of which the seven capital ones are considered the most deadly. . . ."

<sup>19</sup>Erasmus' attack on the clergy in the Enchiridion (pp. 116-120, 198-199) seems to me more devastating than the celebrated attack in the Praise of Folly. Himelick, p. 222, n. 5, says, "This criticism of monastic life was strongly attacked during the author's lifetime and placed on the Index in Madrid in 1584."

<sup>20</sup>Enchiridion, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup>I exclude Richard Hooker, whose Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity was published in 1593, too late to influence the first installment of The Faerie Queene.

<sup>22</sup>Enchiridion, p. 105.

<sup>23</sup>And like Erasmus, Spenser seems to relish being involved in controversy. See The Shepheardes Calendar, Prosopopoeia; or Mother Hubberds Tale, and Colin Clout Come Home Againe.

<sup>24</sup>Variorum, I, 167.

<sup>25</sup>I am limiting the discussion to those authors who specifically deal with holiness.

<sup>26</sup>I say "ironically" because they were both reformers seeking the same end; a purer, revitalized Christianity grounded upon the truths of revealed religion.

<sup>27</sup>See Himelick's "Introduction," p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>Enchiridion, p. 63: "We have the capacity for the divine which enables us to surpass even the nature of the angels and be made one with God."

<sup>29</sup>Martin Luther On the Bondage of the Will, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (London: J. Clarke, 1957), p. 100.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-104.

<sup>31</sup>R. H. Coats, "Holiness, New Testament and Christian," in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, 747-48.

<sup>32</sup>"Sanctification," Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, p. 885.

<sup>33</sup>There were five editions: 1521, 1525, 1535, 1544, 1555. I have consulted The Loci Communes of 1521, trans. C. L. Hill (Boston, 1944) and the Loci Communes of 1555, trans. Clyde L. Manschreck (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963). Professor Manschreck has also published an excellent biography of the German humanist and theologian, Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958).

<sup>34</sup>Manschreck, Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-64, 84, 84, 85, 85, and 53, respectively.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>37</sup>Manschreck (p. 96) believes his attitude toward Aristotle changed as early as 1525.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 285-298.

<sup>39</sup>For a summary of Melanchthon's involvement with English monarchs, the Anglican Church, and English university curriculum, see Manschreck's "Preface" to Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer, pp. xx-xxii.

<sup>40</sup>The Institutes was enlarged four or five times between 1539-1559. I have consulted the Library of Christian Classics edition of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

<sup>41</sup>James Orr, "Calvinism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, III, 150.

<sup>42</sup>R. H. Coats, VI, 748.

<sup>43</sup>The rules for a Christian life are found in Book III of the Institutes. It should be noted that one will not find the idea of the "total depravity of man" in Calvin's great work. Book III of the Institutes reads like Erasmus' Enchiridion: the tone is cheerful, optimistic, and pious; the effect life-enhancing.

<sup>44</sup>A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene," Journal of English Literary History, 16 (1949), 202.

<sup>45</sup>F. Q. I, ix, 52.

<sup>46</sup>Jowett, III, 275.

<sup>47</sup>F. M. Padelford, "Spenser and the Theology of Calvin," in Modern Philology, XII (1914), 9.

<sup>48</sup>Edwin Greenlaw, Variorum, I, 203.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Spenser's Choice of Holiness  
as the First Moral Virtue

There has been a renaissance in Spenser criticism in the past decade, with The Faerie Queene receiving much scholarly attention: Harry Berger has offered an analysis of the Book of Temperance; Thomas P. Roche, Jr., an analysis of the Books of Chastity and Friendship; Thomas K. Dunseath the Book of Justice, and Arnold Williams the Book of Courtesy.<sup>1</sup> While no comparable book-length study of the Legend of Holiness has been attempted -- the possible reasons for this will be examined shortly -- there have been several chapter-long examinations of Spenser's matter and method in Book One; by Paul J. Alpers, William Nelson, Graham Hough, A. C. Hamilton, Mother Pauline Parker, Roger Sale, and the team of Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele.<sup>2</sup> In addition, there is an analysis of these analyses by Harry Rusche, extended by comments of the late Rosemond Tuve.<sup>3</sup>

What is striking in all this scholarship is a lack of agreement as to what Spenser intended in the Legend of Holiness. At one extreme is Mother Parker's sensitive reading of the Legend as "the perfecting of the Christian soul" and "the making of a saint."<sup>4</sup> Spenser, this critic contends, "conceives of Holiness in the manner of heroic faith, hope, and charity, centered in the crucified Christ."<sup>5</sup> She sees the Knight of the Red Cross as the truly holy man ever tempted but never falling into serious sin. He is not perfect, however; he lacks one virtue, Humility, which he must learn in the House of Holiness.<sup>6</sup> An odor of sanctity permeates Mother Parker's prose to the extent that Book One of The Faerie Queene begins to sound like a reworking of Thomas à Kempis' Imitation of Christ or Francis de Sales' Introduction to the Devout Life, a view of

the book that is essentially false to Spenser's allegory. Spenser was not writing a piece of devotional literature or versifying Catholic theology, as I hope to show.

A far remove from Mother Parker's pious reading is that of the critics Nelson, Sale, Kellogg, and Steele, who see Book One as permeated by Calvinist doctrine; that is, as an allegory of fallen, hopeless, helpless man (Luther's "slave of sin"), ever in need of rescue, grace, and redemption.<sup>8</sup> Kellogg and Steele go so far as to describe the events from Canto One to the capture of the Knight of the Red Cross by Orgoglio in Canto Seven as "a detailed account of his [Redcrosse's] gradual descent into total depravity and damnation."<sup>9</sup> Though allegory allows much latitude in interpretation, these critics, I believe, also misread Spenser's poem for several reasons. They place an excessive emphasis on the second half of Book One, making the so-called fall of the Red Cross Knight (to me a questionable interpretation of what happens) and his rescue by Arthur central to the story; they ignore the first half of the poem, in which Spenser states his allegorical intentions. As the "Patron of true Holiness," Redcrosse is not likely to descend into "total depravity" or represent "a marvelous spectacle of human degradation."<sup>11</sup> Spenser did not intend that his first book be a Calvinist tract any more than he meant it to be a Catholic one.

What happens which critics refuse to take the poet on his own terms, when they refuse to read the Legend of Holiness as just that, when they do not acknowledge that the virtue-vice confrontation is between Holiness and Pride--as Spenser clearly indicated? Failing to read the poem as Spenser directed in his letter to Raleigh and in the work itself, they formulate their own ingenious schemes. For example, Mother Parker in her chapter, "Holiness and Truth," finds fault with Spenser's selection of a

first virtue and his citation of "Aristotle and the rest" as the source for that virtue:

Holiness is not a virtue, but a state; Truth is not a virtue either, though truthfulness and sincerity are, for these are habits of the will, disposing always to act in a certain way, whereas truth is objective, and holiness is a complex state.

. . . whatever he [Redcrosse] may owe incidentally to Aristotle, or Plato, or Seneca, his virtues are to be interpreted as Christian virtues looking to a consummation very different from the this-world fruition of the Nichomachean Ethics. . . He thus exemplifies the supernatural virtues which are directly related to God as their end. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Mother Parker then proceeds to examine Book One under the aspects of Truth and Humility, fully aware that Truth is not a virtue and that Spenser did not entitle his first book the Legend of Humility.

According to A. C. Hamilton's interpretation of Book One, the allegorical focus is on the Knight's struggles with Pride and Despair.<sup>13</sup>

William Nelson and Roger Sale also fix upon Despair, the former designating it "the crisis of soul" encountered by man in search of holiness, the latter citing it as "the greatest enemy he [Redcrosse] has to face."<sup>14</sup>

But Harry Rusche, reviewing the conflicting interpretations of Book One, disagrees:

Some critics of The Faerie Queene have obscured the importance of the part that pride assumes as a constant and at times subtle danger in Book I; the result has been a distortion of both the allegorical significance and the structural unity of the Red Cross Knight's quest and his fight against the sins that threaten the Christian life.

. . . pride, both physical and spiritual, retains for Spenser its traditional primacy as the most deadly sin in Christian life and . . . as such he assigns to it a central role throughout Book I. Red Cross must defeat, not Despair, but Pride. What he must learn in the House of Holiness is not an antidote for melancholy, but a Christian humility, which comes with the acceptance of grace; when pride is overcome, its concomitant despair is likewise vanquished.

The central role assigned to pride justifies Spenser's close and detailed description of Lucifera's House of Pride and Red Cross's first major encounter with a recurrent and subtle threat to the

Christian life; if we look to our text for evidence, we find that of all the Knight's opponents--error, hypocrisy, falsehood, faithlessness, despair--pride is still the most constant and deadly.<sup>15</sup>

I quote Ruscheat length because in commenting on and clarifying the views of other scholars, he falls into the same error as they, of paying scant or no attention to the virtue Holiness, an oversight which only leads to a distortion of the actual virtue-vice confrontation in Book One. Whereas Hamilton, Sale, and Nelson focus on the vices of Pride and Despair, Rusche follows Mother Parker in making the vice of Book One Pride and the virtue Humility. But he cannot quite agree with Mother Parker on the nature of the virtue Redcrosse must learn: ordinary humility is not, he contends, an antidote for the holy man's melancholy at not being as morally good as he thought he was; only "a Christian humility; which comes with the acceptance of grace"<sup>16</sup> will suffice. Despite this distinction, Rusche's interpretation, giving Humility a major role in the Legend of Holiness, does not square with the allegorical structure of the book. That the true opposition is Holiness versus Pride is clear from the attention Spenser gives their respective "houses": the House of Pride standing at the allegorical center of the first half of the book, the House of Holiness standing at the center of the second half.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, in numerous treatises available to Spenser, the vices error, hypocrisy, falsehood, faithlessness, and despair (embodied by the poet as monster, lost lady, and man of Hell, respectively) are grouped together as cohorts of the root vice Pride. Spenser followed this arrangement but took it one step further by grouping around the all-encompassing virtue Holiness several particular virtues. Thus the old lowly porter Humilita<sup>n</sup> stands at the entrance to the House of Holiness, and rightly so as humility traditionally is true knowledge of the self, the first step on the path to moral perfection.<sup>19</sup> As fear of the Lord or, better, fear of offending the Lord,

humility is "the beginning of wisdom,"<sup>20</sup> which leads to true holiness. Zeal, Faith, Hope, Charity, Patience, Remorse, Penance, and Mercy are the companions of Humility in the House of Holiness.<sup>21</sup> Each of these virtues is described in a few lines; each functions as a part of the whole which is Holiness. Just as Redcrosse learns the true nature of Pride in his encounters with its cohorts, so he learns the true nature of Holiness through its companions. Armed with this knowledge, a new force, really, he rides off to complete his quest. In the final combat the Knight of Holiness triumphs magnificently over the Dragon of Pride. To ascribe the victory to Humility, as Parker and Rusche seem to do, or to any other virtue is to wrench Spenser's allegory out of its clearly defined frame.

The latest critic to grapple with Book One, Paul J. Alpers, does not fall into the same traps as the earlier critics.<sup>22</sup> He does not mistake the part for the whole, i.e., Humility for Holiness, Despair for Pride, but he is equally confusing in another way. The poet's subject, he contends, is human heroism and human strength, and the first book contains an examination of that "profound puzzle about human nature," namely that "a man's spiritual resources inevitably partake of his earthly, sinful nature" or, as he puts it in another place, "human heroism is bound up in man's sinfulness."<sup>23</sup> Thus wrath and shame motivate the Red Cross Knight in his first encounter, with Error, and in his last battle, with Pride. Though Alpers makes a brilliant case for his thesis, he too finally distorts the intent of Spenser's allegory. In any case, it is impossible to develop a systematic exposition of the first Spenserian virtue from Alpers' rumination on the theological paradox which connects heroism to human sinfulness.<sup>24</sup> Like Mother Parker, but in a different way, Alpers simply overemphasizes the religious element in the poem. Neither man's sinfulness nor his heroism in combating evil impulses in his nature is Spenser's

chief concern in the Legend of Holiness or in the other books of The Faerie Queene. Spenser's vision of Holiness when circumscribed by the Scylla of Catholicism and the Charybdis of Calvinism seems narrow indeed. Both Parker and Alpers seem unable to comprehend Spenser's larger view of Holiness, which goes beyond "Christian" beliefs and makes use of the vast resources of traditional materials, many of them classical or secular in origin. In Plato and Cicero, for example, Holiness is a moral virtue which guides man in the ordering and the subsequent perfecting of all relationships: man with God, man with his fellow man, and man with his own nature.<sup>25</sup>

Lack of knowledge of the moral virtue tradition seems to me to be at the root of the confusion about what Spenser intended in the Legend of Holiness. One cannot look back at the sixteenth century unaided except for a pair of twentieth-century spectacles. With a proper understanding of the sources available to Spenser, it is possible to read Book One as the poet directs, as an allegory of man's perfection in Holiness. Humility and Truth, Magnificence and Grace, Pride and Despair, and other virtues and vices have a place in the poet's scheme, but as tributaries to the designated central flow of the allegory. Knowledge of the moral virtue tradition helps us understand why Spenser felt free to choose Holiness as his first, basic, and all embracing virtue and why he chose the Knight of the Red Cross as its patron.

When Spenser decided to write a poem illustrating the virtues,<sup>26</sup> he had to confront some important questions. Given the vast amount of material on the moral virtues at his disposal, which twelve moral virtues should he choose? What order should he place them in? Where should he begin, or did it make any difference where he began?

These questions of choice were much the same as those faced by Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Aquinas, and all previous expositors of the virtues ("the rest" as Spenser calls them).<sup>27</sup> As there were many precedents and no agreement among them as to the number and hierarchy of the virtues, Spenser was free to fashion his own scheme.

The Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh appended to the first installment of The Faerie Queene (1590) contains Spenser's declared intentions in regard to the whole work.<sup>28</sup> He would follow the custom of illustrating twelve moral virtues, presenting Holiness as the first virtue in Book One and Magnificence as the twelfth virtue in the last book. So in the first installment of three books he examined three moral virtues, Holiness, Temperance, and Chastity; in the second installment of three books (1596) Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy. He also planned to write a book on the virtue Constancy or Fortitude.<sup>29</sup> From the letter and the fragment on Constancy we know eight of the twelve virtues which Spenser had in mind.

The moral virtue tradition aids us in guessing at the other four. Medieval and Renaissance commentators on Plato and Aristotle were wont to compile lists of twelve virtues deriving from the ubiquitous Platonic-Stoic-Christian four. Of special interest to readers of Spenser is the list of Lodowick Bryskett, a friend of the poet and a member of Spenser's literary circle in Ireland in the 1580's. In his dialogue, A Discourse of Civill Life: containing the Ethike part of morall Philosophie (1606), Bryskett describes a gathering of the group in which Spenser, asked to discourse on the moral virtues, graciously refused on the ground that he had "already undertaken a word teding to the same effect, which is in heroical verse, vnder the title of a Faerie Queene. . . ."<sup>30</sup> The Italian scholar's work is of interest to us for several reasons. First, it suggests what Spenser meant by "Aristotle and the rest" as the source for

the virtues he would treat.<sup>31</sup> Bryskett cheerfully admits to following a tradition of virtues dating back to Aristotle and Plato and supplemented by "other excellent writers beside," up to and including the Italian Renaissance philosophers Cinthio and Piccolomini (Pope Pius II).<sup>32</sup>

Following Cinthio in particular, Bryskett gathers from the many virtues mentioned in his discussion a formal list of twelve clustered about the cardinal four, "Fortitude, Temperance, Justice and Prudence; from which four are also derived (as branches from their trees) sundry others to make up the number twelve, and they are ensuing, Liberalitie, Magnificence, Magnanimitie, Mansuetude, Desire of Honor, Veritie, Affabilitie, Urbanitie."<sup>33</sup> Provided with Bryskett's list, with Aristotle's original formulation, and Spenser's known choices, we may draw up parallel lists as follows:

<u>Aristotle</u>	<u>Bryskett</u>	<u>Spenser</u>
1. Courage	Fortitude	Holiness
2. Temperance	Temperance	Temperance
3. Liberality	Liberalitie	Chastity
4. Magnificence	Magnificence	Friendship
5. Highmindedness	Magnanimitie	Justice
6. Desire for Honor	Mansuetude	Courtesy
7. Gentleness	Desire for Honor	Constancy or Fortitude
8. Truthfulness	Veritie	Patience
9. Wittiness	Affabilitie	Gentleness
10. Friendliness	Urbanitie	Truthfulness
11. Modesty	Justice	Liberality
12. Justice	Prudence	Magnificence

Patience seems a likely choice as the eighth virtue because it is linked to, or is a part of, Fortitude in Christian materials on the virtues, as well as in the lists of Cicero, Macrobius, and Seneca.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, as Bryskett tells us, Aristotle linked these virtues.<sup>35</sup> Spenser, who linked Temperance and Chastity (after the manner of Aristotle) in the first installment of The Faerie Queene, might have made a similar connection between Fortitude and Patience.

Gentleness seems a likely choice for the ninth virtue, the third virtue of the third installment. If we consider this installment as one

illustrating virtues which aid men in facing trials, then Gentleness, which "holds the reins in her hands and bridles the vehemency of anger,"<sup>36</sup> is a fitting companion to Patience.

Since we know that Magnificence is a virtue manifested outwardly among men, we need two virtues that complement it. Truthfulness, the "bright shining virtue" wherein men manifest "sincerity and truth in word and deed,"<sup>37</sup> might be the tenth virtue. Liberality is a good choice for the eleventh virtue. The virtue wherein man manifests his generosity in word and deed, it is related to Magnificence, traditionally regarded as Liberality on a grander, royal scale--a scale befitting Arthur, the king-to-be, and Gloriana.

If Bryskett is helpful with respect to Spenser's choices of virtues, he is also informative about the poet's method. Spenser, he tells us, meant each of his knights to be a "patron" and "defender" of the individual virtue stressed in each book. In the "actions and feates of armes and chivalry, the operations of that vertue, whereof he [the knight] is the protector, are to be expressed, and the vices & vnruely appetites that oppose themselves against the same, to be beate downe & ouercome."<sup>38</sup> Bryskett approves Spenser's humanistic vision of man's capacity to become perfect by overcoming vice and growing in virtue.

Like Spenser, Bryskett is positive, optimistic and yet realistic about the potential of human beings. Like Spenser too, he acknowledges the possibility of lapses on the road to perfection, "considering that none but God is perfect without fault, and that every man, even the most vertuous falleth sometimes through human frailtie."<sup>39</sup> The fall he here alludes to is not a terrible plunge into sensuality and depravity (a Christian concept) but a temporary waywardness (a Platonic or classical concept).<sup>40</sup> Spenser incorporates into his legend of Holiness this idea

of man's lapsing.

Spenser's choice of Magnificence as his twelfth and last virtue, one which "includes all the rest,"<sup>41</sup> is also illuminated for us by Bryskett. In the Discourse Magnificence and Magnanimity are said to go "arm in arm," but it is Magnanimity, which "all other virtues wait upon," which "produces effects agreeable to all the rest of the virtues."<sup>42</sup> Bryskett cautions, however, that Magnanimity is "not a virtue for everyone, but such as are furnished with all the other virtues."<sup>43</sup> But the reader of Spenser will note that Bryskett's Magnanimity is virtually identically described as Magnificence in Spenser's Letter to Raleigh; indeed, the words magnificence and magnanimity were often used interchangeably in the sixteenth century.<sup>44</sup> ". . . I labour," Spenser wrote, "to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues" and ". . . in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke."<sup>45</sup> The parallels in Bryskett's treatise and Spenser's poem suggest the commonplace nature of their ideas. Arthur's role in the narrative is a traditional one. The other knights "wait upon"<sup>46</sup> the young prince who is already perfected in all the virtues; his presence produces agreeable effects on those like Redcrosse, for whom perfection is still a distant goal.<sup>47</sup>

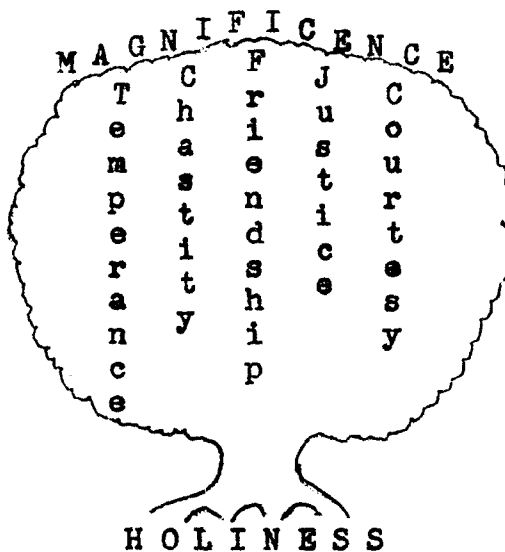
Bryskett also supplies other information in regard to the possibility of one virtue (other than Magnificence) including all the rest. Toward the end of the Discourse, in the section dealing with Justice, he poses the question as to whether or not Justice is "the only virtue" and whether "all virtues [are] contained in her."<sup>48</sup> Then a listener asks, if there

is justice, why the need for other virtues? Bryskett's short, and not altogether satisfactory, response echoes Plato; the virtues are linked together in a chain and cannot be severed.<sup>49</sup> What is of interest here is the reiteration of a traditional idea which helps in understanding the role of Holiness in Book One, namely that some virtues function as all-embracing ones.

Bryskett's Discourse also sheds light on Spenser's choice of Holiness as the first moral virtue. It might be more accurate to say that the Discourse points up Spenser's originality and daring in so choosing Holiness. In his formal discussion of the virtues, Bryskett shies away from considering any that are not recognizably moral or ethical. In the section on Mansuetude he refuses to treat Humility, which he defines as fear of offending God.<sup>50</sup> Since he gives no explanation for this refusal, we may assume that Humility for Bryskett was not a moral virtue and that he distinguished between virtues that were moral and virtues that were spiritual. But in his general discussion of morality, which precedes the formal exposition on the twelve moral virtues, he makes the point that the King's son must be fashioned first in Religion, a virtue sometimes synonymous with Holiness, and then in Truth, Temperance, Justice, and the other moral virtues.<sup>51</sup> In another place, speaking of the virtues as "matters," Bryskett suggests a scheme in which Religion, Prudence, Wisdom, and Truth --all four linked together--are the first "matter," followed in order by Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude.<sup>52</sup> Here perhaps is proof that the separations between moral, spiritual, and theological virtues were not always observed.

Before deciding on Holiness as his first "matter," Spenser must have pondered long on how to begin and where to begin. He needed some basic,

all-embracing virtue, one which would serve as a foundation for the other virtues; one which, like Magnificence, would enhance all the rest and make the first link in his chain as strong as the last and complementary to it. Unlike Bryskett, Spenser was not afraid to synthesize the moral and the spiritual, since both are part of the human experience. Besides, moral philosophy as he understood it did not make a distinction consistently.<sup>53</sup> When he made his decision, Spenser chose Holiness because it is the one virtue applicable to all spheres of human activity: the perfecting of man's relationship to God, the perfecting of man's relationship to other men, and the perfecting of man's self. Holiness is comprehensive on another level as well. The classical idea of this virtue as expounded by Plato and Cicero and the Law of Judaic-Christian culture with regard to Holiness are quite consistent.<sup>54</sup> For Spenser, Holiness is the ground for human development toward perfection. It is the root virtue, the source and nourisher of all the rest



The tree above visualizes Spenser's conception. The holy man is temperate, chaste, friendly, just, courteous. If we substitute any other virtue (but Magnificence) for Holiness, the diagram fails. The chaste man,

for example, may be holy, temperate, friendly, just and courteous, but he is not necessarily these other things and he may, in fact, be none of them.

In choosing Holiness as his first virtue, Spenser could suggest the progress to perfection which he would work out in greater detail in the ensuing books of the poem. From the perspective of Book One alone, Holiness is the key to man's perfecting his relationship to God (Redcrosse's desire to serve his Lord most worthily); Temperance to man's perfecting his own nature (Redcrosse in the House of Pride and the House of Holiness); Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy to man's perfecting his relationship to his fellow men (Redcrosse with Una, Arthur, and Una's parents). The culmination in Magnificence seems logical. When Redcrosse is perfected in all virtues, he can act magnificently in vanquishing the Dragon Pride. So Book One, in its movement from Holiness to Magnificence, is a paradigm of the whole of The Faerie Queene.

Spenser's choice of Holiness had another advantage. It provided a means of synthesizing moral virtue materials from Greek, Roman, Judaic, and Christian sources into a comprehensive vision of human perfection.

Plato and Aristotle equated virtue with knowledge which can be pursued and possessed. Their admonition, "Know thyself," is directed at men who wish to grow in and attain to virtue.<sup>55</sup> Spenser allegorizes this idea when he places his knight on a quest in which the youth may gain knowledge of his force or powers:

And ever he rode, his hart did earne  
To prove his puissance in battel brave  
Vpon his foe, and his new force to learne.

(1. 3. 6-8)

Traditionally, the knightly quest was an allegory of the search for

knowledge of something; in Redcrosse's case, knowledge of himself and Holiness.<sup>56</sup>

Plato and Aristotle agree as to the end of this pursuit of knowledge: "passing gradually from temporal things to eternal essence, turning the eye of the soul from shifting shadows to changeless reality."<sup>57</sup> This, of course, can be interpreted as the true end of Holiness. Redcrosse's education in the House of Pride and the House of Holiness prepares him for that brief interlude on the Hill of Contemplation where his passage from temporal things to eternal essence is indicated momentarily, and later for his complete union with eternal essence in his betrothal to Una.<sup>58</sup> Spenser might have found these same ideas in later writers who assimilated the moral idealism of Plato and Aristotle, notably the Hellenized Jews of Alexandria in the third century, B.C., and Romans of the first century, B.C.<sup>59</sup>

In the Old Testament men were constantly admonished to be holy, to imitate the Holy One.<sup>60</sup> Holiness and the Law were actually one: man became holy by loving, worshiping and serving God.<sup>61</sup> In the New Testament, Christ repeats the command of the Old Testament with a difference: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>62</sup> He too stresses the connection between Holiness and the Law: man is to love and worship God and serve his fellow men if he is to become perfect.<sup>63</sup>

Christ's teachings have one purpose: to call man to a life of holiness. They go far beyond the classical dictum of "All things in moderation"<sup>64</sup> to a new height of idealism and inspiration. Paul, whose mission was to promulgate and explicate the Master's teachings, never tired of preaching the ideal of holiness because it struck a responsive chord in the hearts of Jews, Christians, and pagans alike.<sup>65</sup>

The words of Christ and Paul--with the message that holiness is the

key to moral and spiritual life--echo through the centuries of Christian Europe. Holiness is cited as a virtue, a complex state of being, the true goal of man's quest; at times it is equated with religion itself.<sup>66</sup> Always it is God's call to man and His covenant with his creatures.

Perhaps no century had a greater diversity of voices reiterating the Christian message than the sixteenth century. More, Erasmus, Melanchthon, Calvin, Luther and others called for a rededication to the Scriptural ideal of sanctity.<sup>67</sup> In The Faerie Queene Spenser joined his voice to theirs, like them also recognizing the paradox inherent in man's pursuit of holiness: to wit, for all his commitment to the ideal, his imperfect nature keeps him back; for all his heroic effort, he cannot achieve success without supernatural help; and for all he tries and does, his best results can only be a pale approximation of the ideal, for God alone is the Holy One. But to Spenser and his contemporaries, whether humanists or reformers, man's glory lay in his perseverance in the quest for perfection despite his knowledge of the difficulties and sacrifices involved.

The paradox at the heart of the search for perfection was recognized long before the sixteenth century, a time when man's glorious potential and his innate depravity seemed to preoccupy everyone. The Greek prescription, "Know thyself," reiterated by Plato and Aristotle, contains the elements of this paradox. On one hand, "Know thyself" assumes that knowledge leads to and is virtue; on the other, it means that to know oneself is to know oneself to be a man, not a god, and to acknowledge both the glorious potential and severe limitations of one's human nature. Spenser captures the essence of this ancient contradiction in the figure of Redcrosse, a youth full of desire to learn about himself and earn glory. After several setbacks, Redcrosse despairs of ever reaching his goal. Rescued by Arthur from his dark night of doubt and given new hope by Una,

he resumes his quest in the House of Holiness. There armed with true knowledge of the human condition--its frailty, its need for supernatural help, its glorious potential as suggested on the Mount of Contemplation--Redcrosse is able to vanquish the dragon Pride. But still he cannot rest on his laurels; as he tells Una's father:

Ah dearest Lord, said then that doughty knight,  
Of ease or rest I may not yet deuize;  
For by the faith, which I to armes haue plight,  
I bounden am streight after this emprize,  
As that your daughter can ye well aduize,  
Backe to returne to that great Faerie Queene,  
And her to serue six yeares in warlike wize,  
Gainst that proud Paynim king, that workes her teene;  
Therefore I ought to craue pardon, till I there haue beene.

(12. 18. 1-9)

So Redcrosse returns to the world after completing the first task assigned to him by the Faerie Queene. Rewarded in his betrothal to Una and the promise of union with her forever--someday in the future--he leaves his beloved to continue the pursuit of virtue by which alone he can deserve her.

Spenser's genius for synthesizing received materials on the virtues into a new whole can be seen again in the structure of Book One, the Legend of Holiness. In treatises on the virtues and vices and in allegories on the struggles between them, the key confrontation involved Faith versus Pride, or Wisdom versus Pride, or Humility versus Pride.<sup>68</sup> (Faith gained prominence as the first of three theological virtues and as the first of the seven cardinal virtues; Wisdom was the first or seventh gift of the Holy Spirit and the fourth cardinal virtue; Humility was the first virtue bestowed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit). Since an encounter between Holiness and Pride is not found in any treatise, we may say that Spenser's structure is original in this respect. But once again he is synthesizing

traditional materials.

Pride is always shown as the enemy of virtue and perfection, its cohorts traditionally being the six other Deadly Sins or a group of vices including Untruth, Despite, Presumption, Ambition, Vainglory, Hypocrisy, and Pusillanimity.<sup>69</sup> Spenser captures much of the essence of these vices in the monster Error, the magician Archimago, the lady Duessa, the giant Orgoglio, the Man from Hell, and the brothers Sans joy, Sans loy, and Sans foy; and in the palace of Pride, where Lucifera leads her six cohorts, the Deadly Sins. In the second half of Book One, the House of Holiness is set in contrast to the House of Pride. (The idea of a house, court, or palace where one learns the nature of a thing was not new to Spenser; there had been, in earlier literature, a Palace of Honor, a Court of Sapience, a Castle of Health, a House of Fame.)<sup>70</sup> Whereas learning in the House of Pride leads man, as Redcrosse has seen, to disgrace, destruction, and death; instruction in the House of Holiness restores, vivifies, and makes man holy--by giving him knowledge of, and perfecting him in, the virtues Humility, Zeal, Faith, Hope, Patience, Penance, Remorse, Charity, Mercy, and Wisdom. So schooled, Redcrosse is able to conquer the adversary, Pride. The entourage of virtues in the House of Holiness, set off in contrast to the vices in the House of Pride, represents Spenser's vision of Holiness, a vision at once Platonic, Christian, and humanistic. Without counterpart in any known treatise or allegory, it comprises a new whole greater than the sum of its traditional parts.

One may speculate as to why Spenser did not settle upon Wisdom as the first moral virtue, since it is a chief virtue from Plato onward, the first of the Platonic four and the fourth of the Christian seven cardinal virtues. But if he considered Wisdom as the virtue of his first book, he would have found it unsuitable on several counts. First, he wished to be original,

and a "Book of Wisdom" was already in the Bible. Second, with his wide knowledge of the moral virtue tradition, Spenser would have seen that the wisdom figure was usually female.<sup>71</sup> Since he had planned to use questing knights like Redcrosse and Arthur as patrons of the virtues, the traditionally mild wisdom figure would not have fitted into his scheme. (Una, as the companion and, later, the beloved of Redcrosse, can be viewed as Lady Wisdom.)<sup>72</sup> There had been doubt expressed as far back as Aristotle as to the nature of Wisdom. The Greek philosopher set that virtue apart from the moral virtues and designated it a speculative virtue, one which provided the culminating experience of the man perfected in virtue, that is, contemplation.<sup>73</sup> Spenser observes this distinction in Book One. In the two Wisdom scenes, the one on the Mount of Contemplation, where Redcrosse learns the nature of the virtue, and the betrothal scene, where he is pledged to the Wisdom figure forever, the moments of contemplation and vision are short-lived: the knight must return to the world and to his assigned tasks. Beatific repose is not for Redcrosse--yet. The moral virtues, Holiness and its companions, manifest themselves in acts and deeds. Holiness better than Wisdom suggests the ever-ongoing quest which, while giving fulfillment to the quester, allows for no relaxation of his efforts. Thus Redcrosse could be the "Patron of true Holinesse," the man seeking perfection in that virtue, the possessor of it, and the endless embarker on new adventures to manifest and confirm his allegorical identity.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Harry Berger, The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Thomas P. Roche, Jr., The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); T. K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Arnold Williams, Flower on a Lowly Stalk: The Sixth Book of the "Faerie Queene" (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967).

<sup>2</sup>Paul J. Alpers, The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 334-369; William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser: A Study (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 147-177; Graham Hough, A Preface to "The Faerie Queene" (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1962), pp. 138-153; A. C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 22-60; M. Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the "Faerie Queene" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 66-113; Roger Sale, Reading Spenser: An Introduction to "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 22-60; Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, eds., Edmund Spenser: Books I and II of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), pp. 1-53. It should be noted that the chapters by Hamilton and Sale, which contain detailed analyses of the Legend of Holiness, also contain matter on other aspects of Spenser's Faerie Queene.

<sup>3</sup>Harry Rusche, "Pride, Humility, and Grace in Book I of The Faerie Queene," in Studies in English Literature, II, No. 1 (Winter, 1967), 29-39; Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 125ff. See also Tuve's index under "Spenser's Characters" and "Virtues and Vices."

<sup>4</sup>Parker, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>7</sup>The Imitation was written in the fifteenth century, the Introduction in the early seventeenth. Mother Parker mentions Saint Francis' book twice in her discussion of Holiness: p. 84 and p. 110.

<sup>8</sup>Nelson, p.174; Sale, pp. 47-48; Kellogg and Steele, pp. 38-42. See also Alpers, p. 335.

<sup>9</sup>Kellogg and Steele, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup>Sale, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>The epithet, "the Patron of true Holinesse," is found in the four-line introduction to Canto One of Book One of The Faerie Queene.

<sup>12</sup>Parker, pp. 66, 74-75.

- <sup>13</sup>Hamilton, pp. 80ff.
- <sup>14</sup>Nelson, p. 151; Sale, p. 47.
- <sup>15</sup>Rusche, pp. 29, 30, 39, respectively.
- <sup>16</sup>Rusche, p. 30.
- <sup>17</sup>Graham Hough, A Preface to "The Faerie Queene" (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1962), p. 111.
- <sup>18</sup>For this commonplace see The Book of Vices and Virtues, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS, vol. 217 (1942), pp. 10-22, and Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale," ll. 390ff.
- <sup>19</sup>For a discussion of Humility as self-knowledge see Chapter Two, p. 51 and p. 61 n. 64, of this dissertation.
- <sup>20</sup>Prov. 1:7 and Prov. 9:10, respectively.
- <sup>21</sup>For the virtues in the House of Holiness, see 10. 6 to 10. 52.
- <sup>22</sup>The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 334-369. Alpers (p. 335) suggests, however, that a certain stanza in Book One (10. 1) invites the term "Calvinistic."
- <sup>23</sup>Alpers, pp. 335, 336, 343, respectively.
- <sup>24</sup>Alpers, p. 336.
- <sup>25</sup>For a discussion of Platonic and Ciceronian views of Holiness, see Chapter Two, pp. ~~35-37~~, of this dissertation.
- <sup>26</sup>That illustrating the moral virtues was not Spenser's original intention has been shown conclusively by Josephine Waters Bennett in The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), pp. 1-107.
- <sup>27</sup>See "A Letter of the Authors," usually referred to as the Letter to Raleigh, in Variorum, I, 168.
- <sup>28</sup>Variorum, I, 167-170.
- <sup>29</sup>"Two Cantos of Mutabilitie," supposed to be part of a Legend of Constancy, were included in the 1609 edition of The Faerie Queene.
- <sup>30</sup>Lodowick Bryskett, A Discourse of Civill Life: containing the Ethike part of morall Philosophie (London, 1606).
- <sup>31</sup>Variorum, I, 168.
- <sup>32</sup>Bryskett, pp. 31-32.
- <sup>33</sup>Bryskett, p. 214.

<sup>34</sup>For the links between Fortitude and Patience in classical and Christian treatises, see Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp. 59-60, 74-75; 166; see also The Book of the Vices and Virtues, p. 163.

<sup>35</sup>Bryskett, p. 216.

<sup>36</sup>Bryskett, p. 240.

<sup>37</sup>Bryskett, p. 242.

<sup>38</sup>Bryskett, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup>Bryskett, p. 141.

<sup>40</sup>Bryskett states that the quotation cited in n. 39 above is a translation from Plato, though he makes no reference to a specific dialogue.

<sup>41</sup>See Letter to Raleigh in Variorum, I, 168.

<sup>42</sup>Bryskett, pp. 231, 246, 231, respectively.

<sup>43</sup>Bryskett, p. 231.

<sup>44</sup>For the linking of magnanimity and magnificence, see "Magnanimity," OED, VI, 28.

<sup>45</sup>Variorum, I, 167-168.

<sup>46</sup>Bryskett, p. 246.

<sup>47</sup>Bryskett, p. 231.

<sup>48</sup>Bryskett, p. 247.

<sup>49</sup>Bryskett, p. 250.

<sup>50</sup>Bryskett, p. 240.

<sup>51</sup>Bryskett, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup>Bryskett, p. 86.

<sup>53</sup>Ernest Curtius in European Literature and the Later Middle Ages, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 528-29, observes that "up to the sixteenth century there was no categorization of materials into moral philosophy, theology, religion, or ethics. Everything relevant to the human experience and addressed to how man should live was considered 'ethical wisdom.' It is we who divide the traditional materials into secular, religious, humanistic."

<sup>54</sup>The classical conception of the virtue and of the Law are discussed in Chapter Two, pp. 34-42 of this dissertation.

<sup>55</sup>See Josephine Waters Bennett's The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene," pp. 222-223, for a discussion of this Greek precept as a Renaissance commonplace. See also The Enchiridion of Erasmus, trans. Raymond Himelick

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 62, for the humanist's views: "The chief point of this wisdom is simply to know yourself, an injunction which antiquity believed to have originated in heaven and which great authors have found so pleasing that they consider the whole fruit of wisdom compactly enclosed in it."

<sup>56</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 345.

<sup>57</sup>Irwin Edman, ed., The Works of Plato (New York: The Modern Library, 1956), p. xlv, commenting on the Republic. See also Nicomachean Ethics, X.

<sup>58</sup>These visions of Wisdom are found in Canto Ten and Canto Twelve, respectively.

<sup>59</sup>See Chapter Two of this dissertation, "Holiness in the Moral Virtue Tradition from Plato to Spenser," pp. 32-38.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-27.

<sup>61</sup>The Law as given to Moses is found in the "Laws of Holiness and Justice" (Lev. 19:1ff.): "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." The Law is paraphrased in Deut. 6:5 and 11:1.

<sup>62</sup>Matt. 5:48, which may echo Deut. 18:13.

<sup>63</sup>Christ gives his view of the Law in Lk. 10:26 and Mt. 22:35ff. He includes the duty to one's neighbor. In the Old Testament the relationship between God and man is stressed. There is only one specific reference to love of neighbor (Lev. 19:18). But there are other statutes in the Old Testament which make this concept implicit.

<sup>64</sup>Greek Commonplaces dating back to the Pre-Socratics.

<sup>65</sup>The ideal of Perfection touched many hearts, if we are to judge by Paul's record of conversions in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, Galatia, Philippi, and Thessalonika.

<sup>66</sup>Thomas Aquinas is credited with linking Holiness to the true religion in the Summa 2a 2ae, 81, 8.

<sup>67</sup>See Chapter Three of this dissertation, "Holiness in the Sixteenth Century."

<sup>68</sup>The confrontation between Faith and Pride is found where the seven Deadly Sins battle the seven cardinal virtues and Pride is the first vice, Faith the first virtue; Wisdom opposes Pride where Wisdom is the first virtue. The confrontation of Humility and Pride dates back as far as Prudentius' Psychomachia. It can also be found in the struggle of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and their virtues battling the vices.

<sup>69</sup>See The Book of the Vices and Virtues, pp. 10-22, and Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale," ll. 390ff.

<sup>70</sup>See Chaucer, House of Fame (ca. 1375); Court of Sapience (ca. 1465), author unknown; Gavin Douglas, The Palace of Honor (1501); Sir Thomas Elyot, The Castle of Health (1519).

<sup>71</sup>The female Wisdom figure goes back to the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. See especially Prov. 7:4ff., 8:1ff., and 9:1ff.

<sup>72</sup>For a discussion of Una as Lady Wisdom, see Chapter Seven of this dissertation, pp.148-150.

<sup>73</sup>See Nichomachean Ethics, VI.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The Knight of the Red Cross as  
"the Patron of True Holinesse"

If Spenser is taken on his own terms, then Book One is the Legend of Holiness and the Knight of the Red Cross is the "patron" of the virtue, the allegorical vehicle, as Spenser declares, "in whome I expresse Holynes."<sup>1</sup> If we read Spenser's critics we may find something else again. Book One is an allegorical presentation of the Christian experience; namely, the familiar myth of temptation, sin, fall, suffering, regeneration, and restoration.<sup>2</sup> The book's hero, Redcrosse, is seen as the embodiment of every Christian who struggles with sin and who with the help of grace overcomes vice and attains salvation.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the knight is pictured as "a man of sin,"<sup>4</sup> in contradiction of the epithet for him which Spenser puts in the four-line introduction to Canto One:

The Patron of true Holinesse,  
Foul Errour doth defeate:  
Hypocrisie him to entrape,  
Doth to his home entreate.

Roger Sale contends that "Redcrosse is seldom holy" and that of all Spenser's heroes he is "the least embodiment of the virtue he represents."<sup>5</sup> Kellogg and Steele go even further; they speak of the degradation of the knight, his sensuality and lust, his fall into total depravity.<sup>6</sup> This vein of criticism elaborates an idea put forth many years ago in an analysis of the spiritual allegory in the Legend of Holiness: "There is in Spenser . . . a Calvinistic sense of the bankruptcy of the natural man, and a conception of grace as entailing not so much a perfection of nature as a new start."<sup>7</sup>

When Book One is schematized according to this view, the action

takes the form of an inverted pyramid representing the knight's fall into sin, his rescue, and his restoration:

F  
A  
L  
L  
I  
N  
T  
O  
S  
I  
N  
R  
E  
S  
C  
U  
E  
R  
E  
S  
T  
O  
R  
E  
D

The textual evidence usually cited for this interpretation of Redcrosse's story is a passage in Canto Nine:

Why then does thou, O man of sin, desire  
To draw thy dayes forth to their last degree?  
Is not the measure of thy sinfull hire  
High heaped vp with huge iniquitie,  
Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?  
Is not enough, that to this Ladie milde  
Thou falsed hast thy faith with periurie,  
And sold thy selfe to serue Duessa vilde,  
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy self defilde?

(9. 46)

Out of context, these lines distort the image of the Knight of the Red Cross that Spenser intended us to have. They occur in a speech of Despair, who is a liar, an exaggerater and a distorter of truth, and whose purpose is to tempt Redcrosse into committing suicide. (There are several other twisters of the truth, really enemies of truth in Book One -- Duessa, Archimago, Ignaro -- and we must take their words for what they really

are.) Despair is giving an account of what has happened to Spenser's patron of Holiness up to that moment, but his interpretation is essentially warped. The lines must be placed side by side with the speech of the Dwarf, who alone has witnessed all:

Than gan the Dwarfe the whole discourse declare,  
The subtill traines of Archimago old;  
The wanton loues of false Fidessa faire,  
Bought with the bloud of vanquisht Paynim bold;  
The wretched payre transform'd to treen mould;  
The house of Pride, and perils round about;  
The combat, which he with Sansloy did hould;  
The lucklesse conflict with the Gyant stout,  
Wherein captiu'd, of life or death he stood in doubt.

(7. 26)

Here there is no indictment of Redcrosse, no suggestion of the sin, fornication, adultery, or depravity which Kellogg and Steele find in Spenser's hero.<sup>8</sup> The knight of Holiness has experienced much, overcome much, only to be made captive by the giant Orgoglio, who in traditional materials on the vices and virtues represents spiritual pride.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere in Book One, Spenser makes the same point: the real foes of the righteous man are spiritual ones.<sup>10</sup>

Una, in describing her plight to Arthur, first praises Redcrosse, his power and prowess,<sup>11</sup> vows she still loves her knight, and then tells what has happened to him on his quest:

Well hoped I, and faire beginnings had,  
That he my captiue langour should redeeme,  
Till all vnweeting, an Enchaunter bad  
His sence abusd, and made him to misdeeme  
My loyalty, not such as it did seeme;  
That rather death desire, then such despight.  
Be iudge ye heauens, that all things right esteeme,  
How I him lou'd, and loue with all my might,  
So thought I eke of him, and thinke I thought aright.

Thenceforth me desolate he quite forsooke,  
To wander, where wilde fortune would me lead,  
And other bywaies he himselfe betooke,  
Where neuer foot of liuing wight did tread,  
That brought not backe the balefull body dead;

In which him chaunced false Duessa meete,  
Mine onely foe, mine onely deadly dread,  
Who with her witchcraft and misseeming sweete,  
Inueigled him to follow her desires vnmeete.

At last by subtill sleights she him betraid  
Vnto his foe, a Gyant huge and tall,  
Who him disarmed, dissolute, dismaid,  
Vnwares surprised, and with mightie mall  
The monster mecillesse him made to fall,  
Whose fall did neuer foe before behold;  
And now in darkesome dungeon, wretched thrall,  
Remedillesse, for aie he doth him hold;  
This is my cause of grieffe, more great, then may be told.

(7. 49-51)

Again, in Una's account, there is no indictment of Redcrosse. Like the Dwarf, she too stresses the circumstances in which the knight was overcome. Wounded, strengthless, he was taken unawares without his armor, shortly after fleeing from the House of Pride. Traditionally, man is most vulnerable after he has overcome a great temptation.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the knight's weakness after his battle with Sans joy and narrow escape from the House of Pride leads to his capture.

Those critics who take four words in stanza 50--"disarmed, dissolute, dismaid" and "fall"--and use them to support their thesis of Redcrosse's lack of holiness ignore the context in which they are said by Una, as well as the first six cantos of the poem in which Spenser describes the struggles of the holy man. Moreover, Cantos Seven and Eight deal with the holy, righteous, and guiltless man who may be unconscious of his spiritual pride, which puts him in spiritual jeopardy for a time. Spenser had no intention of allegorizing the fall of the knight of Holiness--in no place does he explicitly say such a thing; rather he sought to dramatize the quest for spiritual perfection by a holy man, including the intermissions in that quest.

Although Spenser recognized the weaknesses and limitations of human effort, he shared the ideals of the Christian Humanists, whose central

tenet was man's perfectability in virtue. His vision of perfection is positive, optimistic, yet realistic, much like that of More and Erasmus, who preceded him, and Bryskett, who followed him. For Spenser the virtue Holiness entailed far more than the vanquishment of vice; it demanded a lifelong commitment to sanctity in action.

Erasmus' Enchiridion,<sup>14</sup> especially, sheds light on Book One of The Faerie Queene, for in both works the philosophy is Platonic, the theology is Christian, and the spirit is humanistic.<sup>15</sup> Perfection in Holiness, Erasmus declares in the Enchiridion, should be the goal of all men.<sup>16</sup> The Christian knight, furnished with the weapons enumerated by St. Paul and guided by Wisdom, chooses to follow the narrow path of virtue. Guided by her truth he will not go astray; led by her radiance he will perceive the snares of falsehood. Though sworn to be steadfast, he may occasionally suffer lapses, though well on his way to his goal. But the true knight will "meet defeat with renewed effort" and not "succumb to the worst of all mental states--despair."<sup>17</sup> Rescued and renewed by heavenly grace and schooled anew in the laws of Christ, he can overcome the temptation to despair and all other vices. Peace and repose then enter into his soul, which rises on the wings of love, ascending "from body to spirit, from visible world to invisible, from letter to essence."<sup>18</sup> Perfect now, the Christian knight does not disarm or relax his guard, however; he prepares to continue the battle.

Such is the progress of Spenser's holy knight--not from fall to rescue to restoration, but a gradual ascent, with wanderings on the plains and plateaus, errors in choice resulting in adventures in dark valleys and caves, and sojourns along the way to acquire knowledge. But the upward path is eventually resumed, the ascent continues, and the goal is finally attained.

Spenser chose as the vehicle "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline"<sup>19</sup> the traditional figure of the heroic questing knight, with all the accoutrements of arms, steeds, jousts, and fierce encounters. In the first of three stanzas introducing the hero of Book One of The Faerie Queene, the poet compares the knight seen at a distance with the knight's true condition. He is young and willing but as yet untried and unproven and, we are told:

I cladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,  
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,  
The cruell markes of many a bloody field;  
Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield. . . .

(l. 1. 2-5)

His virtues, all chivalric in character, are enumerated in the second stanza: his relationship to his dear lord is stressed; it is one of remembrance, love, adoration, and hope in his help.

But on his brest a boudie Crosse he bore,  
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,  
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,  
And dead as liuing euer him ador'd;  
Vpon his shield the like was also scor'd,  
For soueraine hope, which in his helpe he had;  
Right faithfull true he was indeede and word,  
But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad;  
Yet nothing did he dread, but euer was ydrad.

(l. 2)

He would qualify as Chaucer's true and perfect knight (described in the "General Prologue" to the Canterbury Tales) because of his fidelity and troth keeping.<sup>20</sup> Surely no higher praise can be bestowed on a Christian gentleman. Yet this is not all. Redcrosse also possesses and exhibits heroic virtue, that combination of courage and desire for honor celebrated from ancient times as necessary for any great achievement. And again like Chaucer's knight, he seeks honor not only for himself but for the greater

glory of his Lord and his queen:

Vpon a great aduerture he was bond,  
That greatest Gloriana to him gaue,  
That greatest Glorious Queene of Faerie lond,  
To winne him worship, and her grace to haue,  
Which of all earthly things he most did craue. . . .

Finally, we are told that the knight yearns to prove himself in battle and to gain some new knowledge of his manly powers:

And euer as he rode, his hart did earne  
To proue his puissance in battell braue  
Vpon his foe, and his new force to learne;  
Vpon his foe, a Dragon horrible and stearne.

(1. 3. 6-9)

Spenser selected and ordered with utmost care the details with which he introduced his patron of Holiness.<sup>21</sup> He hoped that the reader's response, once directed in these first three stanzas, would be to read Book One as an allegory of Holiness. The true allegorical significance of the hero and the action is immediately suggested in the symbolic red cross on the breast and shield of the knight. The knight has no name; he is identified throughout Book One as the Knight of the Red Cross or, simply, as Redcrosse. Spenser's intention may have been to link him to Galahad, the original knight of the Red Cross, hero of the most popular allegorized romance and successful completer of the quest for holiness (symbolized in the Grail).<sup>22</sup>

Since the meaning of any figure was never limited in a true allegory, Spenser could also depend on his reader recognizing the allusion to St. Paul's "armor of God" (Eph. 6:11-17) and thus linking the knight to the miles Christianus or warfaring Christian in medieval and Renaissance materials who overcame the vices within him and thirsted after holiness.<sup>23</sup> The validity of this interpretation is reinforced in the second canto (2. 12) where Spenser refers to the knight as St. George, another wearer of the red badge of courage, renowned as a Christian soldier and dragon-

slayer.<sup>24</sup> That Redcrosse, though still green to combat, wears armor with the marks of old battles points to the armor having been used by former heroes. Salvation will be the reward for Spenser's knight as it has been for other Christian soldiers who have persevered and triumphed in the quest for holiness. Thus an outline of the action and outcome of Book One of The Faerie Queene are foreshadowed in the choice of the Knight of the Red Cross as its hero.

Another allegorical motif included by Spenser in the three-stanza introduction of the knight is that of the quest. In allegorical romances the quest is often a search for knowledge of something.<sup>25</sup> Redcrosse, we are told, seeks to prove "his pusissance" and learn "his new force," (l. 3. 7-8), that is, to acquire knowledge about himself and, by extension, knowledge of the virtue Holiness, which he represents. The four lines which introduce the quest motif prepare us for another central allegorical motif later on: the paradox of perfection. At the outset of his quest, the knight seeks to do great and noble deeds and to comprehend his powers. He will find out, however, that these powers are not sufficient to overcome all enemies. Among the things he must learn is his weakness and need for aid. His true strength, his real ability to overcome, lies in his recognition of his limitations and his dependence on supernatural assistance. Without the latter, no knightly quest can be successfully completed.

The typical romance beginning of knight and quest initiates the allegory of Book One. Holiness in classical and Christian terms involves man's relationship to God. From Plato onward, the virtue of Holiness consists specifically of man's rendering honor, worship, and service to God and striving for moral excellence. There is perhaps no better vehicle to convey these ideas allegorically than the figure of the knight pledged

to his lord. This is the first attribute stressed by Spenser: in Redcrosse's love, adoration, service, and faithfulness to his lord is imaged the ideal of true Holiness, for the lord thus honored can be understood to be the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>

In stanzas two and three of Canto One, the poet elaborates on his conception of holiness by bringing into the poem another motif found in allegorical romances, treatises, and conduct books, namely the knight's double fealty or double courtesy, as it was sometimes called.<sup>27</sup> Spenser could count on his readers to distinguish between Redcrosse's pledged fealty to his dying Lord (whom he would adore in life and after death) and his fealty to Gloriana. It is the latter's grace "which of all earthly things he did most crave" (l. 3. 5). The key word here is "earthly" for, in his use of it, Spenser makes clear just how the allegory is to be understood. Book One of The Faerie Queene is to be read like other allegorical romances, with attention to the levels of earthly and heavenly chivalry. Redcrosse, like the knights in such traditional materials, functions on one level as the bon chevalier, manifesting "chivalry terrestrial" as servant of Gloriana, companion of Una, and even as succorer of Duessa-Fidessa.<sup>28</sup> On this level, the knight is pledged to rescue and restore those in distress. By his heroic actions, by his striving for excellence, he serves to instruct man in moral virtue (how it is to be on earth). On another level, Redcrosse functions as bon esprit, manifesting "chivalry celestial" in his devoted service to his Lord.<sup>29</sup> His love, adoration, and fidelity on this level serve to instruct man in the true relationship between man and God (how it is to be in heaven).

Spenser links the heavenly and earthly spheres again specifically in Canto Ten, where the old sire Contemplation counsels the knight to persevere in the chivalrous task assigned him by Gloriana, as his reward for victory

will be eternal glory.

And well beseemes all knights of noble name,  
That couet in the 'immortall booke of fame  
To be eternized, that same to haunt,  
And doen their seruice to that soueraigne Dame,  
That glorie does to them for guerdon graunt:  
For she is heauenly borne, and heauen may iustly vaunt.

(10. 59. 4-9)

Following the three-stanza introduction of the knight, Spenser sets out, in a most traditional way, to allegorize the choices of action open to man in his daily life. The knight of Holiness, accompanied by Una, leaves the plain on which he has been journeying and enters the "wandering wood"<sup>30</sup> in search of shelter and rest. Once inside the wood, he finds a number of "pathes and alleies wide,/ With footing worne, and leading inward farre" (l. 7. 7-8). Distracted by melodious bird songs and the beauty of the trees--"led by delight" (l. 10. 1) as Spenser puts it--the knight journeys onward until he realizes he is lost. Hoping to discover a way out of the labyrinth of paths and find again the path "which first was showne" (l. 10. 4), he chooses the way "that beaten seemed most bare" (l. 11. 3). The beaten path, that is, the one taken by most other men, and seemingly the correct choice, turns out to be the wrong choice: it comes to a dead end in the thickest wood before the cave of the monster Error. After overcoming Error (this battle will be discussed in detail later), Redcrosse makes his way out of the wood by following the one path he now knows to be the correct one. As a result of the experience in the wandering wood, he is resolved never "to any by-way bend,/ But still did one vnto the end" (l. 28. 4-5).

Spenser's readers should have recognized easily the allegorical import of Redcrosse's actions with their echoes of Cicero's De Officiis and their suggestion of the commonplace iconographical renderings of the choice of

Hercules. Just as Hercules was faced with deciding between the narrow, difficult, untraveled path to virtue and the oft-traveled beaten path to pleasure,<sup>31</sup> so had the knight of Holiness to choose. Redcrosse has an advantage, however. He has been shown that the path chosen by most men, which leads nowhere but to darkness, destruction, and death, is the wrong one. In the De Officiis,<sup>32</sup> a textbook familiar to every Elizabethan grammar school boy, there is a passage in which Cicero enthusiastically counsels his son Marcus about the path his life should take: ". . . we are all attracted and drawn to a zeal for learning and knowing; and we think it glorious to excel therein, while we count it base and immoral to fall into error, to wander from truth, to be ignorant, to be led astray."<sup>33</sup> Thus traditional ideas of the choice of the narrow path to virtue and the commitment to the pursuit of wisdom and truth are welded in the allegory of the first scene.

The poet, who is our guide throughout Book One, reminds us at other key points in the narrative of the importance of choosing and staying on the right road. In Canto Two, for example, Redcrosse, deceived by Archimago as to the true nature of Una, wanders far away from her and from his quest. Spenser tells us that "will was his guide, and griefe led him astray" (2. 12. 4). Once astray, he is led by Duessa along the bare, much-traveled "broad high way" (4. 2. 8) ending at the House of Pride. In Canto Nine Despair tempts Redcrosse to suicide by reminding him of what happens once man forsakes the narrow path: "For he, that once hath missed the right way,/ The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray" (9. 43. 7-8). In Canto Ten the porter Humiltà leads Redcrosse along the "streight and narrow way" (10. 5. 9) to the court of the House of Holiness. There Dame Coelia sadly comments on the smallness of the number of men who like Redcrosse desire to follow the path to Holiness:

Strange thing it is an errant knight to see  
Here in this place, or any other wight,  
That hither turnes his steps. So few there bee,  
That chose the narrow path, or seeke the right;  
All keepe the broad high way, and take delight  
With many rather for to go astray,  
And be partakers of their euill plight,  
Then with a few to walke the rightest way;  
O foolish men, why haste ye to your owne decay?

(10. 10)

In this same canto, Mercy leads Redcrosse to the hermitage of Contemplation along a "painful way . . . forth to an hill, that was both steepe and hy" (10. 46. 1-2). From the height on which he dwells, Contemplation then shows Redcrosse the true path, the path to virtue:

That neuer leads the trauieler astray,  
But after labours long, and sad delay  
Brings them to ioyous rest and endlesse blis.

(10. 52. 4-6)

At the path's end Redcrosse sees a vision of the heavenly city.

In his commitment to travel the path of virtue, the knight of Holiness is confronted with a variety of temptations. His struggles with these temptations are the essence of the allegory in the first half of Book One. Spenser, as we noted in the preceding chapter, bases his legend on traditional materials describing the conflict of virtue with the vice Pride and its "endlesse traine" of cohorts.<sup>34</sup> When studied closely all the episodes or encounters with vice present a similar pattern, whether the temptation is one in which the peril is obvious and demands an immediate response (as in the mortal combat with Errour, Sans foy, and Sans joy), or whether the temptation is subtler--to malingering and forgetfulness (as in the bower of Fradubio and the House of Pride). It is to this pattern of action that we now turn, in the hope that the analysis will aid us in reading the Legend of Holiness as Spenser intended it to be read and in interpreting the

difficult Orgoglio scene in the second half of Book One.

In the first episode, the struggle with Errour, Redcrosse is counseled to flee by the dwarf Prudence. But "full of fire and greedy hardiment" (l. 14. 4), he fights on bravely until he is caught in the monster's deadly grip. Saddened by his plight, Una calls out: "Now, now Sir knight, shew what ye bee,/ Add faith vnto your force, and be not faint" (l. 19. 304). He thereupon frees himself, only to be overcome by Errour's "deadly stinke" (l. 22. 2). "His forces faile, he can no longer fight" (l. 22. 3). But from this faint condition, he marvelously rises up, full of shame and fury, "resolv'd in minde all suddenly to win" (l. 24. 4). He strikes the beast with "more then manly force" (l. 24. 6) and lays it low. Here, in the knight's first encounter with vice, Spenser sets the pattern for the later struggles with temptation.

In these struggles Redcrosse's own force and human strength tend to be inadequate and to fail; he waxes weak or his senses are astonished and he falls into great peril. At that moment he is called back to his senses and finds new strength--the nature of which he does not yet comprehend--and overcomes his foe. Thus in the fierce and deadly encounter between the knight and Sans foy, who personifies the temptation to faithlessness, both combatants are "astonied with the stroke of their owne hand" (2. 15. 7). ("Astonied" and its variants, "astonished," "astownd" and "stound," are Spenser's words for suggesting a senseless or unconscious condition.) Sans foy, recovering first, curses the cross on the shield of the knight, strikes off part of Redcrosse's helmet, which in falling, clangs loudly on the shield. At this sound Redcrosse rises up "wondrous wroth" (2. 19. 1) as "the sleeping spark/ Of native vertue gan eftsoones reuiue" (2. 19. 1-2), and with one stroke overcomes his adversary. As this episode deals with a temptation against faith to be beaten down, Spenser fittingly emphasizes Redcrosse's weapons, and particularly the shield, which in

traditional materials like Paul's epistles symbolized the warfaring Christian's faith (Eph. 6:16). The clangor of it awakens the knight to his purpose, saving him from certain death and making possible his victory.

We see this pattern again in a later scene where, after watching a pageant of the seven Deadly Sins, a mirthless and numbed Redcrosse struggles with Sans joy, brother of the slain Sans foy. The encounter, or tournament, on the fields of the House of Pride serves as a vehicle for personifying the knight's combat with the temptation to give up hope, the joy of the warfaring Christian. The battle is ferocious. Sans joy, mad for revenge, smashes Redcrosse on the crest and knocks him unconscious. The spectators sense the imminent death of the fallen knight. At this moment, Duessa, believing Sans joy the victor, cries out to him: "Thine the shield, and I, and all" (5. 11. 9). What happens next is reminiscent of what happened when another lady, Una, cried out to Redcrosse on the point of defeat--and seems a parody of the earlier scene.

Soone as the Faerie heard his Ladie speake,  
Out of his swowning dreame he gan awake,  
And quickning faith, that earst was woxen weake,  
The creeping deadly cold away did shake:  
The mou'd with wrath, and shame, and Ladies sake,  
Of all attonce he cast auengd to bee. . . .

(5. 12. 1-6)

So once again Redcrosse, called back from unconsciousness renews his efforts and gains a victory.

In these contests with temptation, human strength, physical prowess, mental resolve, and the powerful emotions of wrath and shame appear to guarantee the knight's success in overcoming the vices that oppose themselves to Holiness. But Redcrosse is not yet conscious of the true nature of the "new force" (1. 3. 8) which he has set out to discover. In a sense, he is deceived in the belief that his superior powers lie in himself, in his good right arm. Una provides the first hint as to the true

nature of these powers when she advises him to add faith to his force. A little later she elaborates on this need for something outside himself, for special supernatural help, when she credits the armor with a role in his victory over Error:

Well worthy be you of that Armorie,  
Wherein ye haue great glory wonne this day,  
And prou'd your strength on a strong enimie,  
Your first aduventure: many such I pray,  
And henceforth euer wish, that like succeed it may.

(1. 27. 5-9)

We have already alluded to this armor, to whose significance Spenser himself drew attention in his Letter to Raleigh. It is, in fact, the "whole armour of God" described by Paul in his letter to the people of Ephesus (Eph. 6:11-17): the body armor of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith, all of which together enable one "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). Renderings of knights dressed in this symbolic armor were commonplace throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,<sup>35</sup> It is fitting raiment for a knight of Holiness.

So clad, Redcrosse is victorious in his contests with Error, Sans foy, and Sans joy. In a later struggle, with Orgoglio, Redcrosse does not wear his armor and is overcome by evil. That the armor has special powers and that it, and not Redcrosse's manly strength, is to be feared is suggested again by Sans foy's recognition of its "charme" (2. 18. 4) which saved Redcrosse from death, and in Duessa's warning to Sans joy:

Yea but (quoth she) he beares a charmed shield,  
And eke enchanted armes, that none can perce,  
Ne none can wound the man, that does them wield.

(4. 50. 5-7)

But the Knight of Holiness himself does not know, and has yet to learn, the source of his victorious strength.

There are also subtle and insidious temptations in the first half of Book One: dalliance and malingering along the way. After his glorious victory over Errour, the Knight of the Red Cross is deceived by Archimago, who separates him from Una and his true quest and sends him on a false quest with Fidessa (in reality Duessa). It must be pointed out, however, that the false quest is still a knightly one; Redcrosse's courteous treatment of Duessa, a damsel in distress, and his rescue and succor of her are comparable to his care of Una.

At one point, wearied by their journey and the heat of the day, Redcrosse and Duessa seek rest in a pleasant bower. There they dally:

Faire seemely pleasaunce each to other makes,  
With goodly purposes there as they sit:  
And in his falsed fancy he her takes  
To be the fairest wight, that liued yit;  
Which to expresse, he bends his gentle wit,  
And thinking of those braunches greene to frame  
A girlond for her dainty forehead fit,  
He pluckt a bough; out of whose rift there came  
Small drops of gory bloud, that trickled downe the same.

(2. 30. 1-9)

But the knight is prevented from symbolically linking himself to Duessa by crowning her with the garland. The "piteous yelling voyce" (2. 31. 1) of Fradubio, the man metamorphosed into a tree -- the very tree from which the bough was taken -- warns Redcrosse to flee at once. On hearing the tree speak, Redcrosse is "astond . . . and vp his haire did houe,/ And with that suddein horror could no member moue" (2. 31. 8-9). The paralysis lasts for some time until Redcrosse, his "manhood well awake" (2. 32. 2), recovers his senses. Once again a warning note has roused the knight -- to his "manhood" as elsewhere it reminds him of his "faith" (1. 19. 3), his "sleeping spark of natiue vertue" (2. 19. 2), and his "quickenning faith" (5. 12. 3). As Before, he is now saved from a grave error: betrothal to Duessa when he is already pledged to Una and his quest.

It is clear to the reader at this point that the Knight of the Red Cross is less than fully capable of dealing with deception. He is inexperienced, ignorant, blind in various ways--that "no'vnttruth he knew" (1. 53. 6) is literally too true. Nowhere are his shortcomings more evident than in his conversation with Fradubio which now ensues. Listening to the tale of the metamorphosed knight and being warned that the cause of all the latter's woe "is one Duessa a false sorceresse,/ That many errant knights had brought to wretchednesse" (2. 34. 8-9), Redcrosse is unable to perceive any admonition to himself. That such blindness will end in wretchedness again, this time for the knight of Holiness, is obvious. Spenser further complicates the portrait of his hero by ending the episode with some prophetic touches. Redcrosse bids Fradubio a courteous farewell, exclaiming chivalrously: "O how mote I that well out find/ That may restore you to your wonted well?" (2. 43. 6-7). Little does Redcrosse know that it is he who will have need of restoring! Next "the good knight" (2. 44. 3), as Spenser calls him, shows the same chivalry and kindly concern for Duessa when she pretends to faint in order to distract him from the implications of Fradubio's story:

Her vp he tooke, too simple and too trew,  
And oft her kist. At length all passed feare,  
He set her on her steede, and forward forth did beare.

(2. 45. 6-9)

The phrase "too simple and too trew" could refer either to Duessa or Redcrosse, depending on whether one reads it ironically or straightforwardly, and the ambiguity may be intentional.

When the knight's story is picked up again in Canto Four, Redcrosse is blindly following in Fradubio's footsteps. Like Fradubio, he has rejected the true quest and aligned himself with Duessa. We find him being guided by her along the broad highway to the House of Pride. At

Lucifera's Palace, as this domain is called, the knight of Holiness watches a procession of the Deadly Sins but is unmoved by the spectacle. He soon disassociates himself from the pomp and ceremony of Lucifera, her cohorts and subjects. But his new knowledge of the human condition, with all its potential for splendid and sophisticated depravity, induces a spiritual sadness in the young and still somewhat rustic knight. After the struggle with Sans joy, which he wins, the sorely wounded knight allows himself to be taken back into Lucifera's palace and ministered to:

Home is he brought, and laid in sumptuous bed;  
Where many skilfull leaches him abide,  
To salve his hurts, that yet still freshly bled.  
In wine and oyle they wash his woundes wide,  
And softly can embalme on euery side.  
And all the while, most heauenly melody  
About the bed sweet musicke did diuide,  
Him to beguile of grieffe and agony:  
And all the while Duessa wept full bitterly.

(5. 17. 1-9)

An epic simile elaborating on Duessa's weeping follows:

As when a wearie traeller that strayes  
By muddy shore of broad seuen-mouthed Nile,  
Vnweeting of the perillous wandring wayes,  
Doth meet a cruell craftie Crocodile,  
Which in false grieffe hyding his harmefull guile,  
Doth weepe full sore, and sheddeth tender teares:  
The foolish man, that pitties all this while  
His mournefull plight, is swallowed vp vnwares,  
Forgetfull of his owne, that mindes anothers cares.

(5. 18. 1-9)

This simile, of course, suggests the condition of the Red Cross Knight. He is "a wearie traeller that strayes . . . vnweeting of the perillous wandring wayes." He is a foolish man who, full of pity for the seeming distress of a predaceous enemy, cannot recognize his own jeopardy and "is swallowed vp vnwares." "Unawares" is a key word in Spenser's allegory of Holiness. It signals Redcrosse's lack of knowledge and preparedness. At this point, beguiled and distracted by the soft bed, the beautiful music,

and Duessa's tears, he represents the crocodile's naive prey. Just as he did not recognize the danger of lingering with Duessa, so he does not recognize the temptation to while away the time in Pride's house, when he is pledged to the quest. And then the warning sound is heard again. This time Una's dwarf Prudence is its maker. He has seen the end of all who sojourn in Pride's palace: the powerful and proud figures of history "condemned to that Doungeon mercillesse,/ Where they should live in woe and die in wretchednesse" (5. 46. 8-9), as well as the princes and court ladies of more recent times who have been brought low "through wicked pride and wasted wealthes decay" (5. 51. 4). After the dwarf has spoken, Redcrosse recognizes the danger to himself, rises early<sup>36</sup> and flees from the palace, but not before he has his own nightmare vision of fallen mankind:

Scarse could he footing find in that fowle way,  
For many corses, like a great Lay-stall  
Of mured men which therein strowed lay,  
Without remorse, or decent funerall:  
Which all through that great Princesse pride did fall  
And came to shamefull end. And them beside  
Forth ryding vnderneath the castell wall,  
A donghill of dead carkases he spide,  
The dreadfull spectacle of that sad house of Pride.

(5. 53. 1-9)

But to flee temptation is not to conquer it. The lesson--that until Pride is confronted and rooted out, her train of deceits will be never-ending--is not really learned. Hence Lucifera and Sans joy (whom Redcrosse has been unable to kill) give way to their more deadly counterparts, Orgoglio or spiritual pride, and Despair.

The House of Pride is important to the allegory of the first half of Book One. Redcrosse's visit to it should represent a high point in the knight's education with regard to the vice of pride, but it does not. Previously, Redcrosse has been warned by Una and has paid no heed; he has failed to perceive in Fradubio's situation a parallel of his own; he has made no connection between the thralls of Lucifera and his spiritual

peril. As the first half of the Legend of Holiness ends, the knight is still vulnerable to temptation and prone to be deceived, in spite of experience gained from his struggles and education in the House of Pride. This education and experience is, nevertheless, of value as preparation for the still greater struggles which the knight of Holiness must undergo. Despite his lapses, he has won a few victories and gained a degree of confidence in his powers. But this very confidence will prove to be a defect. He must yet attain a certain kind of knowledge not found in this world to be equal to the powerful adversaries who await him in the second half of Book One.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Variorum, I, 168. Spenser's use of the word "patron" to denote "the declared champion of a theory, teaching, or position" is now obsolete. Webster's Third International Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas P. Roche, Jr., in The Kindly Flame (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 26, speaks of a "well-defined Christian myth" of Holiness which Spenser had at his disposal. Roche does not elaborate on this statement, however.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Four of this dissertation for a summary of critical attitudes toward Book One.

<sup>4</sup>"Man of sin" is Despair's epithet for the Red Cross Knight in 9. 46. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Reading Spenser: An Introduction to "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 46 and p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>Edmund Spenser: Books I and II of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene," ELH, XVI (1949), reprinted in Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Paul J. Alpers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 345-379. F. M. Padelford in a seminal article, "The Spiritual Allegory of the Faerie Queene, Book One," JEGP, XXII (1923), 1-17, must be considered an originator of the "Calvinistic" interpretations of Book One, for he convinced many who came after him that the source for Spenser's allegory of Holiness was Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.

<sup>8</sup>Edmund Spenser: Books I and II of "The Faerie Queene," p. 30.

<sup>9</sup>Orgoglio is Orguel or spiritual pride, not "the grossest carnality of human nature, man fallen to the state of the animal and in revolt against God and reason," as Kellogg and Steele assert, p. 30. See also The Book of Vices and Virtues, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS, vol. 217 (1942), p. 10ff.

<sup>10</sup>See 10. 1. 1-4.

What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might,  
And vaine assurance of mortality,  
Which all so soone, as it doth come to fight,  
Against spirituall foes, yeelds by and by. . . .

<sup>11</sup>Una cites her knight's powers three times in two stanzas: 7. 47-48.

<sup>12</sup>This commonplace is employed by Spenser again in Book Two. Guyon after overcoming Mammon seems near to death and is ministered to by an angelic figure. See 2. 3ff.

<sup>13</sup>Taking a word or phrase out of context can distort the allegory of a given passage and lead to a serious misinterpretation of the poem. Another example of the harm done by this practice is found in discussions of 9. 53,

where the word "chosen" appears. Critics have seized upon this one word to support a Calvinistic interpretation of the Legend of Holiness.

<sup>14</sup>The Enchiridion of Erasmus, tr. Raymond Himelick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963).

<sup>15</sup>In the "General Introduction" to The Renaissance Philosophy of Man, eds. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1948), p. 6, Kristeller and Randall speak of Erasmus and other Renaissance thinkers who posited a "Christian world view . . . with a single Truth, Platonic in philosophy, Christian in theology, and humanistic in its values."

<sup>16</sup>Enchiridion, pp. 55, 77, 101, 199. What follows is my paraphrase of Erasmus' prescription for perfection.

<sup>17</sup>Enchiridion, p. 170.

<sup>18</sup>Enchiridion, p. 130. Erasmus is paraphrasing the Phaedrus, 245-248. See Himelick's note, n. 94, p. 216, in the Enchiridion.

<sup>19</sup>"Letter of the Authors" in Variorum, I, 167.

<sup>20</sup>The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 18.

<sup>21</sup>Just as he carefully polished all of Book One. See Bennett's Evolution, pp. 119-120.

<sup>22</sup>See Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp. 419-423, for the popularity of the allegorized romance in the sixteenth century in England.

<sup>23</sup>Graham Hough in A Preface to "The Faerie Queene" (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), p. 32, links Redcrosse to the miles Christianus. Kellogg and Steele, p. 17, use Spenser's allusion to the weapons of St. Paul and Redcrosse's employment of the sword and shield of Faith in the defeat of Error as proofs for the Reformational cast of Book One.

<sup>24</sup>For Spenser's use of the Legend of St. George see Variorum, I, 379-391, and Josephine Waters Bennett, Evolution, pp. 108-123.

<sup>25</sup>Tuve, p. 345.

<sup>26</sup>For a discussion of how medieval and Renaissance readers understood allegory, see Tuve, Chapters One and Five; the former deals with the subject generally, the latter with allegorized romances specifically. See also the Book of Vices and Virtues for the linking of lord and Lord. The epithet most often applied to Christ is "my most courteous Lord."

<sup>27</sup>Tuve, pp. 34-55, is the source for this discussion of the motif of double chivalry.

<sup>28</sup>Tuve, pp. 36ff.

<sup>29</sup>Tuve, pp. 36ff.

<sup>30</sup>Una identifies the place in l. 13. 6. For a history of this traditional symbol of worldliness in Virgil, Servius, and Dante, see William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 158-160.

<sup>31</sup>"Heracles," The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, ed. Sir Paul Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 201. For a lengthy discussion of this Hercules legend in ancient, medieval and, especially, sixteenth-century works, see Hallett Smith's excellent chapter, "Heroic Poetry," in Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 290-342.

<sup>32</sup>Henry Sidgwick, Outlines of a History of Ethics for English Readers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 95, says of Cicero's work: "There is probably no ancient treatise which has done more than his De Officiis to communicate a knowledge of ancient morality to medieval and modern Europe." We know also that the work was a favorite textbook in continental Europe and in England in the sixteenth century and that Erasmus and Melancthon collaborated on a textbook edition with a commentary.

<sup>33</sup>De Officiis, trans. Walter Miller, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), p. 19.

<sup>34</sup>See Chapter Two, pp. 49-51, and Chapter Four, pp. 95-96, of this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup>For example, see the engraving of the Christian Knight in Joseph Fletcher's The History of the Perfect-Cursed-Blessed Man (London, 1628), pp. 76-77.

<sup>36</sup>To rise early is traditionally to be on guard, to be obedient, to be ready to serve. See the Abraham and Isaac story in Gen. 22:33.

## CHAPTER SIX

## Orgoglio and Despair:

## Temptation and Triumph

In the preceding chapter I have suggested that Spenser followed a traditional formula in his allegory of Holiness: virtue beating down and overcoming the vices which war against it. But there is no mechanical morality-play-like progress in the struggle Spenser depicts. In the first half of Book One the development is complex: the righteous man, Redcrosse, patron of true Holiness, encounters and conquers the vices Error and Sans foy (Faithlessness); he defeats but cannot kill Sans joy (Spiritual Joylessness). In each contest the knight fights bravely, is overcome temporarily (either astonished or knocked unconscious), and then awakened by the voice of faith, the spark of his own native virtue, or his quickening faith. He achieves one of the things he has set out to do: "prove his puissance in battell braue" (l. 3. 7). But by midpoint in the Legend of Holiness, he has not yet come to the knowledge of his "new force" (l. 3. 8), a second element in his quest. He comprehends only the powers of his good right arm. The reader knows, as do his enemies, that his own strength is augmented by the special powers contained in his armor that protect him from death.

Along with his victories over the more obvious vices are, as we have seen, conquests of subtler temptations to linger by the way or to sit down and seek respite from the arduous quest. Thus tempted in the bower of Fradubio, the knight heeds Fradubio's voice and his manhood is awakened. In like way, he responds when the voice of the Dwarf Prudence warns him away from the House of Pride.

But in Spenser's view of Holiness, a few victories over Pride and her cohorts do not mean that the righteous man's struggles are at an end.

The enemies of Holiness seek his overthrow "daily" (i. l. 2), intensifying their efforts, testing him when he is weak with still more powerful members of the train. So we now turn to two temptations, greater than any Redcrosse has heretofore faced, personified in Orgoglio and Despair.

The Orgoglio scene is literally the heart of the allegory of the Legend of Holiness: Spenser begins the second half of the book with it. In a sense, it is what all the previous action has been leading up to. We have seen some of the faces of temptation; we have also seen how Redcrosse's strength, armor, will, and preparedness have meant victory for his virtue. What happens when vice redoubles its efforts to conquer virtue, especially when virtue has been weakened after long struggle, is the poet's subject here.

Redcrosse, "his woundes wide/ Not throughly heald, unreadie . . . to ride" (5. 45. 4-5), has fled from the House of Pride after battling Sans joy. Weak and weary, he sits down in a glade beside a fountain. He unlaces his heavy armor so that he may rest comfortably. Duessa comes upon him, dissembles once more, and upbraids him for abandoning one so weak and in need of succor as herself. He drinks from the fountain and then rejoins her on the grassy knoll. Deceived again, Redcrosse treats Duessa with typical chivalric courtesy in a scene reminiscent of Fradubio's bower. Then a sound is heard, followed by the appearance of a great, grisly giant, Orgoglio, who attacks the knight. Unprotected by the armor he has put aside, weakened by his wounds, and unprepared to fight an enemy of such magnitude, Redcrosse is easily taken captive. This defeat of the knight by Orgoglio has often puzzled critics. How can the patron of true Holiness thus fall (that is, sin grievously) and remain holy? A careful reading of the scene against the background of temptations traced in the preceding chapter suggests an answer.

After fleeing from the House of Pride, Redcrosse "wearie sate/ To rest him selfe, foreby a fountain side,/ Disarmed all of yron-coted Plate" (7. 2. 6-8). The narrative stops at this point and Spenser gives us a history of the fountain:

. . . one day when Phoebe fayre  
With all her band was following the chace,  
This Nymph, quite tyr'd with heat of scorching ayre  
Sat downe to rest in middest of the race:  
The godesse wroth gan fowly her disgrace,  
And bad the waters, which from her did flow,  
Be such as she her selfe was then in place.  
Thenceforth her waters waxed dull and slow,  
And all that drunke thereof, did faint and feeble grow.

(7. 5. 1-9)

The myth here serves the same purpose as the epic simile describing the crocodile discussed in the preceding chapter: it illuminates the plight of the Red Cross Knight. Notice the repetition of images when Spenser describes the knight drinking from these waters:

Eftsoones his manly forces gan to faile,  
And mighty strong was turned to feeble fraile.  
His changed powres at first them selues not felt,  
Till curdled cold his corage gan assaile,  
And chearfull blood in faintnesse chill did melt,  
Which like a feuer fit through all his body melt.

(7. 6. 4-9)

The knight and the nymph are one. To sit down in the middle of the race, to linger, to seek rest, to forget the goal one is pledged to or, worse, to forget whom one is sworn to serve (whether the goddess Diana or one's Lord) is a great and subtle temptation, for even the truly holy man who has struggled long like Redcrosse may be unconscious of the slackening of his effort. Spenser echoes Paul's admonition in Corinthians (I Cor. 9:24) that there can be no halting in the race for salvation.

In this scene the challenge is a double one: not only is there a temptation to rest; there is also a call to mortal combat with a great adversary. For the first time the Knight of the Red Cross is unready to

meet the assault of vice. We know that his wounds from the battle with Sans joy have not healed and that his depleted "manly forces" (7. 6. 4) have been further diminished by his drinking from the fountain of forgetfulness. We know, too, that now Redcrosse must battle without his essential armor. He has had no time to buckle it on or to seize his shield before Orgoglio attacks him. Never before has he been so in need of his manly strength and his charmed arms, for never before has he faced an enemy so powerful. Even before Orgoglio can be seen, his "dreadful sownd" (7. 7. 4), like that of a terrible wind storm, causes the earth to shake and the trees to tremble. Redcrosse is astonished by his noise, but even more by the sight that follows it: "an hideous Geant horrible and hye. . . / The hight of three the tallest sonnes of mortall seed" (7. 8. 4,9). The narrative stops again so that we may learn the parentage of this monster: Aeolus, god of wind, and Earth claim as their progeny "this monstrous masse of earthly slime, / Puft vp with emptie wind, and fild with sinful crime" (7. 9. 8-9). Spenser's image here is a conflation of traditional materials dealing with the vice Pride. Orgoglio is the embodiment of Orguel, cited in many treatises as the first vice.<sup>1</sup> Orguel is spiritual pride, the more deadly counterpart of physical pride--more deadly because a man may be unconscious of possessing it and of the dangers it holds for him. To this concept Spenser welds another found in treatises on the vices and virtues, namely that of Vainglory, the fifth branch of Pride.<sup>2</sup> This vice is usually encountered as "the winds of vainglory which blow against the goods of grace, that is, virtues and good deeds."<sup>3</sup> These winds often "fell the highest trees, that is, the best men, the men in holynesse."<sup>4</sup> As we shall see presently, it is a great wind which overcomes Redcrosse; and later, when struck by Arthur, Orgoglio proves to be a great bag of wind which is quickly emptied. The image of an empty bladder usually signified the end of vainglory.<sup>5</sup> But Spenser is not emphasizing the temptation to vaingloriousness

as much as another familiar aspect of spiritual pride, the temptation to forgetfulness. In putting off his armor, Redcrosse, albeit temporarily, has removed from sight and mind the reminder of whose servant he is and of the true nature of the quest to which he has pledged himself.

When Orgoglio attacks, Redcrosse is therefore in a perilous state:

Disarmd, disgrast, and inwardly dismayde,  
And eke so faint in every ioynt and vaine,  
Through that fraile fountaine, which him feeble made,  
That scarcely could he weeld his bootlesse single blade.

(7. 1. 6-9)

The struggle which ensues is described in one stanza which must be read most carefully:

The Geaunt strooke so maynly merciless,  
That could haue ouerthrowne a stony towre,  
And were not heuenly grace, that him did blesse,  
He had been pouldred all, as thin as flowre :  
But he was wary of that deadly stowre,  
And lightly lept from vnderneath the blow:  
Yet so exceeding was the villeins powre,  
That with the wind it did him ouerthrow,  
And all hit sences stound, that still he lay full low.

(7. 12. 1-9)

If this giant's power is so great that it can overthrow a tower of stone, what hope is there for a man? Saved from certain death by the grace of heaven, Redcrosse leaps from beneath Orgoglio's blow only to be knocked to the ground by the wind which follows it. To make perfectly clear what has happened to the patron of Holiness, the poet employs another epic simile. The wind which overcomes Redcrosse is likened to the thunder of a cannon which "all the air doth choke,/ That none can breath, nor see, nor hear at will" (7. 13. 6-7). This "stincking smoke" daunts the knight "who hath escapt the stroke" (7. 13. 8-9)

In the lesser temptations of the first half of Book One, Redcrosse had also been in dire straits, sometimes faint or unconscious, but a voice had called him back to his senses so that he might triumph or escape. But

now there is no Una to counsel him to add faith to his force. Una's absence from the Orgoglio scene is significant (as is the presence of Arthur in its aftermath), since it further underlines the knight's separation from spiritual truth. Thrown back upon the knowledge learned in the world of experience, from "the book of nature," Redcrosse relies on his natural powers, blind to or forgetful of the limitations of these powers.

One key passage in the Orgoglio scene often overlooked makes clear again the nature of the strength which saves men. This is where we are told that the giant could have ground the Knight of the Red Cross into flour "were not heauenly grace, that him did blesse" (7. 12. 3). Man's need for grace is central to Spenser's vision of Holiness. That it is grace alone which rescues man in times of trial the poet states directly when he addresses the reader at the beginning of Canto Eight:

Ay me, how meny perils doe enfold  
The righteous man, to make him daily fall?  
Were not, that heuenly grace doth him vphold,  
And stedfast truth acquite him out of all.  
Her loue is firme, her care continuall,  
So oft as he through his owne foolish pride,  
Or weaknesse is to sinfull bands made thrall. . . .

(8. 1. 1-7)

The conditional "Were not, that heuenly grace doth him vphold" is virtually the same expression Spenser used in describing Redcrosse's narrow escape from death at Orgoglio's hands: "And were not heuenly grace, that him did blesse" (7. 12. 3). And of course, the repetition underlines the poet's point.

But while nothing worthwhile can be accomplished without faith, not everything can be done with faith alone. Spenser is too much of a realist to suggest that faith or the gentle Una can extricate Redcrosse from the solid prison in which he now lies. A third party is needed, with powers that neither of the other two possesses. Upon learning from the Dwarf of

her companion's sad plight, Una wanders far and wide before she meets a possible rescuer of her knight. She implores this person to use his "prowesse" (7. 42. 8); the Dwarf, too, asks him to exercise his "mightie powres" (8. 2. 6). The individual appealed to is, of course, Arthur, and the powers he brings to bear deserve our careful and detailed consideration.

Lest there be any confusion as to Arthur's role in the allegory of Book One, Spenser painstakingly delineates that prince's function in the Letter appended to the first installment.<sup>6</sup> Slightly less than half of the Letter, in fact, deals with Arthur.

The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceiued shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample: I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former workes, and also furthest from the daunger of enuy, and suspition of present time. In which I haue followed all the antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Vlysses hath ensampled a good gouernour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso disseuered them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in Philosophy call Ethice, or vertues of a priuate man, coloured in his Rinaldo: The other named Politice in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict, in Arthure, before he was king, 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 books: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged, to frame the other part of polliticke vertues in his person, after that hee came to be king. . . .

So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deedes of Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke.<sup>7</sup>

To understand Spenser's conception and use of Magnificence, one must know something of the tradition in which that virtue evolved. Like Holiness, it has a long history.

Plato did not discuss the virtue in his works. Magnificence enters the tradition in the Nichomachean Ethics of Aristotle as the moral virtue which concerns itself with wealth and the expending of it in great sums.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, Aristotle's Magnificence is not Spenser's. The virtue that will evolve into Spenser's Magnificence has its beginning in Cicero. In the latter's De Inventione (which like his De Officiis was known to every schoolboy), Magnificence is held to be a form of Fortitude, the virtue "by which one undertakes dangerous tasks and endures hardships."<sup>9</sup> As the first subpart of this classical virtue, Magnificence is defined as "the contemplation and execution of great and sublime projects with a certain grandeur and magnificence of imagination."<sup>10</sup> Upon this Ciceronian foundation, as a form of Fortitude concerned with noble deeds, all later formulations of Magnificence would be developed.

Macrobius, the fifth century writer and philosopher credited with transmitting Ciceronian thought into the Middle Ages, followed the Roman philosopher's scheme of four virtues with numerous subparts and continued the designation of Magnificence as a form of Fortitude.<sup>11</sup> But Macrobius made Magnanimity the first subpart of Fortitude and Magnificence the fourth.

Cicero's Fortitude

magnificentia

fiducia

patientia

perseverantia

Macrobius' Fortitude

magnanimitas

fiducia

securitas

magnificentia

constantia

tolerantia

firmitas

In comparing the two schemes, we see why there was a later confusion between Magnificence and Magnanimity. Macrobius interchanged these two virtues and then seemingly linked Magnificence with Perseverance. Since

his short discourse on the virtues contained no definitions, writers on moral philosophy who followed his scheme supplied their own definitions.

In the Middle Ages expositors, who were more often than not churchmen, copied, intermingled and ultimately Christianized the four classical virtues (Wisdom, Temperance, Fortitude or Courage, and Justice) and their now traditional subparts, using Cicero and Macrobius quite freely. Fortitude was designated a cardinal virtue and Magnificence one of its manifestations as early as 1150 in Guillaume de Conches' Moralium dogma philosophorum, one of the most widely disseminated treatises of the Middle Ages and a model for many more famous expositions, notably those of Alan of Lille (Alanus de Insulus) and John of Wales in the thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Guillaume drew heavily upon Cicero's writings to fashion a description of the virtue Magnificence which contains "the usual meanings of Christian charity as the Powerful are advised to practice it in the use of their Force--great things always and only for the others' benefit, mildness and a forgiving temper, absence of vindictiveness toward enemies, absence of self-aggrandizement or other ambitious motives, power only defensible as the agent of Concord."<sup>13</sup> This description supplies the basic outline of the portrait of the truly magnificent man, one fleshed out centuries later in the Renaissance ideal.

But in addition to these scholarly works Spenser may, as Rosemond Tuve suggests, have drawn upon a popular tradition of the moral virtues, one passed down from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in summas, handbooks, imaginative literature and iconography.<sup>14</sup> In these works the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit to man (seven kinds of grace) nourish the seven principal virtues and root out the seven vices (sometimes designated the Seven Deadly Sins). This conception of the grace of God being poured down in the form of moral gifts was known to all, even to the illiterate, who learned of it from parish priests using standard manuals for the instruction

of the faithful. Indeed, the gifts-vices-virtues tradition was far better known than the more formally derived scheme of the seven cardinal virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins.<sup>15</sup> The former conception gained in popularity as the lovely image of a garden of virtues waxing in the heart of man was promulgated; this image became a favorite in iconographical representation, along with the depiction of gifts and virtues overcoming vices.<sup>16</sup> Artists and writers were not content with just seven gifts and virtues. As a consequence, the original gifts cited by Isaiah and linked by Augustine to the Beatitudes were expanded, just as the schemes of Cicero and Macrobius were centuries before; and the virtues acquired their subparts.

The source for this tradition which probably gave Spenser his conception of Magnificence as the perfecting virtue was Frere Lorens' Somme des Vices et Vertues (1279), or Somme le roi as it is sometimes called, the most widely disseminated text on the seven gifts and their virtues in Europe from the thirteenth century onward.<sup>17</sup> Lorens' popularization of the works of the scholars Raymond of Pennafort (Summa Casuum Poenitentiae, 1235) and Peraldus (Summa de Vitiis and Summa de Virtutibus, both 1261) was known in England long before it was translated and published by William Caxton in 1486 as the Ryal book.<sup>18</sup> Chaucer and Gower used it in their writings on the moral virtues.<sup>19</sup> Dan Michel of Northgate called his 1340 translation of Lorens the Ayenbite of Inwit; an unknown writer composed a more popular redaction simply titled The Book of Vices and Virtues (c. 1350); and one William of Nassyngton versified the Somme as Speculum Vitae (c. 1350).<sup>20</sup>

In these treatises the divine gift of Fortitude (also designated Strength or Force) inculcated the virtue of Prowess (also called Doughtiness) in all who hungered and thirsted after holiness.<sup>21</sup> Prowess had seven degrees, the sixth of which was Magnificence.<sup>22</sup> Doughtiness and Magnificence

thus were linked and, in fact, were sometimes seen to be synonymous, as in The Book of Vices and Virtues, where Doughtiness is called the sixth degree of Prowess.<sup>23</sup> Spenser, as we shall see, used all three terms--Doughtiness, Prowess, and Magnificence--in Book One of The Faerie Queene.

That Spenser borrowed from the popular tradition for his concept of Magnificence becomes still clearer when the texts of English versions of the Somme are consulted. Thus Caxton:

The vi degree of prowesse is magnyfycence. This vertue expresseth & declareth also the phylosophre sayeng Magnyfycence is an hye werke and happy achyevyng. Our Lord Jhesu Cryst the soverayn phylosophre calleth this vertue perseveraunce by whyche the good knyght of God endureth the evulles unto the endes in the hye waye of perfectyon which he hath empyred. Of thys vertu sayth saynt poula that al the vertues renne/ but this vertu wynneth the swerde Alle they fyght but this hath the vycторыe & the croune. Alle werken. But thys vertu of perseveraunce bereth away the rewarde and the meryte. For oure lord Jhesu Cryste sayth, who that shal persevere unto the ende he shal be saved & none other.<sup>24</sup>

The power and strength alluded to here are courtly and chivalrous, but the acts which they effect are spiritual as well as physical. The strength give to man is the strength to persevere in the great struggle to overcome vice. Credit is given to Cicero (the philosopher referred to), but it is the sovereign philosopher Christ who related Magnificence to Perseverance in the struggle for perfection. Paul made Magnificence the fountain out of which all virtues flow, the victory, the crown, the reward.

Magnificence, then, as described in the Somme (and numerous other books on the virtues) is something more involved than the classical quality expounded by Aristotle, Cicero, and the rest. It is a gift of the grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit under the form of Fortitude by virtue of which the "good knyght of God"<sup>25</sup> has the prowess or spiritual stamina to accomplish high and noble tasks; even more importantly, it is the strength to endure all trials and temptations on the road to perfection. Magnificence is the virtue necessary for the completion of all the other virtues and is

itself their source and sum.

This is the virtue Spenser "sets forth" in Arthur,<sup>26</sup> in whose actions we behold the intervention and operation of divine grace in the world.

Arthur assents to Una's request to rescue her knight, but first he must save his beloved squire, whose manly courage has been quelled by Duessa's magic. The puissance Arthur displays in the ensuing fray serves as a "proud ensample" (8. 16. 3) to all who fight the good fight. But his real power to overcome lies in the supernatural qualities of Arthur's shield, the light of which overwhelms both Orgoglio and the seven-headed beast of Duessa. Once again the Pauline metaphor is given concrete form: "above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16).

Arthur then proceeds to rescue Redcrosse from prison. In having the latter watched over by old Ignaro, foster father of Orgoglio, Spenser makes another telling point: ignorance fosters spiritual pride; ignorance keeps men in darkness. It should be noted, however, that the dungeon in which Redcrosse is held now differs from Lucifera's "Dongeon mercillesse" where the thralls of Pride "liue in woe, and die in wretchednesse" (5. 46. 8-9). Orgoglio's dungeon is a place where many holy innocents and holy martyrs have suffered before, following their capture by Spiritual Pride. Redcrosse's agony here is the experience sometimes called the dark night of the soul, which the holy man endures until Heavenly Grace effects his rescue.

When Arthur calls out to the knight of Holiness in this prison, we recognize an element in the now familiar pattern of Spenser's temptation scenes: the call of faith and grace which quickens the knight and saves him from destruction. Following the rescue, Arthur gently counsels the knight of Holiness, first obliquely as he comments to Una on the events of that day:

But th'onely good, that growes of passed feare,  
Is to be wise, and ware of like agein.  
This dayes ensample hath this lesson deare  
Deepe written in my heart with yron pen,  
That blisse may not abide in state of mortall men.

(8. 44. 5-9)

While Redcrosse lives, he must be ready to struggle daily with the foes of virtue. There will be no rest for him. He must guard against being deceived again,

Then in a direct address to the knight, Arthur instructs Redcrosse in the correct manner of meeting temptations:

Henceforth sir knight, take to you wonted strength,  
And master these mishaps with patient might.

(8. 45. 1-2)

Strength and might are stressed, but the meaning of "wonted strength" is ambiguous. It could be that Redcrosse is to fight with his customary prowess and bear trials patiently. But since his customary strength has not been sufficient to withstand Orgoglio, we must look for another meaning. "Wonted" here may refer to the strength drawn upon by all heroes in their struggles with vice, to wit, supernatural strength. Support for this second reading comes in the fact that Redcrosse, in putting off his armor and in abandoning Una, had lost the wonted strength with which previously he had defeated temptations. Further support for this reading is found in the exchange of gifts which takes place between Arthur and Redcrosse. The prince gives the knight a precious casket containing some "few drops of liquor pure, / Of wondrous worth, and vertue excellent. . . ." (9. 19. 3-4). The liquor represents the gift of the Spirit which nourishes the virtues Prowess and Magnificence. These qualities will be incorporated into Redcrosse's strength in battles to come.

The battle with Orgoglio over, Redcrosse must confront Despair, "a

man of Hell" (9. 28. 5) who will use words to lead the knight to destroy himself. The scene with Despair closely follows the pattern of subtle temptations traced in the previous chapter of this dissertation but resembles the Orgoglio scene in that the knight joins the encounter in a weakened state. But the end is different: Redcrosse experiences his first spiritual triumph.

Filled with "fine zeale" and "courage bold" (9. 37. 4), Redcrosse would go against Despair, despite Una's warning of his weakness. The man of Hell fights with words. He conjures up visions of eternal rest which men crave and then reminds the knight of the times he has wandered from the true path into evil ways. Why continue? Despair asks:

For he, that once hath missed the right way,  
The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray.

(9. 43. 8-9)

Then do no further goe, no further stray,  
But here lie downe, and to thy rest betake. . . .

(9. 44. 1-2)

But despair is not done; he proceeds to recount Redcrosse's "lucklesse disauntures" (9. 45. 4) and then poses some overwhelming philosophical questions:

Why then does thou, O man of sin, desire  
To draw thy dayes forth to their last degree?  
Is not the measure of thy sinfull hire  
High heaped vp with huge iniquitie,  
Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?  
Is not enough, that to this Ladie milde  
Thou falsed has thy faith with periurie,  
And sold thy selfe to serue Duessa vilde,  
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy selfe defilde?

(9. 46. 1-9)

Despair's distorted but cogent indictment of the knight's past behavior causes Redcrosse to quake, faint many times, and contemplate suicide. At the last moment, he is saved by Una, who snatched the knife out of his

hand. Her voice calls him back to life and remembrance of his quest:

Fie, fie, faint harted knight,  
What meanest thou by this reprochfull strife?  
Is this the battell, which thou vauntst to fight  
With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and bright?

(9. 52. 6-9)

The same truthful voice issues another reminder:

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight,  
Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,  
Ne diuelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.  
In heuenly mercies hast thou not a part?  
Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?  
Where iustice growes, there grows eke greater grace,  
The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,  
And that accurst hand-writing doth deface.  
Arise, Sir knight arise, and leaue this cursed place.

(9. 53. 1-9)

At these words, "vp he rose, and thence amounted streight" (9. 54. 1),<sup>27</sup> and we know that his battle against Despair has been won.<sup>28</sup>

The despair scene, one of the high points of the allegory in Book One, shows Spenser once again reshaping traditional materials to his own ends. Despair or Wanhope, as the vice is sometimes designated in treatises on the virtues vices and in morality plays,<sup>29</sup> personifies man's loss of hope in himself and in his success in spiritual endeavors. But Spenser's Despair is something more than abstract negation; he is a brilliant debater who singles out unerringly Redcrosse's every weakness and mistake; some of the best lines of the poem are his. The knight's struggle with Despair is a real spiritual battle against an extremely gifted adversary. It is only the voice of Redcrosse's own quickening faith which saves him from defeat at the last instant. Arthur's gift of grace, namely Magnificence or Perseverance, enables the knight of Holiness to rise up and continue his quest.

So Redcrosse's faith and virtue save him, not his physical powers, and the allegory comes full circle back to its starting point. The poet

has stated that heavenly grace and steadfast truth protect the holy man from perils and the prospect of fall. Having shown the efficacy of grace in rescuing Redcrosse, he proclaims again the inadequacy of man's own powers and his need for supernatural aid:

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

(10. 1. 6-9)

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>W. Francis Nelson, ed., The Book of Vices and Virtues, EETS, vol. 217 (1942), p. vlv1.
- <sup>2</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 18f.
- <sup>3</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 20.
- <sup>4</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 20.
- <sup>5</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 21.
- <sup>6</sup>"A Letter of the Authors" in Variorum, I, 167-170.
- <sup>7</sup>Variorum, I, 167-168.
- <sup>8</sup>"Nichomachean Ethics," Bk. IV, Chap. 2, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), pp. 379-383.
- <sup>9</sup>De Inventione, trans. H. M. Hubbell, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 331.
- <sup>10</sup>De Inventione, p. 331.
- <sup>11</sup>Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, tr. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 120-124.
- <sup>12</sup>See Rosemond Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and the Vices, Part I: Two Fifteenth-Century Lines of Dependency on the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," JWCI, XXVI (1963), 264-330, and her book, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 60-65.
- <sup>13</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 83.
- <sup>14</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 80f.
- <sup>15</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 81.
- <sup>16</sup>See Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 23, figure 7; p. 115, figure 25, and p. 117, figure 26.
- <sup>17</sup>Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 80f.
- <sup>18</sup>For a discussion of popular manuals of instruction in English and their literary counterparts based on the Somme, see Albert C. Baugh's chapter, "The Omnibus of Religion," in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), pp. 202-204.
- <sup>19</sup>Baugh, p. 204; Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 81.
- <sup>20</sup>Baugh, p. 204.

<sup>21</sup>For a discussion of the gift Fortitude and the virtue Prowess, see The Book of Vices and Virtues, pp. 162-187.

<sup>22</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 163.

<sup>23</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, pp. 169, 187.

<sup>24</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 169. Tuve in Allegorical Imagery, pp. 57-58, quotes the same passage from Wybken de Worde's 1507 reproduction of Caxton's Ryal Book, STC 21429.

<sup>25</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup>"A Letter of the Authors," in Variorum, I, 168.

<sup>27</sup>This point has been made earlier. To rise up early is traditionally to be in the correct moral frame, to be on guard, to be obedient, to be ready to serve. See the Abraham and Isaac story in Gen. 22:33.

<sup>28</sup>Spenser supplies this interpretation in the four-line introduction to Canto Nine:

His loues and lignage Arthur tells:  
The knights knit friendly bands:  
Sir Treuisan flies from Despayre,  
Whom Redcrosse knight withstands.

<sup>29</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 22: "the devil gives him [the man who despairs] a stroke of death and puts him in wanhope and slays him." Despair appears in the plays Mankind and Mary Magdalene and in Skelton's Magnygyence.

<sup>30</sup>Arthur comforted the grieving Una with these words when they first met. See 7. 41. 7.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## The Way to Perfection

As Canto Ten begins, Redcrosse and Una are journeying on the narrow path that leads to the House of Holiness. Redcrosse, having strayed to the broad highway with all its spiritual perils, and having but recently escaped the long, debilitating imprisonment by Orgoglio, is not fit to continue the quest assigned him by the Faerie Queene. His companion Una, "whose love is firm" and "care continuall" (8. 1. 5), guides him to the house of Dame Coelia so that he may recover from "his late decayed plight" (10. 2. 9) before he attempts to rescue her parents. Throughout the narrative Una has played a crucial role, more than once saving the life of the Red Cross Knight when his enemies had overpowered him. That Spenser considered her, or the qualities she embodied, essential to the knight's attainment of perfection in Holiness there can be no doubt. It is time that we paused to examine her role in the allegory of Book One.

In the Oxford Companion to English Literature (1946) there is an article about Una by Sir Paul Harvey which tells us that "in Book I of Spenser's Faerie Queene [Una] typifies the true religion. She is separated from the Red Cross Knight of Holiness (the Anglican Church) by the wiles of Archimago, but meets and is protected by a lion (England), until the latter is killed by Sansloy, who carries Una off to a forest. She is rescued by fauns and satyrs, and is finally united to the Red Cross Knight."<sup>1</sup> But what have we here, a political-religious allegory dealing with the Anglican-Roman conflict? And what of the moral virtues and, specifically, Holiness that Spenser declared he was setting forth in Redcrosse? Is Book One an artfully disguised piece of Tudor propaganda? And if it is, what are we to make of the fact that at the end of the

book "the Anglican Church" and "the true religion" are separated?

But the role of Una has been variously interpreted, even by critics less inclined to ingeniousness and political apology than Harvey.

Upton (1758): Unity, Christian truth, humility.

Church (1758): Truth, the one and only bride of man's spirit, marked out by the tokens of humility and innocence.

Warton (1762): Singular and unparalleled excellence.

Ruskin (1853): Truth.

Harrison (1903): Platonic wisdom; Platonic unity of truth and beauty.

Padelford (1923): Christian truth.

Parker (1960): Divine truth as revealed to man.

Hamilton (1961): Wisdom, Faith, Truth, true Church, Church Militant.

Nelson (1963): Faith of Red Cross; faith in prelapsarian purity.

Kellogg and Steele (1965): Unitas of Pilgrim's Progress; truth and true church; Platonic unity of truth and beauty.

Tuve (1966): truth of the Godhead, Three in One.<sup>2</sup>

In over two hundred years of Spenser commentary, as we see, there have been numerous identifications with little agreement, and even less in the way of exhaustive and coherent discussion, as to Una's role. Once again we find ourselves turning to the moral virtue tradition, on which we know Spenser relied, to aid us in our interpretation.

The best place to start is the poet's own words. In his Letter to Raleigh, Spenser recounts the action leading up to the quest of the Red Cross Knight and his companion Una:

In the beginning of the feast, there presented him selfe a tall clownishe younge man, who falling before the Queen of Faeries desired a boone (as the manner then was) which during that feast she might not refuse: which was that hee might haue the atchieuement of any aduenture, which during that feaste should happen, that being graunted, he rested him on the floore, vnfitte through his rusticity for a better place. Soone after entred a faire Ladye in mourning weedes, riding on a white Asse, with a dwarfe

behind her leading a warlike steed, that bore the Armes of a knight, and his speare in the dwarfes hand. Shee falling before the Queene of Faeries, complayned that her father and mother an ancient King and Queene, had bene by an huge dragon many years shut up in a brasen Castle, who thence suffred them not to yssew: and therefore besought the Faery Queene to assygne her some one of her knights to take on him that explot. Presently that clownish person vpstarting, desired that aduenture: whereat the Queene much wondering, and the Lady much gainesaying, yet he earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the lady told him that vnlesse that armour which she brought, would serue him (that is the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise, which being forthwith put vpon him with dewe furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in al that company, and was well liked of the Lady. And estesoones taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that straunge Courser, he went forth with her on that aduenture.<sup>3</sup>

The enumeration of familiar romance motif: the boon begging chivalric adventure; the aiding of the maiden in distress; the king and queen shut up in a brazen tower, captive to a dragon; the transformation of the rustic, clownish youth into the godliest of men, along with the particular reference to the armor of a Christian knight according to St. Paul--all this makes clear the genre of the Legend of Holiness. The information about Una given us in the Letter is repeated in the short two-stanza description of her at the beginning of the poem. Following immediately on the three stanzas which introduce and portray the knight, these eighteen lines help to establish the tone and direction of the allegory and supply the first hints as to Una's identity and role:

A louely Ladie rode him faire beside,  
 Vpon a lowly Asse more white then snow,  
 Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide  
 Vnder a vele, that wimpled was full low,  
 And ouer all a blacke stole she did throw,  
 As one that inly mournd; so was she sad,  
 And heauie sat vpon her palfrey slow;  
 Seemed in heart some hiddn care she had,  
 And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.

So pure an innocent, as that same lambe,  
 She was in life and euery vertuous lore,  
 And by descent from Royall lynage came  
 Of ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore  
 Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore,  
 And all the world in their subiection held;

Till that infernall feend with foule vprone  
Forwasted all their land, and them expeld:  
Whom to auenge, she had this Knight from far compeld.

(l. 4 and l. 5)

In the first stanza we see Una from a distance. The lovely lady seated on a milk-white donkey, leading a milk-white lamb, is reminiscent of many tapestries and illustrations calling to mind perhaps the maiden aided by St. George in the Golden Legend.<sup>4</sup> In the second stanza, the angle of vision sharpens, but not to let us see Una's physical beauty, as might be expected in a romance. Rather, Spenser emphasizes her innocence and purity, for which the white lamb is the traditional emblem. As daughter of Adam and Even, she possesses the innocence of man before the Fall. Moreover, her spiritual perfection is matched by her perfect knowledge of every virtue.<sup>5</sup>

But this is only the manifest content of Spenser's depiction of Una. His contemporary readers, accustomed to reading romances allegorically, could find other moral and spiritual significations in the appealing figure of the knight's companion.<sup>6</sup> They could link the maiden and the milk-white lamb to the Saint George story in the Golden Legend (and then have their insight confirmed in Canto Two, where Spenser speaks of the resemblance between Redcrosse and Saint George).<sup>7</sup> Una's plight comprises a traditional situation faced by the hero in moral allegory: the warfaring knight (Saint George or Redcrosse) manifests chivalry terrestrial in his succor of his lady and in his efforts to rescue her parents; by his example he instructs other men in virtuous action and reminds them that virtuous perfection is only possible in a life of ceaseless endeavor.<sup>8</sup> Una's role on this level, as the distressed maiden of legend, is passive. Since she takes a very active role in The Faerie Queene, however, we must assume that she has other significations.

Spenser's audience could recognize a familiar figure in the maiden expelled from the forwasted kingdom by infernal fiend and forced into the wilderness; namely, the sorrowful lady in the Book of Revelation 12, who in texts and iconography came to represent the one true church, the true faith, and the original pure Christianity as opposed to the corrupt Roman Church symbolized by the whore of Babylon, also in Revelation (and of course by Duessa).<sup>9</sup> But the important consideration for our purpose here is not the possible religious-political allegory. Rather it is what Spenser suggests in making the true church or the true faith the companion of the patron of Holiness. Una's role in this respect is both obvious and traditional: holiness and faith must go hand in hand. Since the first law of the supernatural life is faith,<sup>10</sup> no true holiness is possible to man--to Redcrosse--without faith, which stems from the possession of Christian truth as embodied in Una.

In his initial description of Una, Spenser seems to suggest the Wisdom figure of traditional materials.<sup>11</sup> It is perfectly correct in an allegorical sense that the knight not be cognizant of the identity of his companion; he is rude and untutored and she is heavily veiled. As one critic has observed, "Una's face is veiled even from her chosen knight (i.e. as Plato put it, the truth is seen dimly); Truth cannot be perceived in all her perfection by a man who is still unpurified."<sup>12</sup> Only when perfected in his virtue is the knight capable of recognizing and responding to the beauty of truth, is he possessed of Wisdom.

Plato believed (and Aristotle, Cicero, and the rest after him) that wisdom is to be desired and sought after in the world.<sup>13</sup> Men finding her would be ravished by her beauty and learn to love only her. Everything else would seem false or inferior.

When the Aristotelian conception of Wisdom is allegorized, it takes on

a dynamic quality. Wisdom being absent, vice succeeds in deluding man, who recovers his reason and once more behaves virtuously only when Wisdom returns.<sup>14</sup> Cicero, following Plato, celebrated Wisdom as the princeps of virtues in his treatise on moral perfection.<sup>15</sup> Man's first duty, Cicero insists, is to search after wisdom and truth. "We are attracted to her by zeal for learning, and in thinking it glorious to deal therein while we count it base and immoral to fall into error, to wander from truth, to be ignorant, to be led astray."<sup>16</sup>

But the commonplaces allegorized by Spenser are not entirely classical in origin. They cut across many cultures and times. The female figure embodying Truth and Wisdom is universal. In Semitic literature, specifically in Philo Judaeus, she is the daughter of Adam and Eve.<sup>17</sup> In the Pseudo-Solomon of the Apocrypha, the king is enamored of her and ravished at the sight of her beauty; he wishes to make her his bride forever.<sup>18</sup> In the Book of Proverbs (or Book of Wisdom, as it is sometimes called), the lady is the possessor of all virtues and the bestower of them upon all who will harken to her teachings.<sup>19</sup> It is she who leads men to God. Man's duty, she reiterates tirelessly, is to search for her, for only in the possession of her, will man "understand the fear of the Lord, and find knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:5). In the New Testament, Wisdom is equated with fear of the Lord, then knowledge of the self and of God.<sup>20</sup> In the Christian era, the lovely Wisdom figure was fused with the heavenly Virgin, guide to man in this vale of tears.<sup>21</sup> In another aspect of the Christian synthesis, the Wisdom figure was equated or became synonymous with the true religion.<sup>22</sup> The reader of Spenser marvels that so many of these commonplaces about Wisdom appear in Book One.

Spenser's technique for revealing the identity of Una in the poem has been compared to the exfoliation of a flower.<sup>23</sup> Hint follows hint, the

separate petals unfold, until the whole is defined. As Redcrosse's mentor, Una proclaims the necessity of wisdom (1. 13. 4) and faith (1. 19. 3) in heroic enterprise. Then, watchful that we do not miss any point in the allegory, Spenser identifies Una with Truth in Canto Two.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere Spenser describes Una as "faithful" (3. 3. 1); notes her "simple truth (3. 6. 5) and "humbleness" (3. 26. 9); hails her as "the floure of faith and chastity" (3. 23. 5) and as "the floure of faith and beautie excellent" (6. 15. 5). Her "wisedome heuenly rare" (6. 31. 1) manifests itself in her teaching all men "trew sacred lore" (6. 30. 9) and "her discipline of faith and verite" (6. 31. 9). Although Una's virtuous qualities are numerous, no reader can miss in these epithets the repetition of key words that denote her chief roles: Faith, Truth, Wisdom.

It is interesting to speculate as to why Spenser did not completely utilize another powerful traditional figure evoked by the image of the lovely lady on a donkey leading a lamb: the Lady or Madonna of Humility. A key figure in treatises, conduct books, and iconographical renderings of the virtues,<sup>25</sup> Humility is a virtue who nourishes the other virtues, whom she also leads in battles against the vices. In the final battle she alone is able to overcome Pride.<sup>26</sup> Spenser embodies in Una the role of nourisher and guide in battle but gives over the conquest of Pride to Holiness.

On another level, Humility was the virtue which inculcated true knowledge of the self, recognition of one's frailty, and gratitude to God for his grace and mercy.<sup>27</sup> Redcrosse's desire to learn the nature of his force might be seen allegorically as a search for self-knowledge. But Spenser, I think, holds the view that the knowledge Redcrosse needs to incorporate within himself in order to complete his quest goes beyond Humility.

The actual Humility figure in Book One of The Faerie Queene is something of a surprise: no lovely maiden but the aged, feeble male porter at

the door of the House of Holiness. Humiltà, as he is called, conducts Una and Redcrosse to the court of Dame Coelia and then is seen no more. It is wrong to exaggerate Humiltà's role in the allegory of Holiness, as do certain critics who claim that in Coelia's house the knight learns a perfect humility defined as "a denial of one's own powers, the knowledge of one's insufficiency without grace, and hence the absence of spiritual or intellectual pride."<sup>28</sup> The knight does learn these things, but he learns much more besides. By placing Humility at the entrance to the House of Holiness and having his seeming counterpart, the aged, blind, feeble sire Contemplation complete the education of the Red Cross Knight, Spenser suggests the traditional progress to perfection which begins with the gift of Humility inculcating true knowledge of self and ends in Wisdom, perfect knowledge of all things.<sup>29</sup>

Like the House of Pride, the House of Holiness serves as the setting for a learning experience. In the former Redcrosse had been shown the true nature of the vice Pride, as the way to death and hell. He will now learn the true nature of the virtue Holiness, as the path to greater life and heaven. Holiness requires more than heroic strength and glorious intentions; it demands an understanding of the relationship between man and God as it is revealed by true religion. So after Redcrosse is refreshed by rest, Una makes this request of Coelia's daughter Fidelia (Faith);

To haue her knight into her schoolehouse plaste,  
That of her heuenly learning he might taste,  
And heare the wisdom of her words diuine.  
She graunted, and that knight so much agraste,  
That she him taught celestiall discipline,  
And opened his dull eyes, that light mote in them shine.

(10. 18. 4-9)

Note the reference to Redcrosse's ignorance as blindness. The light of Faith is necessary for him to see clearly and to understand those things

"That the weaker wit of man could neuer reach/ Of God, of grace, of iustice, of free will" (10. 19. 5-6). Schooled thus, he grows in heavenly knowledge. But this new knowledge brings him pain, reminding him of his past weakness and sin. Another of Coelia's daughters Speranza (hope) assuages him, advising him to hold onto her anchor (the traditional anchor of hope) lest he forget all that Fidelia has taught him. (Here Spenser is alluding to the Pauline idea of Hope as concomitant of Faith.)<sup>30</sup> But the sight of Una, a reminder of his former forgetfulness, returns him to despair once more. Wise Coelia sends the virtues Patience and Penance to treat his ailing conscience. In the House of Penance he is cured of every ill. A now joyful Una guides him to Charissa (Charity), the third daughter of Coelia, who teaches him love, righteousness, well-doing, and the path to heaven.

Spenser then allegorizes another Pauline tenet--that true faith expresses itself in charity<sup>31</sup>--by having Mercy, at Charissa's request, accompany the knight to the Holy Hospital, where Redcrosse learns the seven works of mercy. So efficacious has been the knight's instruction in the House of Holiness--with its "many mansions" of Faith, Hope, Penance, and Charity--that Redcrosse is adjudged to possess the virtue of Holiness in the highest degree:

Shortly therein so perfect he became,  
That from the first vnto the last degree,  
His mortall life he learned to frame  
In holy righteousnesse, without rebuke or blame.

(10. 45. 6-9)

The Holiness Redcrosse has attained consists in true and perfect knowledge of himself and of his relationship to his Lord and to his fellow men. His possession of this knowledge brings the reward of the beatific vision which traditionally (in classical and Christian terms) signals the possession of wisdom. The knight of Holiness experiences a vision of the

Heavenly City on the mount of Contemplation and learns from the old man who dwells on that height that he, Redcrosse, will be a saint one day. But Redcrosse responds with perfect humility:

Vnworthy wretch (quoth he) of so great grace  
How dare I thinke such glory to attaine?

(10. 62. 1-2)

And then he accepts the aged hermit's reply:

These that haue it attaind, were in like cace  
(quoth he) as wretched, and liu'd in like paine.

(10. 62. 3-4)

The references to wretchedness and pain call to mind the grievous wounds inflicted on Redcrosse by Sans joy, the imprisonment in Orgoglio's dungeon, the near fatal interview with Despair. But to the man who has traveled through the House of Holiness to the Mount of Contemplation and has seen Fidelia's glorious house among the bright stars of heaven, these trials seem to have taken place a long time ago. Redcrosse asks leave to remain with Contemplation so that he may live out his life in peace and never again have to jeopardize his state of sanctity. But the hermit reminds him there can be no rest until Redcrosse has fulfilled his pledge to Una to rescue her parents from the dragon. Redcrosse returns to Una and the quest.

The battle between Redcrosse and the Dragon will be unlike any of the other battles in Book One of The Faerie Queene. From the den of Errour to the cave of Despair there has been a sense of fear and foreboding about the outcome of the knight's battles. Now as Una prepares Redcrosse for his climactic struggle, she reminds him to be ever ready for the foe, praises his virtue, and looks to the outcome with confidence:

The sparke of noble courage now awake,  
And striue your excellent selfe to excell;  
That shall ye euermore renowned make,  
Aboue all knights on earth, that batteill vndertake.

(11. 2. 6-9)

The poet too seems caught up in the same optimism. Stopping the narrative, he invokes his muse for twenty-two lines so "That I this man of God his godly armes may blaze" (ll. 7. 9). Why this new mood of confidence? As Spenser says, Redcrosse now is a man of God; he has traveled the way to perfection and his "mortall life he learned had to frame/ In holy righteousnesse, without rebuke or blame" (10. 45. 8-9). In Una's view, Redcrosse, schooled in the House of Holiness, now possesses the faith and truth needed by the holy man to persevere in all trials and win all struggles with his enemies. Her knight will not despair, for his Lord's grace will always succor him in those dark moments when the tide of battle seems to go against him. He will fight on when all appears lost because he knows that what is impossible to weak human nature is possible to him through grace.

Redcrosse's three-day battle with the fire-breathing dragon allegorizes the holy man cooperating with the gift of grace and trusting in its efficacy as he struggles with evil. Like those other monsters Error and Orgoglio, the dragon emits a deadly stench which may overpower an opponent. Following the first day's battle, a "faint, wearie, sore, embroyled, brent" (ll. 28. 1) Redcrosse is cast into a nearby spring, whose waters, we are told, are "full of great vertues" (ll. 29. 5) and capable of curing any ill. The wondrous powers of these waters are evident in Redcrosse's complete recovery. He rises from the spring next morning fresh as an eagle to resume the fight. So great is the knight's prowess that the narrator exclaims:

I wote not, whether the reuenging steele  
Were hardned with that holy water dew,  
Wherein he fell, or sharper edge did feele,  
Or his baptized hands now greater grew;  
Or other secret vertue did ensew;  
Else neuer could the force of fleshly arme,  
Ne molten mettall in his bloud embrew;  
For till that stownd could neuer wight him harme,  
By subtilty, nor slight, nor might, nor mighty charme.

(ll. 36. 1-9)

The events of the second day of battle are like those of the first. A weary, wounded, scorched Redcrosse falls down beside a tree whose fruits possess "great vertues" (ll. 46. 4). The tree is the Tree of Life, from which "forth floud, as from a well/ A trickling streame of Balme, most soueraine" (ll. 48. 1-2). This balm, we are told, heals deadly wounds and preserves man from the grave. Redcrosse spends the second night "in a dreame of deep delight,/ Besmeard with pretious Balme, whose vertuouse might/ Did heale his woundes, and scorching heat alay" (ll. 50. 4-6). The night over, he rises early the third morning, puts on his armor, and slays the dragon.

We need not be distracted by interpretations of Redcrosse's three-day fight which argue as to whether the restoratives are Protestant or Catholic sacraments.<sup>32</sup> The Tree of Life and the Well of Life are traditional wellsprings of divine grace, channels through which the free, absolute gifts of a loving Lord flow to man, enabling him to manifest his virtue.<sup>33</sup>

Spenser makes clear his use of traditional ideas in his descriptions of the tree and the well, both of which are said to be full of "great vertues" (ll. 29. 5 and ll. 41. 4). Furthermore, the tree is laden with fruit which endues all who feed thereon with happiness and life everlasting. This fruit is identifiable with the fruits of the spirit or the gifts of grace. On the third day of his battle with the dragon, the day of victory, Redcrosse, who has drawn strength from the well and the tree, manifests the efficacy of their powers:

Then freshly vp arose the doughtie knight,  
All healed of his hurts and woundes wide,  
And did himselfe to battell readie dight. . . .

(ll. 52. 1-3)

This is the first time in the poem that the characterizing epithet "doughtie" is applied to the knight of Holiness. In the following canto

(Canto Twelve) it is applied to him twice more. The people of Una's kingdom acclaim Redcrosse "that doughtie Conqueror" (12. 6. 1), and the poet again calls him "that doughty knight" (12. 18. 1). Spenser's use of the word at this point is quite significant. Redcrosse, who set out "to proue his puissance in the battell braue/ Upon his foe, and his new force to learne;/ Vpon his foe, a Dragon horrible and stearne" (1. 3. 7-9), has now succeeded in both enterprises. The new force he has learned is that of spiritual prowess, which Spenser gives the name of doughtiness. Once again, knowledge of the moral virtue tradition aids in understanding the meaning of this term.

In the preceding chapter we traced the following scheme: the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit, Fortitude (Strength or Force), inculcated the virtue Prowess, which had seven degrees, the sixth being Magnificence.<sup>34</sup> This latter virtue contained all the other virtues.<sup>35</sup> Now, in treatises and conduct books, the virtue Magnificence was also called Doughtiness. In the Book of Vices and Virtues, for example, the sixth degree of the virtue Prowess is said to be Magnificence in one sentence and Doughtiness in another.<sup>36</sup> In the summary which ends the discussion, Magnificence is forgotten and Doughtiness takes its place as the sixth degree of Prowess.<sup>37</sup>

If Magnificence and Doughtiness are synonymous, then what Spenser seems to be saying is that Arthur's gift has enhanced the virtue of the Red Cross Knight, and that Redcrosse's victory over the dragon is proof of his possession of the virtue Magnificence. If Redcrosse possesses Magnificence, then he too is perfected in the moral virtues.

The betrothal of Redcrosse and Una, which follows immediately upon the knight's overthrow of the dragon of Pride and the restoration of Una's parents, seems a fitting conclusion to the allegory of Holiness. Redcrosse

has attained the final goal of Christian life: "complete holiness, through the perfecting of the soul in holy love."<sup>38</sup> He has conquered all the spiritual foes which war against his Holiness. In Platonic and Christian terms, his soul now freed from earthly chains is able to contemplate and enjoy Truth;<sup>39</sup> hence his vision of Una, or Truth, unveiled:

As bright as doth the morning starre appeare  
Out of the East, with flaming lockes bedight,  
To tell that dawning day is drawing neare,  
And to the world does bring long wished light;  
So faire and fresh that Lady shewd her selfe in sight.

So faire and fresh, as freshest flowre in May;  
For she had layd her mournfull stole aside,  
And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,  
Wherewith her heauenly beautie she did hide,  
Whiles on her wearie iourney she did ride;  
And on her now a garment she did weare,  
All lilly white, withoutten spot, or pride,  
That seemd like silke and siluer wouen neare,  
But neither silke nor siluer therein did appeare.

(12. 21. 5-9; 12. 22. 1-9)

Spenser could have stopped at this point, but he did not. The last pieces in the complex mosaic of the Legend of Holiness must be inserted so that there would be no mistaking the poet's attitude toward the pursuit of perfection. Redcrosse soon finds out that the pledge of troth does not terminate his obligations. Archimago and Duessa, who have failed to win his soul, try to spoil his peace and happiness by disrupting the solemnities. This type of peripeteia is a commonplace of morality plays; it serves to remind the virtuous man that he must be on guard as long as he lives against enemies that lie ever in wait.<sup>40</sup> Then while "swimming in the sea of blissfull ioy" (12. 41. 5) that his betrothal has brought him to, Redcrosse remembers his pledge to serve his sovereign Gloriana for seven more years, "the which he shortly did and Vna left to mourne" (12. 41. 9). This last touch rounds out the paradox of the knight's pursuit of perfection here on earth. Holiness brings interior peace and happiness. Yet all earthly

things are short lived. The struggle is unending. Redcrosse, and the reader, are reminded of Arthur's prophetic words: "That blisse may not abide in state of mortall men" (8. 44. 9). Holiness must await a heavenly consummation.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Oxford Companion to English Literature, ed. Sir Paul Harvey, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 809.

<sup>2</sup>The source for the first six writers cited is The Works of Edmund Spenser: a Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, C. G. Dodge, F. M. Padelford, et al., I (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966): Upton, p. 199; Church, p. 422; Warton, p. 196; Ruskin, p. 422; Harrison, p. 502; Padelford, p. 433. The other sources are M. Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the "Faerie Queene" (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 68; A. C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene" (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 87; William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser: A Study (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 175; Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, eds., Edmund Spenser: Books I and II of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1965), p. 16; Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 125.

<sup>3</sup>Variorum, I, 169.

<sup>4</sup>See William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, pp. 150-151.

<sup>5</sup>The lines, "So pure an innocent, as that same lambe,/ She was in life and every vertuous lore" (5. 1-2), present the reader with a certain syntactical difficulty. I think that Spenser is here suggesting Una's perfect knowledge of the virtues.

<sup>6</sup>See Chapter Two, pp. 52-53, of this dissertation for a discussion of how Spenser's readers understood tales of chivalry.

<sup>7</sup>The poet links Redcrosse to St. George in 2. 1. 9 and 2. 12. 2. The aged holy man Contemplation prophesies that Redcrosse will be called St. George some day (10. 61. 8).

<sup>8</sup>For the linking of moral allegory and "chivalry terrestrial," see Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp. 36ff.

<sup>9</sup>The importance of the Book of Revelation and the significance of the woman seated upon the beast are discussed by Josephine Waters Bennett in The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene" (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), pp. 110-113.

<sup>10</sup>St. Paul expresses this theme in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. The idea that only faith can effect true holiness is found in Romans 1:17f. and in Romans 3:21-26.

<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of the Wisdom figure, see Chapter Seven, pp. 148-150, of this dissertation.

<sup>12</sup>Lilian Winstanley, The Faerie Queene, Book I (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1915), p. lxi, cited in Variorum, I, 178.

- <sup>13</sup>See "Theatetus" (176) in The Dialogues of Plato, trans. Benjamin Jowett, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953), III, 275.
- <sup>14</sup>See "Nichomachean Ethics," Book VI, Chaps. 12-13, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), pp. 438-442.
- <sup>15</sup>De Officiis, trans. Walter Miller, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913), p. 157.
- <sup>16</sup>De Officiis, p. 19.
- <sup>17</sup>Josephine Waters Bennett, Evolution, p. 119.
- <sup>18</sup>Wisdom 8:2-3 in The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1966), p. 1016.
- <sup>19</sup>Prov. 8:4-21.
- <sup>20</sup>Wisdom is personified in Prov. 1:20 f. and 8:1 f.
- <sup>21</sup>Jerusalem Bible, p. 943, n. "j."
- <sup>22</sup>Bennett, Evolution, pp. 221-222.
- <sup>23</sup>Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices, Part I," JWCI, XXVI (1963), 303.
- <sup>24</sup>The four-line introduction to Canto Two reads:
- The guilefull great Enchaunter parts  
The Redcrosse Knight from Truth;  
Into whose stead faire falshood steps,  
And workes him wofull ruth.
- <sup>25</sup>Rosemond Tuve, "Notes on the virtues and Vices: Two Fifteenth Century Lines of Dependency on the Thirteenth and Twelfth Centuries," JWCI, XXVII (1964), 59-60. This is Part II of the article cited in n. 23 above.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60. See also Chapter Two, p. 47, of this dissertation.
- <sup>27</sup>In Chaucer's "The Parson's Tale" (l. 476) Humility is described as "a vertu thurgh which a man hath verray knoweleche of hymself, and holdeth of hymself no pris ne deyntee, as in regard of his desertes, considerynge were his freletee."
- <sup>28</sup>Harry Rusche, "Pride, Humility, and Grace in Book One of The Faerie Queene," Studies in English Literature, II (Winter, 1967), 34.
- <sup>29</sup>An iconographical rendering of the commonplace idea of a Ladder of Perfection can be found in Tuve's Allegorical Imagery, p. 115, plate 25.
- <sup>30</sup>See Romans 5:2f.
- <sup>31</sup>See Galatians 5:6 and 5:13-14.

<sup>32</sup>See Variorum, I, 300-303, for commentaries on the Well and the Tree; and the appendix, "Moral and Spiritual Allegory," pp. 422-448.

<sup>33</sup>See The Book of Vices and Virtues, pp. 275ff., and Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, pp. 110-111.

<sup>34</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, pp. 162-187. See also Tuve, p. 442, for a schematization of these materials.

<sup>35</sup>The Book of Vices and Virtues, p. 169.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>38</sup>H. R. Coats, "Holiness, New Testament and Christian, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, 745.

<sup>39</sup>Erasmus, just before he describes the beatific vision near the end of The Praise of Folly, makes this point: "Christians agree in many respects with the Platonists in that they hold that the soul is submerged and tied down with earthly chains. It is so impeded . . . that it hardly has a chance to contemplate or enjoy truth." See The Essential Erasmus, ed. and trans. John P. Dolan (New York: The New American Library, 1964), p. 170.

<sup>40</sup>Robert Lee Ramsay, "Introduction," Magnyfycence, A Moral Play, EETS, ES, SCVIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), p. cxlix; see also Samuel Chew, The Pilgrimage of Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 74.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## Conclusions

If this dissertation has served any purpose, it has provided some idea of what Spenser tried to do in The Faerie Queene and, even, of the place of the poem in English literary history. Of course we have been dealing only with Book One specifically, but the methodology of this book is not significantly different from that of the other books, and certain generalizations, at least tentatively, suggest themselves. Shakespeare is often considered the great synthesizer of the Elizabethan Age, but in a stricter sense the attribution may belong more properly to Spenser. While Shakespeare accepts and appropriates values that have come down to him from the past, he also looks to the future -- his interest in individual depth psychology, his touches of pessimism, his "realism" are peculiarly his own and modern. He is not interested (in Arnold's phrase) in bringing together "the best that has been known and thought in the world," except as that best may serve his artistic needs. Spenser -- as we have seen -- had something very much like Arnold's purpose in mind. Reaching back to Hebraic, classical, and Christian sources, he sought to present a vision of man that was consistent with them all and at the same time affirmed the Renaissance idea of man's perfectability.

But we can place too much stress upon Spenser's borrowings. The poet was a man of broad scholarship but his vision of the cosmos was not muddled by too much reading. His use of sources was selective, discriminating, and purposeful, guided always by a creative intelligence. Though numerous attempts had been made to codify the moral virtues, there was no universally accepted codification, and this condition served Spenser as opportunity. If man was perfectable (as Spenser believed along with

other humanists), his perfectability inhered in his ability to possess certain qualities--but precisely which ones had been answered in no one way that the poet could entirely endorse.

In this regard, Spenser's choice of Holiness as the first and most comprehensive virtue was significant. As we have seen, this was an entirely unique and original choice. No previous work on the moral virtues had included Holiness. At least since the Middle Ages, Holiness had been considered a theological virtue, an attribute of God and His saints. In bringing the virtue down to within the reach of man, Spenser, though consistent with an older tradition, did something that was new and daring. If the step was not precisely Faustian--man could not become as the gods--there was an implicit elevation of man's status in it. Man could become godly, and on earth, without reference to sectarian religious systems or theological doctrines.

This elevation of man takes place in Spenser on another--and perhaps even more significant--level. In the morality plays, which Spenser clearly followed, the conflict was between the virtues and the vices. In Spenser, the conflict is between man embodying the virtues and the vices. This subtle shift is, nevertheless, philosophically telling; for it implies that, though a gift of heaven, the virtues have their only real existence in man and, further, that perfection is an aspect of becoming rather than a static condition, and in Spenser's view a hard-won acquisition. And being bound up with mortality, perfection may not be perfectly achieved. Thus we can understand and put to rest most questions as to why the "patron of true Holinesse" sometimes acts so humanly. Except in God or as a Platonic ideal, perfect virtue lies primarily in the effort to achieve it.

Spenser is often admired--and as often criticized--for the smoothness and musical harmony of his verse. To his detractors, The Faerie Queene

is but a series of pretty courtly romances about ladies and gentlemen of a bygone age. I this dissertation has achieved its purpose, it has shown that the poem is a great deal more than that. If we do not let the music lull us, if we attend to the meanings which lie just beneath the decorative surface of the lines, we discover that we are in the presence of a consummate artist and a first rate mind.

What is the Spenserian vision of the world? It is one in which man is the chief creation but in which he lives amid a variety of tensions--between the real and the ideal, between virtue and vice, between time and eternity. The pull of these opposites, often in combination, makes for a highly charged, dynamic atmosphere. A young man set down in this world, a youth with no more than a predisposition to virtue, is likely to be assailed on every side, to find his powers wanting, to be deceived and betrayed, to be tempted, to faint, and to despair. And this is precisely what happens to Spenser's hero, the Knight of the Red Cross.

What saves him--and what provides balance and control in this world of deadly perils--is heavenly grace. It is hoped that the argument as to whether Spenser wrote as a Catholic or an Anglican or a Calvinist has been relegated to its proper subordinate place. Undoubtedly, articles of faith on all three sides can be found by the reader who looks for them; but in matters of religion, as in other matters, Spenser's approach was synthetic. Religious ideas common to Plato, Cicero, the Church Fathers, and the Reformers occur in The Faerie Queene. Was Redcrosse the patron of Holiness because he was divinely elected so to be or because he deliberately chose the path of virtue? Spenser never quite answers the question--which is not an irrelevant one--perhaps because he wished to avoid theological dispute in order to create a Christian epic which transcended theology.

But though the religious element in Redcrosse's story is pervasive and

often crucial, it is not dominant. Or rather, it is as dominant as the secular. Perfection has two extremes, Holiness and Magnificence, complementary and tending to the same end, but as far apart as the poles. The Red Cross Knight moves through a landscape that, though enchanted, is never very far from earthly reality. In this respect Spenser's poem may be compared with Bunyan's later allegory. If Pilgrim's Progress instructs the reader in overcoming the snares of this world in order to partake of the glories of the next, it may be said that Spenser teaches us to be glorious now so that we may be glorious forever.

What binds heaven and earth in his harmonious unity--expressed by, and justifying, Spenser's aesthetic method--is the moral virtues, God-given ideals resident in the heart of man. This is, of course, the Renaissance philosophy of man: that in man's improvement and perfection is the salvation of the world. In this respect, Spenser is more clearly than Shakespeare linked to figures like Colet and More in England and Melancthon and Erasmus on the continent who comprise the mainstream of Renaissance humanism. The place of The Faerie Queene in Elizabethan literature would seem to be absolutely central, both as a distillation of its most representative ideas and as the supreme poetic embodiment of them.

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