# A Study of Spenser's Hymnes

by

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# Introduction

This thesis is a study of a small collection of Spenser's poems which was published in London in 1596. The title of the collection is the Fowre Hymnes and it is one of the most confusing of Spenser's poetic works. In fact, none of the critics seem to know why this work was written or what is actually in it. The letter of dedication also presents some problems. My purpose in this thesis is to discuss these problems and to offer a textual analysis of each of the printed poems. Once this has been done, I will make some general comments about the collection as a whole.

I will begin by explaining who the poet's patrons were and what they were like in actual life. This is important to our study because it helps us understand the letter of dedication and the contents of the poems themselves. Unfortunately, there is little information on either of the ladies to whom the Hymnes are dedicated and it is consequently necessary to study their male relations in order to determine what their position was in life.

The Hymnes are dedicated jointly to Anne and Margaret Russell and they were very important ladies at the Elizabethan Court. The two were daughters of Francis Russell, second Earl of Bedford, who was one of Queen Elizabeth's closest and dearest friends (see figure 1).

Francis Russell, Earl of Bedford

Fig. I

Bedford was probably born in 1527, the only son of John Russell, first Earl of Bedford, by his second wife Anne. He was educated at King's Hall, Cambridge, and entered public life at a very early age. He was elected a member of Parliament in 1547 and took his seat in the House of Lords, as Baron Russell, in 1551.[1] In 1553, Bedford became involved in the conspiracy of Northumberland and he was placed in prison when Mary came to power. During his stay in prison, he gave secret support to Wyatt and may even have carried messages between Elizabeth and the rebel. At any rate, he escaped abroad in 1554, first to Geneva and then to Venice, sitting at the feet of Continental reformers.[2]

In 1557 Bedford returned to England where he served as captain in the English army at the battle of St. Quentin. His service earned him the appointment of Lord Lieutenant of the Western Shires in 1558.[3] When Elizabeth came to the throne, Bedford was at once appointed a member of the Privy Council. He received a number of diplomatic assignments and was appointed Warden of the East Marches and Governor of Berwick in 1563. He was elected a Knight of the Garter on April 23, 1564 and subsequently appointed Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and the Bishopric of Durham. He later became Lord-President of

Wales and was also made Lieutenant of the Garter in 1576. On February 26, 1583 he was appointed Chief Justice in Eyre of the royal forests, south of Trent. He died at Bedford House, Strand, on July 28, 1585.[4]

When we consider this information, it is easy to see that Bedford was no simple commoner. In fact, he was a prominent member of the English aristocracy, if not a central figure in English political life at the time. Anne and Margaret were his daughters and this would seem to indicate that they were also prominent figures in the Elizabethan Court. Such a conclusion, in my view, can in fact be further supported with reference to the men to whom these ladies were married. This is especially true of Anne for she was married to Ambrose Dudley, the third son of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland.

Ambrose Dudley was probably born in 1528. He was carefully educated in his father's family and served with him in Norfolk in 1549.[5] He was a prominent courtier under Edward VI and was always very high in his favour. He was also intimate with Princess Elizabeth.[6] On her accession to the throne, he became at once a principal favourite at the Court.[7] He was granted the manor of Kibworth Beauchamps, Leicestershire and given the office of Chief Pantler at

coronations, an office which had been hereditary in his father's family. He became Master of Ordinance on April 12, 1560, Baron d'Isle on December 25, 1561, and Earl of Warwick on the following day.[8] On May 4, 1571 he was made Chief Butler of England and was admitted to the Privy Council on September 5, 1573. He was appointed Lieutenant of the Garter in 1575 and died on February 20, 1590.[9]

Anne was the wife of Ambrose Dudley and this would seem to suggest that she was a very important lady at the English Court in Spenser's time. If further proof is needed, however, we might consider the fact that it was through her marriage to him that she became the sister-in-law of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (see figure 2).

Robert was the brother of Ambrose and he was probably born in 1532. He was the fifth and youngest son of John, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland. He was knighted at an early age and married to Amy Robsart in June of 1550. The wedding was attended by King Edward the VI, the brother of Princess Elizabeth.[10] On her accession to the throne, Robert began his rise to power. He was named a Master of the Horse in 1588, installed a Knight of the Garter, and almost immediately appointed a member of the Privy Council.[11] In addition to this, he was granted title to a vast amount of land and property which added to his influence and power.[12]

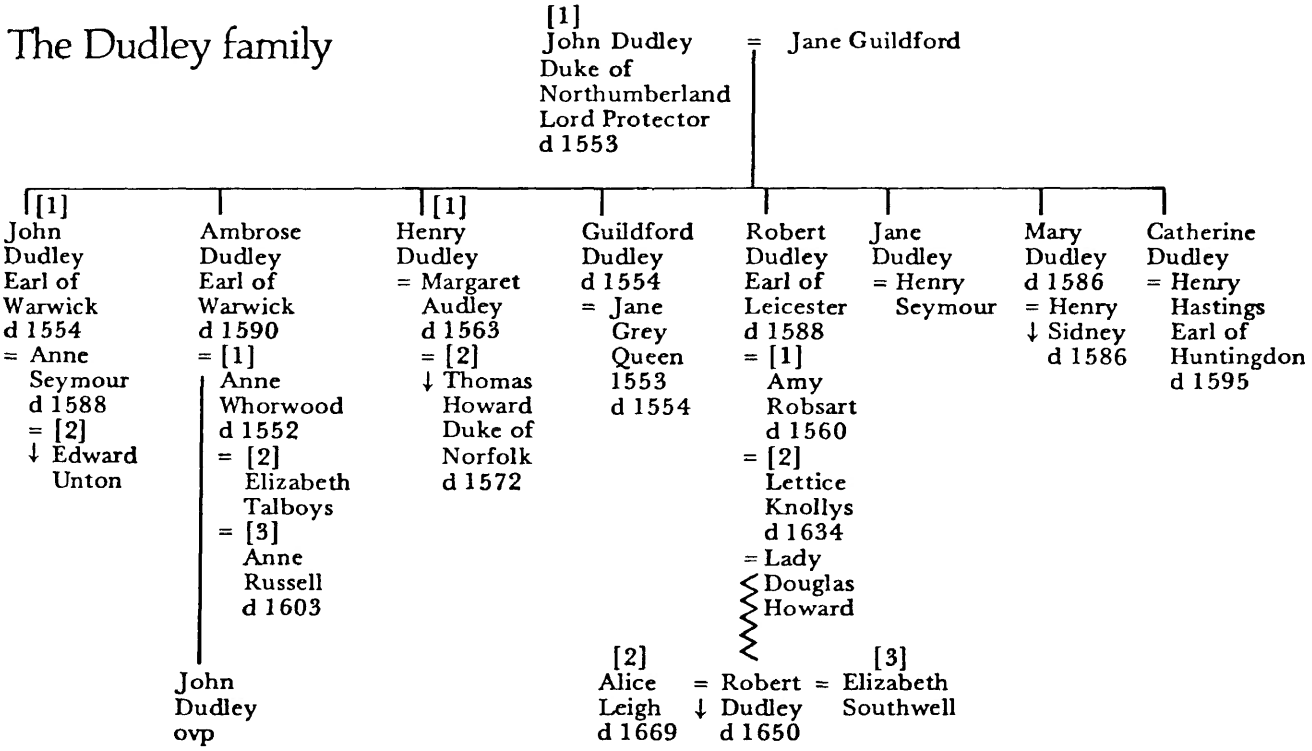
The Dudley family
[1]
John Dudley
Duke of
Northumberland
Lord Protector
d 1553
= Jane Guildford
[1]
John
Dudley
Earl of
Warwick
d 1554
= Anne
Seymour
d 1588
= [2]
↓ Edward
Unton
Ambrose
Dudley
Earl of
Warwick
d 1590
= [1]
Anne
Whorwood
d 1552
= [2]
Elizabeth
Talboys
= [3]
Anne
Russell
d 1603
John
Dudley
ovp
[1]
Henry
Dudley
= Margaret
Audley
d 1563
= [2]
↓ Thomas
Howard
Duke of
Norfolk
d 1572
Guildford
Dudley
d 1554
= Jane
Grey
Queen
1553
d 1554
[2]
Alice
Leigh
d 1669
Robert
Dudley
Earl of
Leicester
d 1588
= [1]
Amy
Robsart
d 1560
= [2]
Lettice
Knollys
d 1634
= Lady
Douglas
Howard
= Robert
↓ Dudley
d 1650
Jane
Dudley
= Henry
Seymour
[3]
= Elizabeth
Southwell
Mary
Dudley
d 1586
= Henry
↓ Sidney
d 1586
Catherine
Dudley
= Henry
Hastings
Earl of
Huntingdon
d 1595

Fig. 2

On September 18, 1564 he was created Baron Denbigh and Earl of Leicester on the following day with great pomp and ceremony.[13] The grants from the Crown were plainly due to the Queen's affections for Robert and there can be no doubt that on her accession to the throne she seriously considered marrying him. A.C. Judson says that

> No one in England had attained greater eminence than Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. When about sixteen, he had been introduced to Princess Elizabeth, and a friendship had begun that lasted as long as he lived. The comeliness of his tall person, his customary gorgeous attire, his love of pomp, perhaps even his arrogance, combined to enchant her; and as the years passed, the parsimonious queen lavished such wealth upon him that even his genius for extravagance could not undermine his fortune. In one year alone she gave him sixteen estates. On her accession she seriously considered marrying him.[14]

When Spenser writes of Leicester in the Ruines of Time, adds Judson, he stresses the Earl's greatness, his pre-eminence among the powerful, and his closeness to the Queen.[15] For more than a decade, says Williams,

> Leicester's extraordinary position with the Queen enabled him to trump every other courtier's hand. Cecil may have held the balance in council, but he was never supreme; he was always dependent on Elizabeth's confidence and she in turn looked increasingly to Leicester for advice - advice, not merely on the filling of posts, but on the entire range of political issues.[16]

Leicester's influence at the Court was not only known at home, but on the continent as well, for he was sent the order to St. Michael, by King Charles IX of France, in 1565.[17] It was in this same year that Anne and Ambrose were married. The wedding was held at Whitehall and it was apparently organized by Leicester and the Queen. In speaking of this public event, Neville Coghill says that

> Sovereign and favourite made elaborate arrangements for the wedding festivities at Whitehall, and Bedford, anchored in Berwick, was content that it be so. Elizabeth permitted the marriage service to be celebrated in the Chapel Royal with the wedding breakfast in the Council Chamber and there was also a tournament in the tiltyard with Leicester himself as a defendent. Little Lady Warwick was to become a great favourite with Elizabeth.[18]

It is clear from this that Anne was a prominent lady in sixteenth century English life. No one seems to know what her position was at Court, but there is evidence to suggest that she had wide authority there.[19] At least, it is safe to conclude that she and her sister, Margaret, had powerful political connections and considerable social status. At the same time, they were important public figures and this would seem to indicate that they were extremely careful not to become involved in scandal. These are the points that I wish to emphasize because they have a significant bearing on the letter of dedication to Spenser's

Fowre Hymnes. In fact, I am firmly convinced that we must keep these points in mind if we hope to solve the problem which is posed by the letter itself. I have attempted to make them evident in the material presented above and this material, in my view, is nicely summarized by Mr. Hill. He says that

> They were both daughters of Francis Russell, Earl of Bedford, who had been a close friend of Elizabeth before she was queen, and who had joined the Privy Council on her accession. His daughter Anne (called 'Marie' by Spenser) married Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, in 1565. Dudley was the third son of John, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland, who had been executed in 1553 for complicity in the plot to put Lady Grey on the throne. The younger Dudley had also been a close friend of Princess Elizabeth; he was created earl in 1560. These Dudleys were also related to another of Elizabeth's favourites, the powerful Earl of Leicester, recently dead. Bedford's other daughter, Margaret, married George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, a dashing sea-captain and close friend of the queen.[20]

I have only one additional point to make. It is important for us to note that Margaret's sister's name was Anne, not "Marie", as it appears in the dedication. "The name of this latter (Mary, Countess of Warwick) is mistaken," says Church, "for it is certainly Anne, the eldest daughter of Francis, Earl of Bedford, whose character as a good man, in R.T., is described at line 261, as well as her husband's

just before."[21]

I am unable to explain how this error was made, but it was obviously made by either Spenser or his printer, Mr. Richard Field. Mr. Renwick seems to think that it was made by Spenser, but this appears to be unlikely.[22] Spenser knew these ladies well and I do not believe that he would make an error like this in dedicating the poems to them. I agree with Mr. Mounts that it was probably the printer's error.[23]

Now, let us take a closer look at what these ladies were like in life. The only thing we know for sure is that they were deeply religious[24] and this is a very important point for the reader to bear in mind. The reason why it is important is because it helps to explain what is in the Hymnes themselves and why the author wrote them. Like most of the poets of this period, Spenser usually wrote with his patrons' tastes in mind. By knowing what these ladies were like, we can begin to understand what kind of poetry they might have supported. But, what is even more important we can begin to understand what kind of poetry they would not accept. We need to know this information because he had upset these ladies with some poetry which he had written in the greener times of his youth. Spenser mentions the incident in his letter of dedication and I am firmly convinced

that it provides an explanation for the very existence of the Hymnes. If this incident had not occurred, it is unlikely, in my view, that Spenser would have authored these poems.

In the second half of this chapter, I will try to place the Hymnes in the context of Spenser's life. This is important to our study because it helps us understand the specific set of circumstances which led to their publication in 1596. Spenser describes these circumstances in his letter of dedication, but the meaning of his letter is hard to understand unless we know some basic facts about the author's life. I will provide these basic facts in the second half of this chapter and I will also attempt to show where each of the people mentioned above appears in Spenser's poetry. This is important to our study because it helps to establish the fact that Spenser knew them all and especially the Earl of Leicester. The connection between the two of them will, in fact, be studied the closest because it helps to explain how Anne and Margaret came to be the literary patrons of Spenser.

Spenser was born in London in 1551, or 1552, the son of John Spenser, by his wife Elizabeth. He was educated at the Merchant Taylor's school, in Suffolk Lane, and he probably entered there in 1561, the first year of its existence.[25]

When he graduated from this school, Spenser entered Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1573. He continued his studies in the following year and completed his Master of Arts degree in 1576.

He was subsequently hired as secretary to Bishop Young, in 1578, and he moved with him to Bromley, Kent, ten miles from London. Spenser's connection with Bishop Young was terminated in 1579 at which time, in Judson's words, "he exchanged the quiet of Kent for the stir and bustle of London."[26]

It was during this period that Spenser established definite contact with the so-called three men of prominence: the Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's great favourite; Sir Phillip Sidney, his nephew, to whom the Earl was deeply attached; and Edward Dyer, a devoted friend of the Sidneys.[27] How these connections were formed, we do now know, but Judson says that however it happened "there can be no doubt that Spenser for a time served Leicester and was on a friendly footing with Sidney, Dyer and Rogers, frequented Leicester House, and had the entree of the Court."[28]

The position which Spenser held at this time was that of secretary to Leicester and this is a very important point for the reader to bear in mind because it helps to explain how Spenser probably met the ladies to whom the Hymnes are

dedicated. Indeed, it seems logical to conclude that Spenser made their acquaintance through the Earl of Leicester while he was the Earl's secretary in 1579. The poet held this position for as much as a year or more, according to Dr. Rosenberg, and he was apparently succeeded for a while by his friend, Gabriel Harvey.[29]

No one seems to know how Spenser acquired the job of secretary to the Earl of Leicester, but it gave him access to the Court as well as financial security to pursue his literary interests. This was consequently a busy period in terms of his poetic career, although he was not so much engaged in the writing of books for print. In fact, he was mainly involved in the writing of manuscript poetry for the English aristocracy. Like many of his contemporaries, Spenser began his poetic career at the sixteenth century Court by writing of poems in manuscript form. These were largely confined to an early phase of his career and, through them, he acquired a wide circle of courtly patrons.[30] In one of his letters to Harvey, dated 1579, Spenser points to the numerous manuscripts that he was producing at this time. He says that

> I was minded for a while to haue intermitted the vttering of my writings; leaste by over-much cloying their noble eares, I should gather a contempt of my selfe, or else seeme rather for gaine and commoditie to do it, for some sweetnesse that I haue already tasted.[31]

He had evidently won patrons at Court, was probably writing love poetry, and did not wish to leave the impression that he was doing it for money. The kind of poetry that was popular at Court in 1579 was Petrarchan love poetry and it is my belief that Spenser was writing this kind of poetry (in the form of private manuscripts) at that particular point in time.[32] In fact, I would like to urge the reader to note this period of his life because he seems to refer to it in his letter of dedication to the Fowre Hymnes. The meaning of this letter is hard to understand unless we happen to know that Spenser was writing manuscript poetry in the early part of his career. Dr. Saunders says that

> Spenser's literary career falls into two overlapping halves: a first period, ending about 1591, in which he interested himself almost entirely in manuscript poetry and gradually acquired a wide circle of Courtly patrons, and a second decade, the period of the Faerie Queene and of his printed poetry.[33]

Much of Spenser's early poetry remained in manuscript form and it has been lost for ever. Some of the pieces are mentioned by name in the preface to The Shepheardes Calender where they are described by E.K. as works of his which sleep in silence. Among them are his Dreams, his Legendes, and his Court of Cupid. Others are mentioned by Ponsonby in the preface to the Complaints. Others still are mentioned in the Spenser-Harvey correspondence of 1579.

The only major work that Spenser published at this time was The Shepheardes Calender and it was almost certainly written in 1579 while Spenser was in Leicester's service. The poet even considered inscribing it to Leicester, but he later decided against this plan because he seemed to feel that the work was "too base" for a person of Leicester's stature. In speaking to Harvey, he says:

> Then also me seemeth the work too base
> for his excellent Lordship, being made
> in Honour of a priuate personage vnknowne,
> which of some yl-willers might be
> vpbraided, not to be so worthie, as you
> knowe she is: or the matter not so
> weightie, that is should be offered to
> so weightie a Personage: or the like.[34]

The work was made in honour of someone with whom the poet was apparently in love. A number of critics seem to think that the lady's name was Rosalind, but others are convinced that Rosalind did not exist. As far as this thesis is concerned, I will take the position that Rosalind did exist, although no one knows her true identity, and that he fell in love with her in 1576.[35]

The poet was still at Leicester House in April of 1580 and it was during this month that he apparently made a blunder which cost him his position. No one seems to know the nature of his mistake, if indeed he made one, but there can be no doubt that Spenser's job with Leicester was

terminated at this time. In July of 1580, he was appointed secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton who was preparing to leave for Ireland as the new lord-deputy.[36] Long afterwards, in Virgil's Gnat, Spenser complained of some wrong inflicted on him by Leicester. He says:

> Wrong'd yet not daring to expresse my paine,
> To you (great Lord) the causer of my care,
> In clodie teares my case I thus complaine
> Vnto your selfe, that onely priuie are:[37]

Spenser's mission to Ireland has often been interpreted as a form of exile, or punishment, for some tactless, even dangerous expression of the poet's thought and feeling. Dr. Greenlaw says: "Ireland, Brabant, the low countries, these were Siberias to which over-zealous persons might be sent if needful." "Lord Grey was himself persona non grata," adds Greenlaw, "for he was suspected of sympathy with the ill-fated Duke of Norfolk."[38]

The poet's fault, according to Greenlaw, was the writing and circulation of Mother Hubberd's Tale in 1579. This work had apparently offended the Queen and Leicester was, in Greenlaw's words, "compelled to suffer her resentment." As a result of this, Dr. Greenlaw concludes that "probably no one was more thankful than the Earl that in the summer of 1580 Lord Grey was appointed to Ireland, was in need of a secretary, and was willing to take the young poet."[39]

Spenser landed in Ireland, with Lord Grey, on August 12, 1580 (see figure 3). Ireland was governed at this time by a lord-deputy and council of state resident at Dublin.[40] As Lord Grey's secretary, Spenser had to transcribe and collate official government documents, many of which dated 1581 and 1582, are extant with verifications in his signature.[41]

During his first year in Ireland, Spenser formed a friendship with Mr. Lodowick Bryskett, the clerk of the council at Dublin, and a poet like himself.[42] On March 22, 1581 Spenser was appointed clerk of the Irish court of chancery "free of seal" in respect of his position as secretary to Lord Grey.[43] Lord Grey was recalled to England in 1582 and Spenser and Bryskett lost their posts. Both retired into the countryside to pursue their literary interests; Spenser to New Abbey and Bryskett to his cottage near Dublin.[44] A significant portion of the first three books of The Faerie Queene was probably written during the period after Grey's departure.[45]

On June 21, 1584 Perrot was sworn in as the new lord-deputy of Ireland, Bryskett became the clerk of Munster and Spenser, Bryskett's deputy.[46] On June 22, 1588 Spenser resigned his clerkship of the Irish court of chancery, in Dublin, and purchased the post of clerk of Munster from his colleague, Bryskett.[47] The poet settled at Kilcolman castle

in 1588 on taking up his duties as the clerk of the Munster Council.

In 1589 Sir Walter Raleigh visited Spenser at Kilcolman and convinced the poet to go to London to present the first three books of The Faerie Queene to Elizabeth, in person.[48] Spenser arrived in London, with Raleigh, in November of 1589 and a meeting was held with the Queen in which Sir Walter Raleigh spoke highly of Spenser's newest work.[49] The Faerie Queene was subsequently printed with two of Raleigh's sonnets and seventeen by Spenser. One of these sonnets is addressed to the Earl of Cumberland and I would like to mention it here because he was the husband of Margaret, one of the ladies to whom the Fowre Hymnes are dedicated. This sonnet seems to indicate that Spenser knew the Earl of Cumberland as well as the Russell sisters.

I would also like to emphasize that it was during this visit to Court that Spenser renewed his contacts with Anne and her sister, Margaret, and that he managed to win their patronage at this particular time. Dr. Judson mentions their names among a list of prominent ladies who were gracious to Spenser during his stay at Court. The list includes the following names: Mary, countess of Pembroke; Anne, countess of Warwick; Margaret, countess of Cumberland; Helena, marchioness of Northampton; Frances, countess of Essex;

the three Spenser sisters, Elizabeth, Anne and Alice; and two Irish ladies whom he calls Galathea and Neaera.[50] "To all of these ladies, except the two from Ireland," says Judson, "he dedicated poems within the next few years, in most cases with expressions of warm gratitude for many graces and favours."[51]

Spenser's connection with each of these ladies is also explained by Judson who says:

> At first thought it may seem remarkable that Spenser should so soon have won the regard of these great ladies, but it is not hard to discover a reason for his connection with each one. His friendship with Sidney would of course account for a relationship with the countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, and with the countess of Essex, formerly Sidney's wife; the old service under Leicester would make natural the patronage of Leicester's sister-in-law, the countess of Warwick, and also that of her sister, the countess of Cumberland. Through Raleigh, it seems certain, Spenser met Arthur Gorges, a friend and kinsmen of Raleigh, and through him in turn the marchioness of Northampton, his aunt. Blood relationship and contacts in Ireland would explain his connection with the others.[52]

Spenser was still in London on January 1, 1591, from where he dated his Daphnaida, an elegy on Lady Douglas. The poet was waiting in London for the preferment which he hoped to receive from the first installment of The Faerie Queene and it was apparently clear to him that Burghley was blocking his preferment.[53] No one seems to know why Burghley would want to block his preferment, but while the poet

waited for this he probably busied himself with the writing and revising of the so-called Complaints volume. Spenser finally received a pension of 50 pounds a year for life on February 25, 1591 and he returned to Ireland, soon afterwards, to begin the writing of Colin Clout, a charming account of his visit to Court.[54]

The Complaints volume appeared later in that year and it was composed of a total of nine separate poems. The first of these poems, The Ruines of Time, is a comprehensive elegy on the Sidney, Russell, and Dudley families and it provides additional proof that Spenser knew these families.

The other poem of interest in the Complaints volume is Virgil's Gnat. The Gnat is described by Spenser as "Long since dedicated to the most noble and excellent Lord, the Earle of Leicester, late deceased," and as far as we know it is the only work of Spenser's to carry Leicester's name.[55] The third and final work which should be noted here is Mother Hubberd's Tale. This work is the one for which the poet was apparently dismissed from his position as secretary to Leicester in 1580. It is therefore interesting to note that the Complaints volume in which it appeared was almost immediately called in, or withdrawn from circulation by the authorities. Why this volume of poems was withdrawn, is

unclear, but it had probably proved offensive to someone at the Court. Spenser was back in Ireland by the time the work was being recalled and he was therefore spared from punishment.

The poet fell in love in 1592 and the lady in question accepted his suit in 1593. Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle, in Ireland, on June 11, 1594.[56] The Amoretti and Epithalamion were sent to Ponsonby in that same year and they were licensed for publication on November 19, 1594. Spenser had also completed the second installment of The Faerie Queene, by 1594, and he brought this work to England himself at the close of 1595.[57] The new installment of The Faerie Queene remained for a time unpublished while other works were issued by Ponsonby. Among these works were Astrophel and Colin Clout's Come Home Againe. The latter work provides a record of Spenser's previous visit to Court and of his earlier contact with Anne and Margaret Russell. He was on excellent terms with these ladies during his previous visit to Court in 1589 and he was also enjoying their patronage. These are important things to remember because they help us understand the letter of dedication to Spenser's Fowre Hymnes.

Colin Clout was probably published in the winter of 1595 and the second installment of The Faerie Queene in the early months of the following year. With the latter work completed,

Spenser began to wait for preferment. In the autumn of 1596, he was with the Court at Greenwich still hopeful of some preferment and it was from the Court at Greenwich that Spenser dated his dedication to the little book of poems entitled Fowre Hymnes. Judson says that

> Several of Spenser's notable poems may be assigned to this period of waiting for the preferment he hoped from the new installment of The Faerie Queene. On September 1, 1596, he completed the dedication for a little book entitled Fowre Hymnes. This volume was inscribed to two noble sisters, Margaret, countess of Cumberland, and Anne - through an odd error her name appears as 'Marie' countess of Warwick. Both of these women had been kind to him on his previous visit to England and now, they were again his patrons. Indeed, his dedicating of this book to them was a modest recognition, he says, of the 'great graces and honourable favours' that they were daily showing him.[58]

The Hymnes themselves were printed in the shop of Mr. Richard Field. The title-page reads: "Fowre Hymnes, Made by Edm. Spenser. London, Printed for William Ponsonby 1596" and it bears the Anchora Spei device which belonged to Richard Field.[59]

Spenser was still in London on November 8, 1596, from where he dated his Prothalamion, a hymn in honour of the double marriage of the daughters of Edward Somerset, fifth Earl of Worchester. It is in the Prothalamion that we learn that Spenser was born in London and that he lived there as a boy (ll. 127-129). It is also in this poem that we learn

that Spenser was getting tired of waiting for the preferment which he felt that he deserved from the second installment of The Faerie Queene. He says

> When I whom sullein care,
> Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
> In Princess Court, and expectations vayne
> Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away,
> Like empty shaddowes, did aflict my brayne,
> Walkt forth to ease my payne
> Along the shoare of siluer streaming Thenmes.
>
> (11. 5-11.)

There is no evidence to indicate when Spenser went back to Ireland, nor has any record been preserved of immediate rewards for The Faerie Queene. It has been suggested that very early in 1597 Spenser returned from London to Kilcolman, depressed in mind and failing health.[60] The poet travelled to London again in 1598 and died there in the following year. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in Poet's corner.[61]

In the second half of this chapter, I have attempted to place the Hymnes in the context of Spenser's life and to mention the general circumstances surrounding their publication. The four of them were published in 1596, but I do not believe that all of them were written during that year. In fact, the dedication seems to suggest that they contain material from two distant periods of Spenser's career and this is the major reason for the background information

which I have provided in this chapter. Now that we have this information, we are ready to consider the letter of dedication itself. It is addressed to Anne and Margaret and I would like to remind the reader to consider who these ladies were and what their status was in life when reading Spenser's letter to them. I will discuss the letter itself in chapter number two.

Dedication

When Spenser completed the Fowre Hymnes in 1596, he prefaced this book of poems with the following letter of dedication to Margaret, countess of Cumberland and Anne, countess of Warwick:

> Hauing in the greener times of my youth composed these former two Hymnes in the praise of Loue and beautie, and finding that the same too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which being too vehemently carried with that kind of affection, do rather sucke out poyson to their strong passion, then hony to their honest delight, I was moued by the one of you two most excellent Ladies, to call in the same. But being vnable so to doe, by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad, I resolued at least to amend, and by way of retractation to reforme them, making in stead of those two Hymnes of earthly or naturall loue and beautie, two others of heauenly and celestiall. The which I doe dedicate ioyntly vnto you two honourable sisters as the most excellent and rare ornaments of all true loue and beautie, both in the one and the other kinde.[1]

This letter is hard to understand, but I believe that in it Spenser makes a reference to some earlier manuscript poems which he had written in his youth. Spenser began his poetic career at the Elizabethan Court by the writing of poems in manuscript form (see previous chaper, pp. 10-12 especially). The manuscript was, in fact, the normal medium of publication for the Courtly poets. Saunders says that

> The leading Court poets, those who set the pattern of the times, did not write for print. It is clear that a great deal of Tudor poetry never passed beyond the manuscript stage, and that even where it did ultimately reach print, the manuscript was generally considered the normal medium of publication.[2]

The Courtly poet did not try to have his poems printed. He had no interest in the printed-book audience, or in a wider circle of readers than his closest friends at the Court.[3] His fundamental purpose in writing was to communicate his experience within this circle of friends and much of what he wrote was viewed as something private.[4] The Courtly poet did not wish to share his poems with the public because the work was private and because he was concerned about the contents of his poems. The poems which he wrote were mainly poems of love[5] and they were not the kind of poems that he would dare to publish. In fact, he was very much aware that they could lead to trouble, even in the form of manuscripts, if they became too widely circulated. The poet tried his best to avoid this situation, but it was virtually impossible to control the destination of each and every manuscript once it had been issued. Manuscript poetry could, and did, sometimes pass beyond the group for whom it had been written and this is when the poet found that it could lead to trouble not only with the public, but with his private patrons and even with the Crown. This, I think, in fact, explains what

happened in the Hymnes. We cannot be positive that this hypothesis is correct, but I will assume that it is for the purpose of this study and proceed to an explanation of the letter of dedication. This letter describes the chain of events which led to the publication of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes in 1596 and I will discuss it here within the context of Spenser's life.

It was probably during the year 1579, while Spenser was at Court, that he composed a pair of hymns "in praise of Loue and beautie". Those two hymns, in my opinion, were a pair of manuscript poems and several copies were made of them for Spenser's friends at Court. The poet went to Ireland, in July of 1580, and the copies of those manuscript hymns were probably left behind. Spenser returned to England in 1589 where he was very well received by Anne and Margaret Russell, so it would seem unlikely that they knew about the manuscript hymns at that particular time or before he left again in 1591. The poet was back in Ireland by the end of 1591 and he probably stayed there until 1595. In the winter of 1595-96, Spenser returned to England again and it was during this visit to Court that he was taken to task by either Anne or Margaret for his manuscript hymns. A copy of those manuscript hymns had somehow found its way into the hands of one of these ladies by the time he arrived and she

was not at all amused by what was in those poems. In fact, it is my belief that she was so upset by them that she approached the poet and demanded that he "call them in" (i.e., retrieve the manuscripts). This he was unable to do "by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad" and he therefore did the next best thing. He resolved "at least to amend, and by way of retractation to reforme them" (those manuscript poems). Spenser revised those manuscript poems to make the first two published Hymnes.

It is crucial to note this point since many critics seem to think that Spenser wrote these first two Hymnes in the greener times of his youth and that they are, in fact, the ones to which his patrons had objected. The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are not the ones to which his patrons had objected and neither are these hymns the ones that were composed in Spenser's youth. If my hypothesis is correct, then the ones that were composed in the greener times of Spenser's youth are those earlier manuscript hymns which I have mentioned above. In fact, I am firmly convinced that it was to those manuscript hymns that Spenser's patrons had objected and that he had to change those poems in 1596. If I am correct, then it was in the course of this that he produced the first two hymns, the ones we have before us now.

The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are the amended versions of Spenser's earlier manuscript poems and they contain material from those earlier manuscripts. But, it is also my belief they contain some new material which was added at a later date. The first two Hymnes are, therefore, neither early works, nor late works, but rather a combination of the two. The manuscript parts were probably written in 1579 while the other ones belong to 1596. At least, this is my hypothesis and I will attempt to support it later with reference to the text.

The last two hymns are easier to date since it is generally agreed that Spenser wrote the two of them in 1596. They were probably written during his second visit to Court or just before the publication of the four existing poems. But what about their purpose? Why did Spenser write these Hymnes? Several critics hold the view that Spenser wrote the last two Hymnes in order to retract the first and this is largely owing to the misinterpretation of a word within the dedication. The word which is in question here is the word "retractation". The word retractation should not be confused with the word retraction. These are clearly different words not only in their meaning, but in their spelling as well. The word retractation means "revision" or "correction" while the word retraction comes from the

verb retract which means "to withdraw" or "take back" as, for example, a literary work. It is also crucial to note that when the poet says that he resolved "at least to amend, and by way of retractation to reforme them" he was referring, not to the last two Hymnes, nor indeed, to the first two, but rather, to those earlier manuscript poems which I have mentioned above. These words describe the process by which those poems were reformed and they must not be used at all in speaking of the last two hymns. To say that Spenser wrote these hymns "by way of retractation" is to take the author's words completely out of context.

But, if these hymns were not composed in order to retract the first then why did Spenser write them? I believe that Spenser wrote them in order to present the themes of heavenly love and heavenly beauty and thus to complement the first. The first two hymns embrace the themes of earthly love and earthly beauty while the last two hymns embrace the themes of heavenly love and heavenly beauty. The four of them together are meant to represent "all true love and beauty" both in the one and the other kind. The last two hymns were, therefore, written in addition to the first and not as many critics think "by way of retractation" (retraction). Dr. LeBel suggests that when we read the dedication, the words "in stead of" should be read "in

addition to" and I agree with her on this.[6] Besides, there is nothing to retract. The first two Hymnes, as we shall see, are not offensive poems and this is so, in my opinion, because the author has removed most of what was deemed offensive in the original work.

There are two conclusions then which can be drawn from Spenser's letter: a) the first two Hymnes are amended versions of some earlier manuscript poems and it was to the manuscript poems that Spenser's patrons had objected, and b) the last two Hymnes were newly composed in 1596 and they were added to the ones that Spenser had revised.

It is with these points in mind that I propose to comment now on how the critics view this letter. They can be divided into two major groups: those who think it is a hoax and those who take it seriously. The critics who think it is a hoax include Davis, Tatlock, Greenlaw, Purvis, Bennett, Long and Palgrave, while the ones who take it seriously include Jones, Mounts and Grossart. I will quote from each of them and comment briefly on their views. Let us start with Davis who makes the following statement:

> On September 1, 1596, writing from Greenwich, Spenser inscribed to Margaret, countess of Cumberland, and 'Marie' (Anne), countess of Warwick, his four Hymnes, the first two composed 'in the greener time of youth', and the other now offered 'by way of retractation.' The latter statement is clearly a blind,

> intended to satisfy the scruples of two Puritanical patronesses; if youth sucked poison from the two earlier Hymnes what was to be said of Amoretti, Epithalamion or many episdoes of The Faerie Queene? The fervid neo-Platonism which illumines the earlier Hymnes had penetrated too deeply into Spenser's being to be thus easily retracted.[7]

Davis concludes that Spenser says that he composed the first two Hymnes in the greener times of youth and I do not agree with this. He also concludes that Spenser says that he composed the second pair in order to retract the first and this, I think, is incorrect. Furthermore, I do not believe that Spenser's statement is blind. Such a theory, in my view, would only be convincing if Spenser's first two Hymnes were, in fact, offensive poems. But they are not offensive poems so why would Spenser need a blind to put them into print? Indeed, it is hard to understand how Davis came to this conclusion when he thought the first two Hymnes were full of Neo-Platonism. I do not believe they are, but there can be no doubt that they contain some Platonic material which, I think, can be explained in terms of my hypothesis. If my hypothesis is correct, then the Platonic material in these Hymnes was added at a later date when Spenser changed his manuscript poems to make these first two Hymnes. The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are not in need of any retraction and I do not believe that Spenser is retracting

them in his dedication. Indeed, as far as I can see, he is not retracting them either seriously or otherwise. Mr. Davis thinks he is and here is where we disagree.

Now, let us turn to Dr. Tatlock. In reading the letter of dedication, Dr. Tatlock says that

> This pious impulse does not lack parallels in literary history. Sometimes, as with Chaucer, it is expressed in the very publication which contains the supposed offence. Edmund Spenser, 'having in the greener time of' his youth composed 'two Hymnes in the praise of love and beautie' found they ministered overmuch to youthful passions, and was urged 'to call in the same.' Finding them much spread in manuscript copies, he 'resolved at least to amend, and by way of retractation to reform them,' and accordingly wrote his Platonic hymns of Heavenly Love and of Heavenly Beautie. Along with the former two he published them in 1596, with the preface which I have summarized. His mea culpa over the earlier hymns, now published with a poetic corrective, hardly seems to us called for, and clearly was not meant to be taken very seriously, as perhaps Chaucer's was not.[8]

Dr. Tatlock understood that Spenser was referring to some early manuscript poems in his letter of dedication. But, he believes the first two Hymnes are those early manuscript poems and I do not believe they are. The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are the amended versions of his early manuscript poems and this, in fact, explains why they are not in need of any mea culpa. Spenser's mea culpa is expressed

within the context of his early manuscript poems and it is meant in earnest. But, we must not confuse those poems with the first two Hymnes. The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are not his early manuscript poems, as Tatlock has suggested.

The error that Dr. Greenlaw makes is much the same as that of Tatlock. Greenlaw says:

> Let me turn, now, to Mr. Renwick's handling of the four hymns. He reacts justly, here, as elsewhere in his commentary, against excessive and pedantic source study. But, it seems to me that he falls into the error of postulating Spenser's complete repudiation of the first two of the hymns, which leads to a quite unjustifiable view. He seems to take quite literally the dedication letter. He may be right, but I do not see why he should not apply here what he has so well taught us in the Ponsonby letter; dedicatory letters are not to be taken too literally. Literal interpretation, here, brings us face to face with the necessity of explaining why a poet sincerely regretful of his earlier love poems and determined to correct his error by more godly poetry, should nevertheless publish for the first time the pagan and the godly in the same volume. Surely, it was not to show the extent of his reformation.[9]

If my theory is correct, then there are errors in this statement on the part of both critics. Mr. Renwick takes the view that Spenser is repudiating the first two Hymnes and this, I think, is not the case. I believe that he is right to take the letter literally, but I do not agree with him that Spenser is repudiating the first two Hymnes. The

hymns that Spenser is repudiating are those earlier manuscript hymns which I have mentioned above.

Dr. Greenlaw holds the view that Spenser's letter of dedication cannot be taken literally and here is where we disagree. I believe that Spenser's letter should be taken literally and I do not agree that this approach presents a problem. Dr. Greenlaw thinks it does because he fails to see that Spenser did revise the poems to which his patrons had objected before he placed them in this book.

The views of Dr. Purvis are the same as those of Greenlaw. Purvis says:

> One other explanation for the unity of the Hymnes has also been given - that the 'retractation' is simply a literary convention. Certainly, some of Spenser's dedicatory statements are at least troublesome to those wishing to take them literally. It is often remarked that if Spenser truly meant to apologize for the first two hymns, it is scarcely logical that he would not only reprint them but also claim that the ladies to whom they are dedicated are perfect types of both earthly and heavenly beauty. And, as many have recognized, these hymns make a clear distinction between love and lust and hardly need to be recanted. As Jones has said, it is difficult to believe that Spenser seriously repented the first two poems.[10]

If my theory is correct, then Purvis makes some major errors in reading Spenser's dedication. She adopts the point of view that Spenser was pretending to apologize for

the first two Hymnes while he was reprinting them within the present volume. She completely fails to see that these are not the hymns for which he was apologizing. She also fails to see that the ones for which she was apologizing were some earlier manuscript poems which he had never printed before. Purvis also fails to see why the poet was able to claim that the ladies to whom these hymns are dedicated "are perfect types of both earthly and heavenly beauty". Spenser was able to make this claim because he did revise the poems to which these ladies had objected before he put them in this book.

The first two Hymnes embrace the themes of earthly love and earthly beauty while the last two Hymnes embrace the themes of heavenly love and heavenly beauty. The four existing hymns, together, are meant to represent "all true love and beauty, both in the one and the other kind" of which these ladies are the types. The first two Hymnes, therefore, are not and cannot be, the ones to which they had objected. We add to this the fact that they are simply not offensive. Dr. Purvis notes this point, but she completely fails to see why they are innocuous. The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are the amended versions of his ealier love poems and this is why the two of them "hardly need to be recanted". This is also why they make a very clear distinction

between the concepts of love and lust. Spenser drew a clear distinction between the concepts of love and lust when he changed the earlier poems to make these first two Hymnes.

The first two Hymnes are not in need of any kind of retraction. Spenser's "retractation" is not simply a literary convention because there is no "retractation" (in the sense of retraction). Dr. Purvis thinks there is because she has confused the words "retractation" and retraction and because she misinterprets what the poet has to say.

Now let us turn to Dr. Bennett. Dr. Bennett shares the view that Spenser's letter is conventional. She says:

> In the first place, the conventional character of this epistle ought to be more fully recognized. Petrarch's apology for the love poetry of his 'youth', nugellas meas vulgares..... juveniles ineptias,' was echoed by almost every writer of love poems in the century. Benivieni is only expressing the conventional apology when he writes to a friend, in a letter which Spenser saw, if he saw the Canzona & Commento, that he had wished to make of his 'ineptie puerile...uno sacrificio a Vulcano' as the friend addressed had advised him to do so. (Note that the situation is an exact parallel of the one described in Spenser's letter.) But, 'molte copie & uarii luoghi disseminata, and so he has rendered the offending poems innocuous by prefixing an 'argumento' to each. Spenser's phrase 'the greener time' of my youth is certainly an echo of this conventional excuse for publishing amatory verse.[11]

It is hard to see how Benivieni's situation is the same as Spenser's. In fact, they appear completely different. The major difference here is one of personalities. Benivieni's letter is a letter to a friend while Spenser's letter is addressed to two of England's finest ladies. I fail to see how they could be involved in any kind of scheme to publish racy love poems. I also doubt that he would dare to try to dupe these ladies by the use of such a scheme. At the same time, it does not seem likely that he would use their proper names in some fictitious story on the present book of poems. Dr. Welsford says that "I find it hard, indeed, to believe that Spenser would have dared to publish a completely false statement about the attitude and behaviour of these two noble sisters"[12] and LeBel says "he could not expect the countess of Cumberland and the countess of Warwick graciously to take part in a literary convention."[13] I agree entirely with this. Indeed, we must always remember who these ladies were and what their status was in life (see previous chapter). They were important members of the English aristocracy and Spenser was a commoner in comparison to them. So, how could we believe that they would graciously participate in the kind of literary convention that Bennett has described above? Furthermore, it is hard to see what Spenser was excusing. The first two Hymnes, as I have said, are not offensive poems,

so Spenser needed no excuse to put them into print. No excuse was needed and none is being offered here. He was free to print these poems because they were amended versions of his early love poems. Many critics fail to see that Spenser did revise the hymns to which his patrons had objected and this is why they question Spenser's dedication. Dr. Long has made this error as witnessed in his statement. He says that

> It may be objected that the dedicatory letter of 1596 cannot be so paralleled, in that it forms no part of the feigning of the Fowre Hymnes. But, does it not? J.B. Fletcher has shown Spenser's inconsistency there in printing the two former hymns at the moment he condemns their effect upon unstayed youth. Artifice is certainly present, and convention requires for the sake of decorum that the former and latter hymns shall represent respectively, greener and riper years.[14]

If my hypothesis is correct, then the hymns we have before us now are not the poet's former hymns. They are, in fact, amended versions of the poet's former hymns and it is, therefore wrong to think that Spenser lacks consistency.[15] The letter is consistent with the actions of the poet and it must not be viewed as if it were a hoax. Dr. Long, in fact, believes that Spenser's letter is a hoax[16] and so does Dr. Palgrave. He says:

> I hold it as, for the most part, a poetical device, a trick of fine art

> by which Spenser in his prefatory letter to his fair and noble friends, sets forth these two latter Hymns as a sort of retractation or palinode in regard to the two earlier.[17]

Spenser's letter, in my view, is not a conventional palinode and it quite certainly holds more than mere structural significance. In fact, I am firmly convinced that it provides the very key to what is in the larger work and to its individual parts. It also points the way to some significant internal relationships between all four of the hymns which might otherwise be overlooked. It is consequently more than worthy of serious consideration. The critics who take it seriously include Jones, Mounts and Grossart. Jones says that

> The meaning of the quoted passage from the dedication, as has often been noted, is not quite clear. Did the amendment and 'retractation' consist in changing the poems originally published, or merely in adding two which would prove more acceptable to the religious tastes of the critics? If the latter hypothesis is accepted, one is left to wonder why the poet should have given further publicity to the objectionable poems by reissuing them. If we assume that the first two Hymnes preserve their original form, an objection might conceivably have rested upon the paganism of certain stanzas; as for instance, the description of the paradise of joys at the conclusion of the Hymne of Love.[18]

The fundamental question which is raised by Spenser's

letter is the one examined here by Dr. H.V. Jones. Did the poet, besides composing the two later hymns, also reduce the earlier to inoffensiveness? The answer to this question is very simply - yes. Spenser changed the earlier hymns to make them less offensive and it was only after this that he composed the second pair. It is not a question then of whether the poet changed the hymns to which his patrons had objected or whether he merely added two more godly poems. Spenser clearly did them both to try and please his patrons. He not only changed the hymns to which they had objected but he composed a second pair of more religious poems. This is my hypothesis.

If my hypothesis is correct, then Spenser's amendment did not consist in changing the poems originally published. The original poems were manuscript poems and they had never been published before. Spenser changed the manuscript poems to make the first two Hymnes and hence there is no question of any further publicity. Spenser did not give further publicity to the objectionable poems by reissuing them. He clearly changed the objectionable poems before he put them into print in 1596.

The first two Hymnes, in my opinion, are the amended poems and it would be an error to conclude that they preserve their original form. Certain stanzas of these hymns

are, no doubt, very pagan and I believe that these are part of Spenser's earlier manuscript poems. The manuscript poems, in my view, were highly pagan in subject matter, but they were also more than this as we shall soon discover.

Now, let us turn to Mr. Mounts who says:

> Much as we should like to know which of these great ladies had chided Spenser for the too great seductiveness of his original hymns to love and beauty, the evidence is inconclusive and perhaps does not greatly matter. What matters a great deal is what sort of ladies they unpoetically and actually were. Legois has noted that the Countess of Warwick was reputed a Puritan, and that the Countess of Cumberland enjoyed a great name for piety and virtue... Considering the lofty platonic sentiments of the two poems as actually printed, critics and editors down through the years have been hard-pressed to explain why she ever rebuked him at all. The line generally taken has been that these ladies were, in Grossart's phrase, 'English gentlewomen, not prudes,' and that it is simply inconceivable that they could have objected to the poems as they now stand, and in the case the verse have been expurgated, it is hard to see what can have been removed.[19]

I agree with Mr. Mounts that we shall probably never know which of these ladies had objected to the original poems. I believe that it was Anne, but we cannot be certain of this (see figure 1). The fact that both were pious ladies is, of course, important and we must keep this point in mind to know the source of their objection. But we must not be fooled to think that they had chided Spenser for the

Lady Anne, Countess of Warwick

Fig. I

first two Hymnes as they now stand. The first two Hymnes, in the present collection, are the amended poems and this, I think, explains why they appear to be Platonic. The Platonic material in these hymns was added at a later date when Spenser changed the original poems to make them less offensive. The original poems were manuscript poems and they were not at all Platonic, for, had they been Platonic poems, they would not have caused a controversy.

Now, we come to Dr. Grossart. In reading Spenser's dedication, Dr. Grossart says that

> By his 'amending' and 'reforming' of the two Hymnes of Love and Beauty, I understand that he had removed the over-warmth of the original MS. - circulated Hymns. The ladies were English gentlewomen, not prudes, and it is simply impossible that they should have objected to or sought the suppression of these two hymns as we now have them. The explanation of the poet's apologetic phrasing is that he had called down on him a rebuke or rebuff from one of the fair ladies - probably the Countess of Warwick, who was especially Puritan, and did much for the 'oppressed' clergy - whilst his plea of inability to 'call in' the MS. copies was set off by his printing the 'two Hymnes' as he now wished them to be read... There was no reason for adding these (H.H.L. and H.H.B.) from anything erotic in the two Hymnes, but there was commanding reason that he should glorify his penance and be shriven of his lady-friend.[20]

It is in this statement that we find the clearest mention of Spenser's original manuscript hymns in praise of Love and

Beauty. The original hymns to Love and Beauty were a pair of manuscript poems and Dr. Grossart understood that it was to those manuscript poems that Anne and Margaret had objected. They did not object to the first two Hymnes as we now have them. The first two Hymnes, as they are printed, are the amended poems and this is also evident from Dr. Grossart's statement. Dr. Grossart understood that Spenser changed the manuscript poems to make the first two Hymnes and here is where he differs from all the other critics. In fact, I believe that he alone has understood the dedication. He does not attempt to date the manuscript poems, but I believe that they were written in 1579 while Spenser was at Court.

Manuscript poetry was in wide use at the Court when Spenser was there in 1579 and much of it was focused on the theme of love. Love was the talk of all the Court as Spenser notes in Colin Clout:

> For all the walls and windows there are writ,
> All full of loue, and loue, and loue my deare,
> And all their talke and studie is of it.
> Ne any there doth braue or valiant seeme,
> Unlesse that some gay Mistresse badge he beares:
> Ne any one himselfe doth oughte esteeme,
> Unlesse he swim in loue vp to the eares.
>
> (ll. 776-782).

In the next chapter, I will study the question of what was wrong with the manuscript poems. The first two Hymnes,

in my opinion, contain enough material from those early manuscript poems to make the problem obvious. I have studied them carefully and come to the conclusion that the following stanzas of these Hymnes contain the manuscript material: stanzas 1-7, 18-24 and 29-44 of the Hymne in Honour of Love and stanzas 1-4, 8-9 and 38-41 of the Hymne in Honour of Beauty. The material in these stanzas is written from a different perspective than the other material which, I think, was added in 1596.

It is important to note, however, that I am not suggesting that the first two Hymnes are offensive poems. In fact, I have consistently held the position that they are inoffensive in their present form. My purpose in chapter three is simply to explain the source of the objection to the manuscript poems on the basis of what I believe to be the manuscript material in the first two Hymnes.

# Explanation

I believe that Mr. Mounts came close to knowing what was wrong with Spenser's earlier manuscript hymns in praise of Love and Beauty. I do not agree with all of his conclusions, but many of my own were prompted by his study. In 1963, Mr. Mounts produced a paper in which he drew a parallel between the poem Colin Clout and Spenser's Hymne of Love. Mr. Mounts observed that in the former poem, Spenser gave expression to

> a personal religion of earthly love and earthly beauty couched in an extravagance of pagan imagery unparalleled in certain respects by other Cupid poetry of his day, and by so doing, may have seriously antagonised an influential segment of his reading public.[1]

Having said that, he proceeded to argue that the author's intentions were entirely innocent and that certain of his readers were, in fact, at fault. They had apparently misunderstood the author and he was, in turn, "almost beside himself with rage over this continued misinterpretation of his intentions".[2] Indeed, "he felt a compulsion to defend his brand of Cupid worship against a morally reprehensible kind".[3] Someone was attacking "his system, his private religion of love and beauty, and he rose to its defense, a shade extravagantly".[4]

The problem, according to Mr. Mounts, was mainly one of language. He said that Spenser had permitted himself to

praise Cupid (that is, Love) and Venus (that is, Beauty) in language that meant one thing to himself and something utterly different to many of his readers.[5] In other words, he felt that what Spenser had said about Cupid and Venus was, in fact, "not so unacceptable as the language in which he had said it".[6] He gave the following example from Colin Clout itself:

> We poore shepherds, whether rightly so,
> Or through our rudeness into errour led,
> Do make religion how we rashly go,
> To serve that god, that is so greatly dred;
> For him the greatest of the gods we deeme,
> Born without syre or couples of one kind,
> For Venus selfe doth soly couples seeme,
> Both male and female, through commixture joynd,
> So pure and spotless Cupid forth she brought,
> And in the Garden of Adonis nurst;
> Where growing, he his owne perfection wrought,
> And shortly was of all the gods the first.
>
> (ll. 795-806)

"Obviously," he added, "first here means first in authority, not just in time."[7] He felt that this distinction was, in fact, an important one although he doubted that "to rigid Christian orthodoxy either conception would have been tolerable."[8] Colin had apparently not only praised Cupid in a highly elevated and inappropriate language, but much of what he had said about Cupid would have been more fitting of the Christian God. He gave a second example from Colin Clout itself:

> So we him worship, so we him adore
> With humble hearts to heaven uplifted hie,

> That to true loves he may us evermore
> Preferre, and of their grace us dignifie :
> Ne is there shepherd, ne yet shepherds swaine,
> What ever feeds in forest or in field,
> That dare with evil deed or leasing vaine
> Blaspheme his powre or termes unworthie yield.
>
> (ll. 815-822)

From this, he concluded that it was indeed "small wonder" that a few lines later Cuddie should exclaim that Colin must have been divinely inspired.[9]

> Shepherd it seems that some celestial rage
> Of love (quoth Cuddy) is breathed into thy breast
> That powreth forth these oracles so sage,
> Of that high powre, wherewith thou are possest.
>
> (ll. 823-826)

In the same study, Mr. Mounts went on to say that Colin Clout had, in fact, indirectly acknowledged himself as a virtual priest of Venus, as well as of Cupid, who was "greatest of the gods," "of all the gods the first," and "lord of all the world by might."[10] Such a relationship, in his view, had been more than hinted at in Cuddy's words to Colin,

> But never wist I till this present day
> Albe of love I always humbly deemed,
> That he was such an one, as thou doest say,
> And so religiously to be esteemed.
> Well may it seeme by this thy deep insight
> That of that God, the Priest thou shouldest be
> So well thou wot'st the mysteries of his might,
> As if his godhead thou didst present see.
>
> (ii. 827-834)

In pointing to the poet's readers, Mr. Mounts concluded that

"never in the most perfervid outbursts of the sonneteers had they ever encountered such a religious intensity in the service of Cupid and Venus."[11] At the same time, Mr. Mounts observed that to the literal-minded reader in 1596

> Colin Clout was no semi-fictional pastoral shadow but the poet-speaking in his own right, and the Cupid and Venus of whom he virtually announces himself the priest in an earthly religion of love and beauty, are the loathed gods of paganism.[12]

The poet's pious readers, said Mounts, could hardly have been more shocked, had Spenser suddenly proclaimed himself a worshipper of Baal.[13] Some of these readers, he added, may have turned upon the author, "with the same sharpness and reproach that they might have turned against any heretic relapsed into pagan ways".[14]

The poet's Hymnes, in his opinion, were equally objectionable.[15] In fact, Mr. Mounts concluded that these two works were remarkably similar in subject matter and circumstance.[16] At the same time, he was quick to observe that Cupid was present in both of these poems. He not only pointed this out, but he encouraged his readers to think that the Cupid who appeared in Colin Clout was the same one who appeared in Spenser's Hymne of Love.[17] Mr. Mounts was even convinced that Spenser's approach to this pagan god was identical in these poems. His praise of Love or Cupid in Colin Clout and his frankly pagan adoration of Cupid in the

Hymne of Love were merely two examples of a larger and common approach. And, that approach was apparently marked by the kind of religious intensity which he had mentioned at the start. "If devoutly orthodox readers were scandalized by the Cupid worship in Colin Clout," said Mounts, "they would scarcely be soothed by the concluding stanzas of the Hymne of Love. For here, he added:

> One tells how successfully lovers win at last through paines of Purgatory after which they are translated in the next stage, into a strangely sensuous Paradise, where they lie like gods in yvorie bed arayed! Next we learn that Love's daughter is named Pleasure, and that too has a familiar pagan ring, especially as the lovers lay their heads in her bosom, "deuoyed of guilty shame/after full joyance of their gentle game."[18]

"Finally," he added, "comes that crowning touch in what C.S. Lewis quite rightly calls, a 'collect,' a lover's prayer to the lover's god, vowing in exchange for the attainment of his desire to sing,"[19]

> of thy immortal praise,
> An heavenly hymne, such as the angels sing,
> And thy triumphant name then would I raise,
> Bove all the gods, thee only honouring,
> My guide, my God, my victor and my king.
>
> (ll. 301-305)

In pointing to this stanza of the Hymne of Love, Dr. Long concluded that "its paganism would have conveyed to unsympathetic eyes, the notion of positive blasphemy."[20] Furthermore,

he felt that lines 280-292 of this hymn could easily have lent themselves to a very sensuous interpretation.[21]

The closing stanzas of this poem also caught the attention of Dr. Enid Welsford. She saw them as a sort of Envoy in which the poet presented his gift and made a final attempt to wheedle Love.[22] Dr. Welsford said that

> as one reads the Envoy, the misgivings of Spenser's patronesses become understandable. For here, and throughout the poem, he seems to be speaking with the tongue of the troubadour and making an almost blasphemous use of Christian phraseology. Without the grace of Love, one cannot worship Love, whom Love loveth, he chasteneth, in Heaven, Love will become the sole object of adoration.[23]

Dr. Welsford ended by asking "is this not to place the Ovidian Amor on the very throne of the Christian God?"[24] Indeed, she felt that it was, although she was quick to add that, in her opinion, Spenser had "not necessarily done so with any impious or defiant intention."[25] "The reference to Heaven in the Invocation, the Hymn and the Envoy," said Welsford,

> are all part of an attempt to influence Love's behaviour by suggesting that he discloses his essential nature most fully when his restless Eros action brings about a restful Hymeneal joy which includes both soul and body.[26]

Dr. Welsford, in my view, was very close to knowing what was in the manuscript parts of Spenser's Hymne of Love, but she

did not pursue the matter. In these sections of the hymn Spenser was singing with the tongue of the troubadour and making an almost blasphemous use of Christian phraseology. At the same time, if he had, in fact, not elevated the Ovidian Amor to the very throne of the Christian God, then he had certainly drawn a rather potent analogy between this Cupid and the Christian God. And, he had obviously done so within the context of a love religion, as Mr. Mounts suggests. But, this particular love religion was not of Spenser's making. In fact, it has wide and varied roots in Spenser's medieval past. It was the poets of courtly love in the Middle Ages who extended the use of Cupid and Venus beyond the level of ordinary allusion to actually produce a religion of love.[27] Mr. Mounts had failed to recognize that this particular love religion was nothing new to English poetry. Why he failed to do so is hard to understand, since he had quoted Lewis on this very subject. In pointing to the closing stanzas of the Hymne of Love, Mr. Mounts observed that "Dr. Lewis is a modern churchman, learned enough to place this fine frenzy in its proper place in the Frauendienst tradition of the Middle Ages."[28] Dr. Lewis knew that Spenser's love religion was a part of this tradition, but Mr. Mounts had missed the point that Dr. Lewis made. Lewis said that

> The Hymne of Love is in general, very much more medieval than Platonic. The invocation to the God of Love and the Muses (1-35), the cruelities of Cupid (120-61), the effects of love in producing nobility and knightly deeds (176-237), the pains of jealously (252-272), the passage from Love's Purgatory to Love's Heaven (237-93) and the concluding collect (294-307), are exactly in the manner of Frauendienst and its religion of love.[29]

Dr. Lewis added that "except for the language, they could have been written two hundred years earlier. They are well done, though not in Spenser's greatest manner and by them, the poem stands or falls."[30]

Mr. Mounts was wrong to think that this was Spenser's private mythology, his personal religion of love and beauty and that it represented a unique approach to Cupid and Venus.[31] Spenser always wrote within a framework, says Broadbent, "whether of ideas, conventions, or forms -- usually all three,"[32] and he had clearly done so in his earlier manuscript hymns. Those two hymns were written in the Frauendienst tradition and this, in fact, explains the reason for the controversy. The religion of love, as Mounts suggests, was at its very centre.

The reason for the controversy can best be understood, in fact, by simply asking the question: what was wrong with the religion of love from a Christian point of view? It was pagan, to be sure, but it was also more than this as Dr.

Jacobson has suggested.

Dr. Jacobson says that the Church of Love is that poetic religion of which the deities are the pagan Venus and Cupid and the language and forms of worship those of the Christian Church.[33] Several pages later, Dr. Jacobson adds that "it took its deities from Roman mythology and its forms, both from the Roman poets and the Christian Church".[34] In the same study, Jacobson says that for the purpose of discussion

> the Church of Love may be taken in its natural divisions: first, the love deity or deities originally pagan or classical; second, the religious forms and practices, some of them borrowed from the Christian Church, by which the love deities are worshipped or acknowledged.[35]

And, finally,

> the religious forms and languages within the Church of Love are of two kinds: first, the common elements like prayer, reward and punishment, and an Elysium, all of which could have been inherited from the classical Religion of Love; secondly, the forms and doctrines of the Christian Church.[36]

We can see from this that pagan elements were in no sense foreign to the Frauendienst tradition, or its religion of love. These were, in fact, an essential and fundamental characteristic of this particular poetic cult. Mounts had detected these pagan elements in Spenser's Hymne of Love, but he had not detected the other aspect of the cult as outlined here by Jacobson. Dr. Jacobson noted the fact that

while some of its elements were actually pagan, others were strictly Christian and borrowed from Christian worship.[37] In other words, the religion of love incorporated both pagan and Christian elements.

Some of the Christian elements, says Jacobson, are the doctrines of sin, penance and absolution, a gospel (taken from Ovid), a religious order of lovers, and excommunication in the name of Venus.[38] But, this was only part of it. The religion of love was, in fact, fundamentally and predominantly "Christian" and this poetic cult incorporated virtually all the important features of medieval Christian worship.[39] Dr. Griffith says that

> the religion of love had its god, its mediator and intercessor...its saints, its legends, its martyrs, its relics and its shrine, with a system of repentance, penance and satisfaction, all created in analogy to the Christian worship of the time.[40]

It had its churches, its masses, its commandments, its priests, and its sacred texts, and like the Christian God, Cupid was given the power of reward and punishment, life and death, and the power of excommunication.[41] He was, in fact, a virtual counterpart of the Christian God. His worshippers were members of a religious order, they prayed, sinned, and repented, just as Christians did:

> This religion had its devotions, its reverences, its heresies, its penance and its absolution. To write of untruth in love with sympathy was wickedness and sin against God's law. This religion had its hell and its saints lived with their god in Paradise. This God of Love had his martyrs who died for his religion, as did Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Medea and Lucretea and their stories, as in Ovid's Heroides were considered devotional literature.[42]

But, what did this religion mean? Or, what was its relationship to medieval Christianity? The answer to this question will help us fully understand the reason for the controversy over Spenser's manuscript hymns.

Dr. Lewis, once again, is very helpful here. He has explained the religion of love as it appears within the poem, the Concile of Remirement. Dr. Lewis says that "the whole poem illustrates the influence of Ovid and the religion of love, very well,"

> but it is by no means an instance of Ovid misunderstood. The worship of the God Amor had been a mock religion in Ovid's Art of Love. The French poet has taken over this conception of an erotic religion with the full understanding of its flippancy and proceeded to elaborate the joke in terms of the only religion he knows--medieval Christianity. The result is a close and impudent parody of the practices of the Church in which Ovid becomes a doctor egregius and the Ars Amatoria a gospel, erotic heterdoxy and orthodoxy are distinguished, and the God of Love is equipped with cardinals and exercises the power of excommunication.[43]

"The love religion often begins as a parody of the real religion," says Lewis, but this does not mean that it may not soon become something more serious than a parody, nor even that it may not, as in Dante find a modus vivendi with Christianity and produce a noble fusion of sexual and religious experience.[44] But, he added,

> it does mean that we must be prepared for a certain ambiguity in all those poems where the attitude of the lover to his lady or Love looks at first sight most like the attitude of the worshipper to the Blessed Virgin or God.[45]

Lewis described the love religion as an "extension of religion, an escape from religion, a rival religion".[46] Fraudendienst can be any of these, or any combination of them said Lewis, and in certain instances it may even be an open enemy of true religion.[47] This is entirely dependent on the author's personal approach.

Lewis subsequently compared the "lord of terrible aspect" in Dante's Vita Nuova with the God of Love in the Concile of Remirement. His purpose was to illustrate "a measure of the tradition's width and complexity".[48] "Dante is as serious as a man can be," said Lewis, and the French poet is not serious at all.[49] Other writers, he added, can be placed in every position between the two extremes.[50] And, this is not all.

> The variations are not only between jest and earnest; for the love religion can become more serious without becoming reconciled to the real religion. Where it is not a parody of the Church it may be, in a sense, her rival--a temporary escape, a truancy from the ardours of a religion that was believed into the delights of a religion that was merely imagined.[51]

The religion of love is also found in some of Chaucer's poetry where its meaning is explained by Dr. A.C. Spearing. Dr. Spearing says that

> this religion was a parody of Christianity borrowing its conceptions and terminology and it constantly played against Christianity in Chaucer's poetry. If taken seriously, the religion of courtly love would have been a heretical rival of the true religion and indeed, it has been suggested that its historical origin is connected with the development of heretical cults in Southern France in the Twelfth century. [52]

But, he adds, "in fourteenth century England, this religion too, was a game, an unsystematic collection of attitudes."[53] "Sometimes," says Spearing, "the object of the cult was the lady herself, but there was also a different parody-theology which placed the God of Love himself, in this position." It had more commonly both figures.[54]

Spenser's earlier manuscript hymns were part of this poetic cult and that is why his patrons had objected to those poems. They not only recognized what kind of poetry was in those hymns, but they were also aware of how the work was

intended to be read. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that they had reached the conclusion that Spenser was seriously worshipping the pagan Cupid and Venus. Anne and Margaret had objected to the earlier manuscript hymns because those poems were, in fact, making fun of Christianity.

In addition to this, it is important to note that in the case of the manuscript hymns we are ultimately dealing with the subject of courtly love. The manuscript hymns, in my opinion, were hymns of courtly love and this particular kind of love would not have been acceptable to Anne and Margaret Russell because they were religious. It is consequently important to know what is meant by courtly love and why it was offensive from a Christian point of view. This will help to further explain the reason for the controversy.

Courtly love "is neither Christian caritas, nor platonic love," says Denomy, "neither mystical love, nor lust," but rather, "a special type of love which was peculiar to the troubadours, by whom, as far as historical texts allows us to know, it was formed, developed and spread."[55] This took place in Southern France during the early decades of the twelfth century. The system began as a code of manners and it was later introduced into the literature of the period by the troubadour poets of Provence.

For the troubadours, the main stress fell on courting,

not on coition, on desire, not on possession,[56] and courtly love did not approve of sensuality for its own sake, the enjoyment of fleshly delights, of and for themselves.[57] What the lover sought from the lady was permission to enjoy a perpetual state of desire.[58] Everything that served to intensify that desire was, for the troubadours, not only legitimate, but it was to be encouraged and cultivated.[59] Father Denomy says that courtly love

> is a love wherein desire is a means towards an end: progress and growth in virtue, merit and worth. Desire is an integral part, an essential part, but what is of the very essence of Courtly Love is its ennobling force, the elevation of the lover effected by a ceaseless yearning for union with a worthy lady. Desire is a means towards the final end of Courtly Love: the ennobling of the lover.[60]

"Despite all the sensuality that such love implied," says Denomy, "for the troubadours, it was a spiritual love in that it sought a union of the hearts and minds and not of the bodies."[61]

> Pure love consists in the union of the hearts and minds of the lovers. It is a love that yearns for and, at times, is rewarded by the solace of every delight of the beloved except the possession of her. That is not allowed to those who love purely.[62]

"Pure love, in this sense," says Denomy, "becomes the ideal of courtly love."[63]

Physical love, to the troubadours, was something less than 'pure' and they called it 'mixed' love. Dr. Foster says that

> mixed love is love that is permitted to reach its term in coition; pure love is love that is deliberately withheld from coition; though it can go a fair way towards this end so that its purity from a Christian point of view remains ambiguous.[64]

But, not for Father Denomy. He says that

> the troubadour and Christian conceptions of pure love are at entirely different poles, so much so that when the Christian and the troubadour speak of pure love, they are speaking, as it were, two different languages. Pure love, for the Christian is devoid of physical, carnal recompense of even the thought and desire for it. For the troubadours, fin amor forbids intercourse and that is all; it allows every physical and carnal boon of the beloved that is not intercourse, thoughts, desires, looks, embraces and touches that are mortal sins in Christian eyes.[65]

Father Denomy adds that "far from being pure in the accepted sense, or disinterested, courtly love is frankly sensual, carnal, and selfish, in that it allowed, approved of, and even encouraged all those things which fan and provoke desire."[66] "The troubadours assumed that love was sexual, but also, that because sexual, it had potentially great moral and spiritual value."[67] This was, in Dr. Foster's words, "the enduring and essential message of courtly love."[68] The troubadours sought to give the sexual impulse "an intrinsic

value, a potential moral worth, apart from its procreative purpose,"[69] and here, of course, as Russell notes, they could look for no support from contemporary theology. The Church took no account of any such value or worth in sexual love.[70]

It is also important to note that almost all the troubadour love songs are addressed to married women.[71] Dr. Valency says that "the knightly love of the troubadour song did not usually address his suit to a girl he hoped to marry."[72] The troubadours even held that love and marriage were incompatible, that love had nothing to do with marriage. Lewis says that no rule is made clearer in courtly love than the one which excludes love from the marriage relation.[73] The troubadour lady, to be sure, was high-born, proud and lovely, but she was also usually the wife of another man. Through love and desire for her, the troubadour grew in value and worth.

> Without ceasing to gravitate toward the lord who employed him, he assumed an orbital motion around the lady who fascinated him, his star. It was from this source that he acquired his worth and greatness.[74]

The knight became the lady's vassal; she was his lord, his leader, and his guide.[75]

This is what is meant by the concept of courtly love as it appeared in Southern France in the early part of the

twelfth century. The concept spread from here to England during the Middle Ages, but not without some major changes. Indeed, Dr. Valency says that the concept of courtly love was still widely current in Renaissance England and that the cult of "pure love" had more than merely literary significance even as late as the seventeenth century throughout Europe. But he adds, by this time, the idea had suffered some dilution.[76]

Dr. Siegel, in my view, was closer to the truth. He says that

> the fundamental attitude underlying the convention was far different. With the decay of feudalism and the fading dream of chivalry the practices of chivalric love became the diversion of a degenerated aristocracy, which retained very little of the chivalric attitude.[77]

"The exaggerated laudation of the mistress and the complete humility of the lover in the Petrarchan sonnet," adds Siegel, "do not represent an idealization of womanhood." "Rather do they represent a degradation of women for the literary and social convention which gave them this spurious elevation sprang from a point of view in which they were viewed as so many conquests to be gained."[78]

> A close reading of the Petrarchan sonnet-cycles will show, as we shall see, that the torments of the lover, the appeals to his mistress' pity and

> the outcries against her cruelty have the same meaning as similar complaints in chivalric poetry--the lover is begging his mistress to yield 'grace' and 'grace' in both cases means the same thing.[79]

What it means, of course, is the final submission of 'grace' in bed.

Dr. Siegel also said that the writing of sonnets was, in fact, a part of the art of love making among the aristocracy.[80] These sonnets were written in accordance with a tradition, he said, which was often, however, more than merely a literary tradition.[81] Courtly love making declined in England during the fifteenth century, says Siegel, but it rose into a new being with the establishment of the Tudor Court.

> It seems to have reached its full bloom during the reign of Elizabeth as conditions stabilized after the troubled reigns of Edward and Mary. The main source of this re-invigoration was, of course, the Italian Renaissance both through contact with the Italianized court of France and through Italy itself. From Italy came both the Platonic ideal of courtly love and the degenerate chivalric tradition of free love.[82]

Dr. Siegel adds that "chivalric love has, as its very center, sexual intercourse outside of marriage"[83] and this kind of love he says

> was especially practiced at the court of Elizabethan England by the young nobles of the old aristocracy who adopted Italianism as an expression

> of their discontent with social and political conditions and as a mark of their emancipation from morality.[84]

Dr. Foster linked the very emergence of courtly love to this underlying feeling of discontent with traditional Christian morality.[85] Courtly love, says Foster, "was in part, an assertion of personal values against an established order which had become, in certain respects, excessively impersonal" and he mentions specifically "the established attitudes and opinions on sex which had apparently become somehow inhuman and which did not reflect human realities."[86]

Dr. Foster goes on to conclude that courtly love is a sort of game, but that even games have their unconscious motives; this one, of regarding sex as a matter of high and serious human interest, he notes, could hardly have arisen in the way that it did if people had not felt that something was lacking in the status quo.[87] It was in this statement that Foster caught the essence of the game of courtly love. The game consisted in treating sex seriously. What the process involved was "a subjection of the self to cupiditas with a corresponding elevation of an earthly object, in this case, a living woman, to the place properly reserved for God."[88] The courtly lover exaggerated the importance of the lady and, among other things, his own suffering for love. He did so in the spirit of a game, but the game was being

played at the expense of Christianity. This is why the manuscript hymns offended Spenser's patrons.

Dr. Reilly says that courtly love was the quintessence of cupiditas and as such, a heresy opposed to everything Christian.[89] And, "if not a heresy in the formal sense," said Russell, courtly love did represent "a deviation from Christian principles, a perversion of Christian ideals" and it showed hostility to the Christian clergy and at least implicity to the Christian Church."[90] It represented a point of view which was apparently so incompatible with Christian orthodoxy, as to merit classification as a variety of religious dissent, a sort of societal reaction against Christianity itself, so to speak.[91] It showed a total lack of reverence for things which society normally considered sacred, said Russell, and it "almost consistently portrayed the clergy with cynicism, disdain or open mockery."[92]

Courtly love was formed, developed and spread in a milieu which was fundamentally Christian, said Denomy, and which has been so for centuries.[93] It would have been quite unimaginable, had it been removed from this Christian background.[94] But, courtly love was hardly Christian; it was, if anything, anti-Christian. It took over and used the language and forms of the Christian religion, to be sure, but it also "distorted these to fit its own peculiar purposes."[95]

And, these were in no way consistent with either the values or the teachings of the Christian Church. "If the ultimate concern is the mark of a religious attitude," said Russell, then courtly lovers were religious and their religion was not Christianity even though many of them may have attended mass.[96]

Under the courtly conception, love became more than merely an ennobling force. It became the sole source of worldly worth and excellence.[97] But, it was also purely human love, apart from any consideration of the concrete claims and call of divine love.[98] Courtly love elevated the finite quality of human love to the level of the infinite.[99] Human love was placed at the very center of the universe and the courtly system had no place whatsoever for a love directed at God.

But certain of its doctrines were just as unorthodox and offensive from a Christian point of view. They were, in fact, in certain regards in open conflict with the Church. "The elevation of a finite creature, a living woman, above the highest altar of one's devotion," said Russell, "is the most evident example of such a confrontation."[100] Under the courtly conception,

> love for the lady went so far as to replace faith as the guide of life; devotion to the lady was supposed to protect one from harm. Grace was

> replaced by the courtly 'joy' in bestowing upon the lover, a liberating feeling of confidence and inner triumph. The lady rather than God, became the ultimate judge of conduct and one behaved according to what pleased her rather than according to what pleased the Almighty...The knight obeys his lady's every whim without question in the manner of the pious Christian who says 'Thy will be done.' He is utterly humble in her presence and hardly dares touch her, he trembles in her presence like a worshipper before Yaweh.[101]

She was worshipped and loved with a devotion, not of this earth; she became the saviour of humanity and the queen of the universe.[102] The lover's very life depended on her. (See Hymne of Beauty, line 280.) He approached her as a penitent, begging her forgiveness, asking her 'grace' and seeking his very salvation at her feet.[103] "She was the climax of all earthly perfection; no word, no metaphor was sufficiently ecstatic to express the full fervour of his adoration for her."[104] She was exalted, almost deified, and elevated to a position properly belonging to the Christian God. This is what we mean when we speak of the cult of the lady and it is clearly present in Spenser's Hymne of Love.

The cult of Cupid, in my view, is also present in this poem. In fact, the work itself appears to be a hymn in honour of Cupid by another name. It is not a treatise on love, nor could it ever be studied successfully from this rather narrow point of view. Spenser has not philosophized

about love in this work. He has composed a hymn to Cupid and throughout the hymn itself he is, in fact, addressing Cupid, the god of courtly love.

At the center of this piece is a highly conventional Petrarchan poet-lover, who serves as a well defined fictional persona and he is the one who delivers the lines. This he does with considerable force and conviction, at times, bitterly complaining about his poor treatment at the hands of the "mighty" god of Love. (ll. 134-168) When he is not speaking to and about Cupid (stanzas 1-8, 20-24, 33-34 and 40-45) he is speaking to Cupid and relating his personal woes and, in a larger sense, those of the courtly lover (stanzas 18-19, 29-32 and 35-39). But, Cupid is clearly the object of all these lines. This is particularly evident in stanzas 1-8, 20-24, 33-34 and 40-45, where Spenser is employing the direct form of address, "thee", "thou" and "thine" in connection with Cupid. These appear a total of 65 times in different combinations depending on the context. They do not appear once in any other section of the hymn. It is Spenser's heavy reliance on these direct forms of address which serves to ensure the presence of Cupid in the Hymne of Love. And this is done, not at all in a mythological or allegorical manner as Dr. Purvis suggests.[105] Cupid is rather a clearly defined entity whose presence cannot be

argued away by resorting to this type of interpretation of the work. He moves in these sections of the hymn "as a masculine personnage, powerful, imperious, purposeful and cruel at times yet ultimately beneficent" in perfect analogy to the Christian God.[106] Furthermore, the classical, feudal and ecclesiastical conceptions of Cupid are fused in these stanzas of the hymn in a highly complex form precisely as they had been long before this time in medieval poetry.

Spenser's Hymne of Love is, by its very nature, not a philosophical poem. It is rather a highly dramatic piece of literature which requires an almost performance situation. There are three inter-related personae: a vassal poet-lover, his noble lady friend, and, of course, the god of Love himself. The action revolves around these characters and it unfolds amid surroundings which are characteristic of the Court of Love environment. Like much of medieval love poetry, it is highly visual in its overall impact. We can easily picture its familiar setting.

In the Court of Love, Cupid was the one with the final decision. He was the judge in matters of love. Each of the parties was answerable to him; each had to bow to his command, and most importantly, only he could move his subjects to love. He was, in fact, the intermediary in the lover's suit and his intervention was entirely essential to

its success. The lover not only begged, pleaded and prayed for his 'mercy' but he very often composed songs, hymns, and complaints to Cupid in an effort to win his favour. "Spenser's entire poem, is itself, in form and spirit, such a hymn," says Fowler.[107]

"These hymns of complaint, prayer or praise formed a part of the regular service due to the presiding deity in the Court of Love," he adds, and "they were very often of an ecclesiastical or classico-religious flavor."[108] They were considered a form of offering to appease the gods of love. The anger of these gods and expiation by the writing of poetry are frequent motifs in medieval literature and they are clearly evident in Spenser's Hymne of Love. But, other aspects of this poem are equally conventional and the most conventional part, of course, is Spenser's treatment of Cupid.

Mr. Mounts, in my opinion, was mistaken to suggest that Spenser's readers had never before encountered such a religious intensity in the service of Cupid.[109] For, it is clearly present in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess, where the poet says

> Dredeles, I have ever yit
> Be tributarye and yiven rente
> To Love, hooly with good entente,
> And through pleasaunce becomes his thral
> With good wille, body, hert and al

> Al this I put in his servage,
> As to my lord, and did homage;
> And ful devoutly I prayed him to.
>
> (ll. 764-771)

This same kind of religious intensity can be found in Chaucer's Troilus. In fact, this particular poem includes a lover's prayer to Cupid.

> He seyde: Lord have routhe upon my peyne
> Al have I ben rebell in myn entente
> Now mea culpa, Lord I me repente!
> O god, that at thi disposicion
> Ledest the fyn by juste purveiaunce
> Of every wight, my lowe confession
> As liketh the, but from disesperaunce
> That may my goost departe awey from the
> Thou be my shield, for thi benignitie,
> With that, he smot his head adown anon,
> And gan to motre.
>
> (ll. 523-524)

This passage, to be sure, is full of religious concepts and liturgical phraseology, all of which is borrowed from the Christian Church. Indeed, here is a sort of religious intensity in the service of Cupid which far surpasses anything that is found in Colin Clout or the Hymne of Love. Dr. Kirby says that this passage from the Troilus

> breathes a distinctly, in fact, almost exclusively religious air, much condensed it is unmistakably the Act of Penance, addressed to Cupid and the mea culpa is of course taken over directly from the Confiteor. The two stanzas which follow, in which Troilus begs the God of Love to guard him against despair, have all the sincerity and depth of feeling that one might expect to find in a hymn to the Almighty.[110]

It is clear from this that Spenser's approach to Cupid was not, at all, unique. In fact, it had literary precedent in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer.

At the same time, Spenser's description of Cupid as the "greatest of the gods, of all the gods, the first, and lord of all the world by might," was perfectly conventional. This was the position that Cupid held throughout medieval poetry in the Court of Love tradition. That he exercised unopposable and unlimited power over the entire world was perhaps the one thing most frequently said about the god of Love in medieval literature.[111]

> He it was who humbled the proud and
> exalted the lowly, emboldened the
> coward and made timid the valiant
> and was everywhere omnipotent.[112]

Cupid was conceived of as a god whose power was absolute; there seemed nothing that he could not do[113] and nowhere, says Dodd, "may a better expression of that courtly idea of the God of Love be found than in the words of Theseus":[114]

> The god of Love, a benedictie,
> How mighty and how great a lord is he!
> Ayeins his might their gayneth none obstacles,
> He may be cleped a god for his miracles,
> For he can maken at his own gyse
> Of everich herte, as that him lest devyse.

But, Gower had expressed this thought, every bit as vividly in the Confessio Amantis. He said,

> It hath and schal ben evermore
> That love is maister, wher he wille,

> There can no life make other skile
> For wher as evere him lest to sette,
> Ther is no myht which him may lette.[115]

This type of elevation of Cupid was a common characteristic of courtly love poetry in the Middle Ages. In fact, "it was the poet of courtly love in the Middle Ages who took over from the classics more than merely the names and general attributes of Cupid and Venus. He took also the idea that these gods were deities of immense power and almost universal sovereignty."[116] The courtly Cupid held sway over all the gods, as well as over the poets and philosophers.[117] He is described in the Hymne of Love as "victor of gods," "subduer of mankind" and "souveraine Lord of all". No one could escape his power.

In medieval love poetry, Cupid was often portrayed as a cruel and merciless god. He was "a lord, a tyrant, terrifying in the power that he held over his devotees."[118] He was omnipotent and irresistable, "the subduer, all subduing, but himself invincible."[119] Merciless and unmoved by pleading he spread ruin and calamity in his wake. He waged fierce wars on mortals and laughed in his victory. He even rejoiced in their suffering. He was utterly capricious, cruel, stubborn, wild, heartless, violent, and, in short, a hateful and bitter burden to mankind.[120] This was the Cupid of Petrarch and the one that we find in the Hymne of Love.

Now that we know what the problem was with Spenser's earlier manuscript hymns, we are ready to consider the four existing poems. I will study them in pairs and my analysis will consist of a detailed explanation of the printed text. The reader is, thus, advised to keep his copy at hand in reading the next two chapters of the thesis. In them, I will continue to assume that my hypothesis is correct with regard to the manuscript poems.

# The First Two *Hymnes*

Before we begin the textual analysis of Spenser's four existing hymns, it is important for us to consider the genre of these poems. Years ago, J.B. Fletcher observed that Spenser's Hymnes were intentionally written in the tradition of the classical literary hymn[1] and that Spenser was using the term hymn in the sense of a Greek song or paean in honour of a god or hero.[2] But he considered the literary hymn to be more or less the same thing as the Italian canzone, the laudatory ode, or the ode in general, and he consequently failed to appreciate the full significance of his discovery.[3]

The point was taken up again by Dr. Enid Welsford in 1967 when she encouraged her readers to think that it was, in fact, extremely important to consider the genre of these poems. Dr. Welsford said that "it is well to remind ourselves that since Spenser is writing poetry not versified philosophy, much of his meaning will be conveyed by style, structure and the use of literary conventions; and it is, therefore important to consider the poetic and fictitious character of the genre to which they belong."[4] In the subsequent paragraph, Dr. Welsford added that

> the history of the hymn is complicated and obscure, but for our purposes, it is sufficient to recall that it originated in ancient Greece and was closely associated with religious cult. In its

> specific sense it denoted a song to a divinity and consisted in an invocation to a god, a prayer, for his favour and it usually included stories concerned with his birth, his achievements and the propagation of his cult. During the heyday of Greek lyric poetry hymns were often sung in unison by a procession of choristers as they marched towards the temple and stationed themselves around the altar.[5]

In the same study, Dr. Welsford said that Spenser's first two Hymnes had a ritualistic quality which was probably influenced, to some degree, by the references to rites, processions and festive ceremonial in extant hymns of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[6]

It was Dr. Rollinson, however, who made the greatest contribution to the generic study of Spenser's Hymnes. His first significant contribution was made in 1968 when he completed a paper on the revival of the literary hymn during the Renaissance.[7] This was followed in the same year by a full length doctoral dissertation[8] and, in 1971, by yet another article recommending the generic approach.[9] In his initial paper, Dr. Rollinson said that

> the literary hymns of such vernacular poets as Spenser cannot be fully understood or evaluated without some recognition of the classical and Neo-Latin tradition of the genre any more than Paradise Lost can be adequately considered without taking some account of the Virgilian epic. The title itself of the Fowre Hymnes implies a consciousness on Spenser's part of a generic expectation which he and the reader ought to share.[10]

"The fundamental concept of all hymns" says Rollinson "involves the idea of praise, usually limited to the praise of gods, but sometimes including that of heros."[11]

> The literary hymn is intended to be appreciated primarily for its artistic qualities, the liturgical hymn is designed to function as a means of public worship or devotion.[12]

Dr. Rollinson adds that "the literary hymn originated with the hexameter Homeric Hymns which celebrate the classical Greek gods."[13] These hymns, he says, were imitated by the Neo-Latin writers, Marullo, Vida and Scaliger and they supplied the model for Spenser's four existing poems.[14]

The three-part structure of the hymn is also explained by Dr. Rollinson. He says that

> the structure of the longer hymns is remarkably consistent. There are roughly three parts; an exordium, main body, and peroration, corresponding to the Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. The exordium usually invokes the Muse and apostrophizes the god or goddess to be praised with a catalogue of ephithets, describing or indicating the god's attributes. The main body of the hymn will consider in more detail some major characteristic referred to or suggested by the catalogue. The detailed exposition is usually some significant myth associated with the god. The peroration almost always contains some sort of apostrophe and prayer.[15]

Spenser's Hymnes, as Purvis notes, preserve this three-part structure. Purvis says that "in each hymn both the laudatory

purpose and the characteristic three-part structure of the classical literary hymn are carefully maintained.[16] In fact, I would like to urge the reader to note this aspect of the work because I think that it explains the presence of the manuscript material in Spenser's first two Hymnes. When Spenser came to revise his earlier manuscript poems he was faced with a difficult problem. The original work was written in the form of a literary hymn and he could not ignore this point. In order for the work to remain as a literary hymn, the author was obliged to retain its basic structure. The beginning and end of the first two Hymnes are full of manuscript material for this very reason.

At the same time, it is crucial to note what Dr. Rollinson says about the use of the literary hymn during the Renaissance. According to his study, the hymn was the cause of a major controversy at that particular time. The controversy concerned the question of whether or not the literary hymn should imitate pagan subject matter as well as pagan forms.[17] The Hymns of Michelle Marullo were pagan in both respects and they were largely responsible for bringing on the controversy. Vida and Scaliger took the position that the Christian poet ought to praise the members of the Christian Trinity and not the pagan gods.[18]

Vida's Hymns, says Rollinson, are cast in corrective opposition to Marullo's pagan poems.[19] The first three celebrate respectively, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.[20] The titles describe each member of the Trinity as optimus and maximus.[21] Marullo's opening Hymn had used the same epithets for Jupiter.[22]

In speaking of Julius Scaliger, Dr. Rollinson adds that

> his criticism of Marullo follows the line that the inclusion of pagan attitudes, ethics and metaphysics in the imitation of classical literary forms becomes ridiculous in a Christian culture...Beyond the potential for religious heresy and blasphemy such imitation is inappropriate in a society which believes in different values and celebrates different gods.[23]

Dr. Rollinson concludes that the Hymns of Michelle Marullo and Julius Caeser Scaliger "represent two different results of the Neo-Latin imitation of the Greek literary hymn in the Renaissance."[24] Marullo's hymns are basically pagan, while those of Scaliger are strictly Christian. Spenser's Hymnes, in his opinion, show the same kind of dichotomy. He says that

> The first pair follow that part of the Renaissance tradition which had chosen to imitate and modify classical objects of praise as well as to adopt the conventions of the classical form. The heavenly hymns imitate the other Neo-Latin school of Vida and Scaliger which

> up-dated the objects of praise in accordance with the values of contemporary Christian culture.[25]

Dr. Rollinson adds that "the second pair consequently involve more than middle-aged experience's assertion of moral and religious values superior to those affirmed by green youth in the first pair."[26]

> Spenser's reformation includes a broader aesthetic dimension which reflects a development of his artistic judgement. Spenser became his own Vida, correcting the Marullianism of his earlier poetic compositions in the genre.[27]

All of this, in my opinion, has major implications for any study of Spenser's Hymnes. Dr. Rollinson does not hypothesize an earlier pair of manuscript poems, but I believe that what he says is just as valid for them. Spenser's earlier manuscript hymns were hymns in praise of Cupid and Venus and they were, therefore, pagan in nature. But, once we consider the fact that they were also anti-Christian because of the religion of love, it is easy to understand why Anne and Margaret objected to them. These two ladies were deeply religious and Spenser's earlier manuscript hymns were making fun of Christianity. Furthermore, he had used the genre itself for a totally frivolous purpose. The literary hymn was supposed to be used for grave and serious subjects.[28]

The work of Dr. Rollinson provides a new dimension to

the study of this controversy. It raises the possibility that Anne and Margaret had objected for aesthetic reasons as well. Dr. Rollinson says that

> there might have been some aesthetic grounds for objection suggested by Scaliger's norm of the proper Christian imitation of the classical hexameter hymn. Scaliger's dogmatic position that hymns by Christian poets ought to celebrate the members of the Trinity (III,cxii) is as much based on his idea of artistic decorum as it is on his religious convictions.[29]

Dr. Rollinson adds that

> beyond the paradoxical moral and religious considerations which Ellrodt has enunciated, there is this further aesthetic dimension. The subject matter of both pairs of hymns involves an artistic commitment on Spenser's part within the framework of choices offered by the Renaissance imitation of the classical literary hymn. Consequently, without taking account of other factors, it is unlikely that both pairs of hymns were composed at the same period in Spenser's poetic development. In any case, there is no question that Spenser's ultimate commitment was to the models of Vida and Scaliger.[30]

Before we begin the textual analysis of the Hymne of Love, I would like to mention one additional point. It is important for us to note the fictional framework of these poems. Dr. Rollinson says that the first two hymns develop a rather elaborate fictional frame in the manner of Callimachus, Prudentius and other writers of literary hymns.[31]

> Spenser's original adaptation of the traditional device of the genre may be seen in his use of this conventional fiction to introduce and conclude the first two hymns.[32]

Callimachus introduced the highly developed fictional frame into the conventional structure of the classical literary hymn.[33]

> In his hands such frames facilitated smooth transitions from the formal introduction to the central development and back to the conclusion.[34]

Dr. Rollinson says that Spenser's hymns follow Callimachus in their creation of a well-integrated fictional situation to introduce and conclude their central praise.[35] But there is one important addition. Spenser assumes the fictional role of a Petrarchan poet-lover.[36] Dr. Rollinson says that

> Spenser develops a fictional frame for his celebration of earthly love and earthly beauty with a consumate skill worthy of Callimachus. His fiction of poet-lover integrates the two main bodies into their respective introductions and conclusions to form tight individual artistic wholes. Furthermore, he uses the same fiction to connect the two hymns together.[37]

"This creation of a fictional frame for the two earthly hymns out of the fashionable elements of literary Petrarchism," says Rollinson, "admirably illustrates his original use of one of the important conventions associated with the literary hymn."[38]

Dr. Rollinson also provides some excellent examples of Spenser's peculiar handling of certain conventional techniques and formulae which were closely associated with the literary hymn. Among these are the employment of elaborate rhetorical devices, the heavy use of alliteration, repetition and anaphoric figures as well as the adaptation of certain conventional topoi. It is virtually impossible to understand the Hymnes unless we have some knowledge of how these elements function and what they contribute to the poems. And, Dr. Rollinson offers the reader expert direction in this regard. Now, let us take a closer look at what is in the poems.

## The Hymne in Honour of Love

While the Hymne of Love is not necessarily the best of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes, from an artistic point of view, it is the most important by virtue of its contents. This hymn contains a wealth of material from Spenser's earlier manuscript poem and it is this material which helps us understand the reason for the controversy. The first seven stanzas of the Hymne of Love are part of Spenser's manuscript poem in praise of Cupid, the god of Love. The lines are being spoken by a highly conventional Petrarchan poet-lover, who is speaking to Cupid, and they are undoubtedly meant to be read in a loud and boisterous manner. For Spenser is playing at

courtly love within this section of the hymn. The heightened air of exaggeration which is part of the game of courtly love is more than evident in these lines. The poet is suffering terrible agony at the hands of the "mighty" god of Love. In the opening stanza, he cries to Cupid to seek relief:

> Loue, that long since hast to thy mighty powre,
> Perforce subdue my poore captiued hart,
> And raging now therein with restlesse stowre,
> Doest tyrannize in eurie weaker part;
> Faine would I seeke to ease my bitter smart,
> By any seruice I might do to thee,
> Or ought that else might to thee pleasing bee.

The stanza which is quoted here is full of conventional notions which were part of the poetry of courtly love during the Middle Ages. The poet is totally powerless at the hands of the "mighty" Cupid who reigns within his very heart causing pain and havoc. Cupid is held responsible for all the poet's suffering and only he can bring relief. It is with this point in mind that Spenser offers "service" to him, in the typical feudal manner, and agrees to do whatever is necessary to please the mighty god. In the subsequent stanza the poet tells the god of Love exactly what he plans to do:

> And now t'asswage the force of this new flame,
> And make thee more propitious in my need,
> I meane to sing the praises of thy name,
> And thy victorious conquests to areed;
> By which thou madest many harts to bleed
> Of mighty Victors, with wyde wounds embrewed,
> And by thy cruell darts to thee subdewed.

What the poet plans to do is to sing the praises of Cupid, to make him more propitious (ie. favourable) in this time of desperate need. The poet needs his help, of course, to win the lady in question and what he is proposing here is a sort of contract. He will sing the praises of Cupid and, in return for this, he expects the god of Love to help him with his suit. In this stanza, therefore, Cupid assumes the conventional role as a sort of intermediary between the lover and his lady. The lady will only yield her "grace" if Cupid moves her to it.

But, what is more important to note about this second stanza is Spenser's description of Cupid himself. This particular Cupid is a cruel and merciless god. (l.l. 11-14) He is the Cupid of Ovid and the one that we find in Petrarch's poetry. Dr. Lisle says that "in the works of Ovid, Love is frequently personified as a god of irresistable power, as a tyrant who tortures his victims cruelly or punishes them with great severity."[39] The hymn that Spenser is planning to sing is meant to praise this Cupid, the god of courtly love. In the subsequent stanza, like a religious devotee, Spenser utterly humbles himself before this "mighty" god. In addition to this, he doubts that he can find the words to relate the "wondorous triumphs" of Cupid's so-called "godhead". This is so because he is terribly weak, right now, from all his pain

and suffering. The thought, of course, is rather humorous. But, he feels certain that he can do it, if Cupid will only help him a little by taking him under his "gentle" wing.

In the subsequent stanza, Spenser appeals to Cupid directly to give him inspiration for the writing of his song:

> Come then, O come, thou mightie God of loue,
> Out of thy siluer bowres and secret blisse,
> Where thou doest sit in Venus lap aboue,
> Bathing thy wings in her ambrosiall kisse,
> That sweeter farre than any Nectar is;
> Come softly, and my feeble breast inspire
> With gentle furie, kindled of thy fire.

In stanzas five and six, Spenser invites a host of figures to form a group of choristers to chant the hymn itself. Dr. Welsford says that we are supposed to imagine that the hymn is to be sung by a band of Cupid's followers, marching forward, if you will, with their victorious Lord after the manner of a Roman triumph.[40] This, of course, is perfectly correct and it is a very common scene in medieval poetry in the Court of Love tradition. (See Figure 1.)

In the subsequent stanza, Spenser begins his hymn to Cupid, the god of courtly love.

> Great god of might, that reignest in the mynd,
> And all the bodie to thy hest doest frame,
> Victor of gods, subduer of mankynd,
> That doest the Lions and fell Tigers tame,
> Making their cruell rage thy scornfull game,
> And in their roring taking great delight;
> Who can expresse the glorie of thy might?

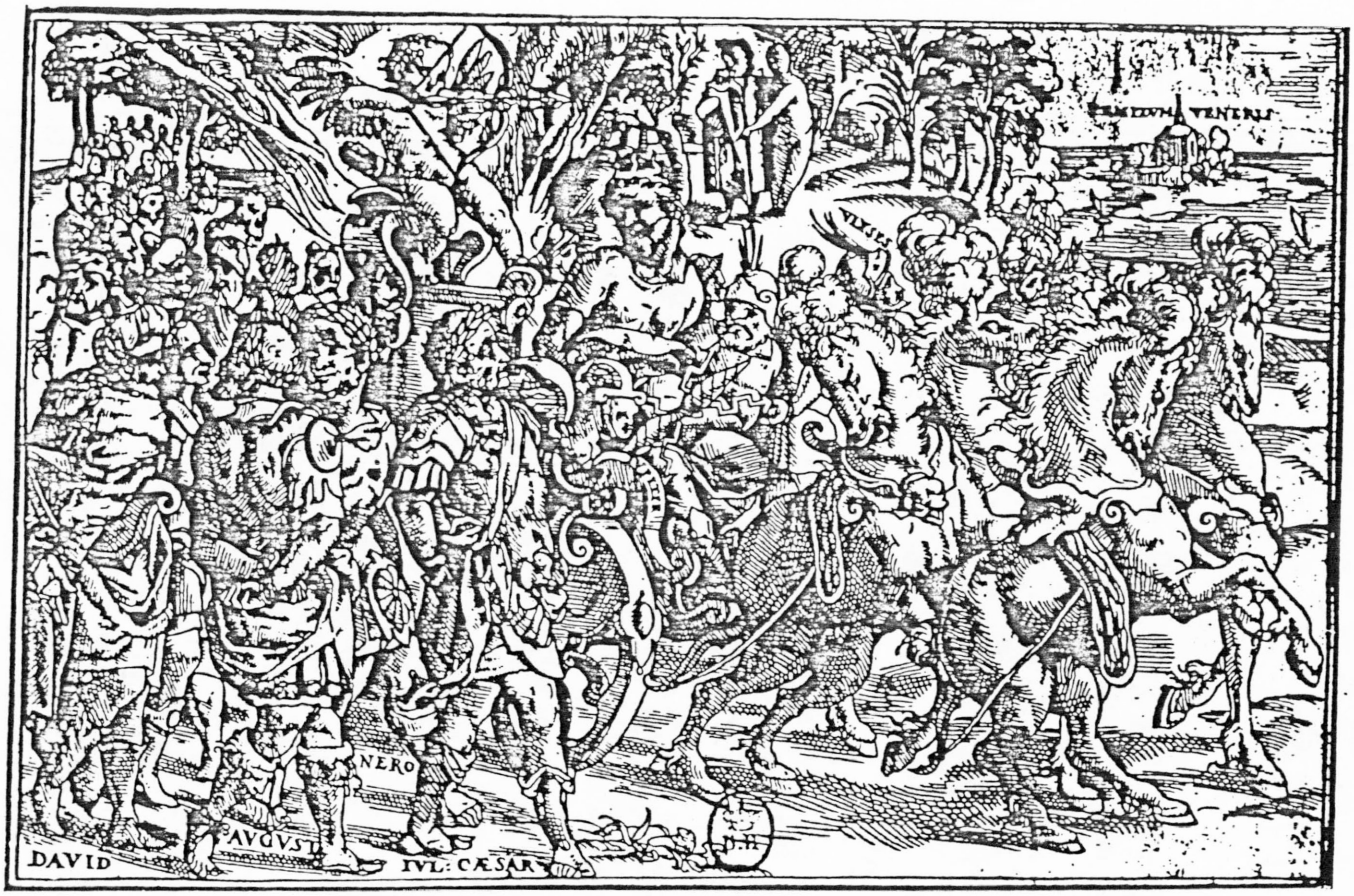


Fig. I

I believe that this is where the manuscript ends. In the subsequent stanza, Spenser begins to clear the ground for what, I think, is new material added in 1596. This material starts at stanza number eight and ends at stanza seventeen and if we consider the structure of the work, it is easy to understand why Spenser chose to add it here. For, this was the logical place to make the appropriate revisions. At this particular point in the poem, the hymnist was supposed to describe the birth of the god that he was praising and to relate a significant myth connected with that god. Spenser describes a birth, of course, in stanza number eight and he also relates a lengthy myth within the subsequent stanza. But these have nothing at all to do with the god that he had started to praise in stanza number seven.

Spenser's treatment of Cupid is not consistent in this poem as Mr. Mounts has noted,[41] and this, of course, can be explained in terms of the revision. Dr. Lewis says that Spenser makes a terrible blunder in stanza number eight in which he gives the god of Love, not two parents, but rather, three.[42] This, again, can be explained in terms of the revision. What the poet tried to do was to take some highly Platonic material and place it in this hymn. The myth that is related here can be traced to Plato.[43] It is interesting enough to read, but what is it doing in a hymn to Cupid, the

god of courtly love? He is clearly not the one who binds the world together with love, as outlined in this myth.

> Bot this I se, on daies nou
> The blinde god, I wot noght hou,
> Cupido, which of love is lord,
> He set the thinges in discord.[44]

The rest of the material within this section of the hymn is also totally alien to the world of courtly love. In stanza fifteen, for instance, Spenser is treating physical love from a purely Protestant point of view. All this talk of "progenie" is far removed from courtly love. Courtly love, as we have seen, did not approve of marriage, and children, of course, are never mentioned where courtly love is being discussed. The next two stanzas of the hymn appear to be Platonic and children pose a problem here as they do in courtly love. By orthodox Neo-Platonists, fruition was either repudiated or coldly conceded.[45] In addition to this, there is a radical difference in tone between the old and new material. The new material is totally serious while the old is hardly serious at all. It is, therefore, easy to see that this is where he changed the poem. The majority of the new material was probably taken from Colin Clout as Bennett has suggested.[46] The manuscript does not start again until stanza number eighteen.

In stanzas eighteen and nineteen Spenser describes the conventional suffering of the courtly lover. Once again, it

is very important to note the heightened air of exaggeration. In the subsequent stanza, the poet addresses Cupid directly and here is where we probably get our most revealing picture, yet, of the cruel and merciless god. Having described the suffering that courtly lovers face, the poet turns to Cupid and says:

> The whylst thou tyrant Loue doest laugh and scorne
> At their complaints, making their paine thy play;
> Whylst they lye languishing like thrals forlorne;
> The whyles thou doest triumph in their decay,
> And otherwhyles, their dying to delay,
> Thou doest enmarble the proud hart of her,
> Whose loue before their life they doe prefer.
>
> So hast thou often done (ay me the more)
> To me thy vassal, whose yet bleeding hart,
> With thousand wounds thou mangled hast so sore
> That whole remaines scarse any little part,
> Yet to augment the anguish of my smart,
> Thou hast enfrosen her disdainefull brest,
> That no one drop of pitie there doth rest.

Mr. Nelson says that in this section of the hymn Spenser is comparing, the woes of the courtly lover to the agonies of Christ.[47] Dr. Purvis objects to this[48] but I believe that Nelson is right. For, these are precisely the kinds of analogies which fed the poetic religion of love as outlined in the previous chapter. It is little wonder, then, that Anne and Margaret were upset by Spenser's earlier manuscript hymns.

In the next two stanzas, the reader finds himself within the familiar setting of the medieval Court of Love. Cupid is

here depicted as if he were, in fact, a judge and Spenser is reproaching him for his brand of justice. While Cupid was cruel to his victims, he was nevertheless expected to reward his faithful followers. The poet has served him faithfully and expects to be rewarded. At the same time, he feels that Cupid is being unfair because he spares the lady. The distinctive air of debate which pervades this section of the hymn is highly characteristic of the medieval Court of Love.

In stanza twenty-two, Spenser asks the god of Love why he is being so cruel to him when he has just composed a song in honour of his name.

> Why then do I this honour vnto thee,
> Thus to ennoble thy victorious name,
> Since thou doest shew no fauour vnto mee,
> Ne once moue ruth in that rebellious Dame,
> Somewhat to slacke the rigour of my flame?
> Certes small glory doest thou winne hereby,
> To let her liue thus free, and me to dy.

In stanzas twenty-three and twenty-four, Spenser continues to argue his case before the "mighty" Cupid:

> But if thou be indeede, as men thee call,
> The worlds great Parent, the most kind preseruer
> Of liuing wights, the soueraine Lord of all,
> How falles it then, that with thy furious feruour,
> Thou doest afflict as well the not deseruer,
> As him that doeth thy louely heasts despize,
> And on thy subjects most doest tryannize?
>
> Yet herein eke thy glory seemeth more,
> By so hard handling those which best thee serue,
> That ere thou doest them vnto grace restore,

> Thou mayest well trie if they will euer swerue,
> And mayest them make it better to deserue,
> And hauing got it, may it more esteeme,
> For things hard gotten, men more dearely deeme.

In this section of the hymn, Spenser draws a powerful analogy between the pagan Cupid and the Christian God. Like the Christian God, Cupid tests his followers in order to be certain that they are worthy of him. In the latter stanza, we also find the courtly conception that love which is too easily won is not, in fact, appreciated. Under this conception, the lover was expected to win the lady's mercy through the greatest pain and labour. Only then would it be prized. Furthermore, it is here that Spenser shows his unfaltering faith in the god of Love. Cupid has neglected to advance the poet's interests, but he does not despair, in spite of his adversity. In fact, he continues to presevere in humble devotion to his god. Unfaltering faith kept during heavy adversity was a cardinal virtue in the religion of love as it was in the Christian religion.[49] Indeed, it is very surprising to see that Spenser left this section in, since it could still have proved offensive to Anne and Margaret Russell. The mere fact that Spenser calls Cupid "The world's great Parent, the most kind preserver/Of living wights, the souveraine Lord of all" is only one example of this. The poet's position, to be sure, is totally uncompromising. It leaves no room for the Christian God. This sort of mention

of Cupid would not have been acceptable to those who were religious for reasons which are mentioned in Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse. In speaking of the courtly poets, Stephen Gosson says that

> whilst they make Cupide triumphe in heaven, and all the gods to marche like miserable captives, before his chariot, they belie the reader with bawdie charmes...thus making gods of them that were brute beastes, in the likeness of men, divine goddesses of common harlots; they robbe God of his honour, weaken his might and turn his seate to a stewes.[50]

The Protestant divine, Thomas Bryce, had made a similar comment in The Court of Venus Moralized: "Tell me, is Christe or Cupide Lord? Doth God or Venus reign?"[51] According to the Hymne of Love, it is clearly Cupid. Spenser must have realized just how bad this section was because he changed the hymn again within the subsequent stanzas. The material which he added is heavily ascetic and it does not belong, at all, to the present poem. The new material starts at stanza twenty-five and ends at stanza twenty-nine. The fact that he revised it here is clear from stanza twenty-six where Love becomes, as we can see, the "Lord of truth and loyaltie." This is certainly far removed from what he was in stanza twenty.

In stanza twenty-eight, the poet also chose to add some very Platonic material which makes it look as though he meant

to climb the Platonic ladder of love. But he does not, in fact, progress beyond the usual second step if he is on the ladder at all. For, in the subsequent stanza, Spenser makes it clear that he could never be satisfied with the image of the beloved, and in the following stanza we are back to courtly love. The rest of Spenser's Hymne of Love is manuscript material and it is heavily Petrarchan. In stanza number thirty, the lady is depicted as if she were, in fact, the source of all the poet's joys. This and the following stanza are full of Christian phraseology and the attitude of the lover, here, is one of religious worship. The lady herself is being described as if she were the Blessed Virgin. The lover devotes himself to her, just as the pious Christian devotes his life to God and the Church. The ultimate goal he has in mind is that of physical possession, but other gifts will do as well. Indeed, to merely see the lady's face is viewed as revelation. The beloved embodies revelation to her devotee. All he can know of the divine on earth is through her.[52] Once again, it is easy to see how this could prove offensive to those who were religious. If each lover could find through his beloved the means of grace and salvation, what place did that leave for the Church? A man could not hope for salvation in another human being and still be capable of pleasing God.

In the subsequent stanza, we find the courtly conception that love is the source of increased valour. Under this conception, the lover was expected to show his love by deeds of prowess and to go on expeditions to win the lady's "grace".[53] In stanzas thirty-three and thirty-four, Spenser turns to Cupid again to talk about his role in this:

> Thou art his god, thou art his mightie guyde,
> Thou being blind, letst him not see his feares,
> But cariest him to that which he hath eyde,
> Through seas, through flames, through thousand swords and speares:
> Ne ought so strong that may his force withstand,
> With which thou armest his resistlesse hand.
>
> Witnesse Leander, in the Euxine waues,
> And Stout Aeneas in the Troiane frye,
> Achilles preassing through the Phrygian glaiues,
> And Orpheus daring to prouke the yre
> Of damned fiends, to get his loue retyre:
> For both through heauen and hell thou makest way,
> To win them worship which do thee obay.

In this section of the hymn, we find a list of exemplary lovers, a common feature of courtly poetry. It has been included here to stress the power of Cupid. He is the one who gave them courage and made them perform impossible feats. The poet is planning similar feats to win the lady's "grace". The meaning of grace in each of these cases is the final submission of grace in bed. But he is more than happy to settle for something less than this. Indeed, to win a word or smile from her is enough to bring him "heavens of joy" as we can see from the subsequent stanza. The poet is ready

to die for his lady if she will merely acknowledge his presence.

In stanza thirty-six, we find the other courtly conception that "love cannot endure a Paragone." Under the code of courtly love, the lovers were expected to love in one place only. Constancy was a central requirement under the laws of courtly love. The law of constancy, once again, makes it impossible to interpret this hymn in terms of Plato's ladder of love. The courtly lover, to be sure, is not prepared to abandon his lady to worship the beauty of other women. James D. Gordon says that "the wanton Cupid is concerned with individual beauty and not with the idea of beauty that shines through them, higher and greater than any individual examplar of it."[54] And, Fowler says that "Renaissance Platonism starts with beauty in woman at the lowest rung of the ladder of love and mounts by successive stages to the concept of abstract love in God. On the other hand, pure courtly love begins with beauty in woman and ends there."[55] The dramatic persona in this hymn is a courtly lover and it is important to remember this point. Otherwise, it is easy to be misled by what the poet added in 1596. The love that lurks within this hymn is not Platonic love even though it was revised.

In stanzas thirty-seven, thirty-eight and thirty-nine,

Spenser describes the psychic tortures of the courtly lover. Love produces a state of anxiety in which the lover is prey to every sort of doubt and fear.[56] In fancy, a thousand obstacles obtrude themselves between the lover and his lady, invisible eyes observe their every movement, malevolent tongues whisper everywhere.[57]

This particular section of the hymn is a very important one to note because it offers a sort of build-up to what is said in stanza forty. Having described the horrible suffering that courtly lovers experience Spenser turns to Cupid again and makes the following statement:

> By these, O loue, thou doest thy entrance make,
> Vnto thy heauen, and doest the more endeere
> Thy pleasures vnto those which them partake,
> As after stormes when clouds begin to cleare,
> The Sunne more bright and glorious doth appeare;
> So thou thy folke, through paines of Purgatorie,
> Doest beare vnto blisse, and heauens glorie.

In this stanza, once again, Spenser draws a powerful analogy between the pagan Cupid and the Christian God. Like the Christian God, Cupid makes his children suffer before he calls them unto him. In medieval courtly poetry suffering was commonly regarded as a condition or, at least, as a necessary accompaniment of love.[58] Those who served the god of Love, if they would have joy, must also endure pain.[59] These pains were, in fact, inseparable from their service to Cupid. Love required both suffering and patient waiting.[60]

Indeed, it was felt that the lover's reward was in proportion to the torments suffered. Consequently, he not only submitted himself to grievous torment, but he actually welcomed it.[61] This strong emphasis on the lover's willingness to suffer, to endure all trials for love, says Evans, "seems to have gained some of its intensity from the emphasis placed on the exaltation of suffering in Christian thought."[62]

The use of Christian phraseology to describe the lover's psychic condition should also be noted here. The religious tone of Spenser's Hymne can, in fact, be traced to it. The use of words like "God" and "Lord" has a similar tonal effect. This section of the hymn breathes a highly religious air and it provides a good example of what is meant by the religion of love. The use of Christian ideas and language was conventional to the religion of love as mentioned in chapter three.

The next two stanzas of the hymn are also easy to understand. Once the lovers have suffered enough they are placed in "Paradise" by the god of Love.

> There thou them placest in a Paradise
> Of all delight, and joyous happie rest,
> Where they doe feede on Nectar heauenly wize,
> With Hercules and Hebe, and the rest
> Of Venus dearlings, through her bountie blest,
> And lie like Gods in yuorie beds arrayd,
> With rose and lillies ouer them displayd.

> There with thy daughter Pleasure they doe play
> Their hurtlesse sports, without rebuke or blame,
> And in her snowy bosome boldly lay
> Their quiet heads, deuoyd of guilty shame,
> After full ioyance of their gentle game,
> Then her they crowne their Goddesse and their Queene,
> And decke with flowers thy altars well beseene.

The heaven which is pictured here is one for courtly lovers and it is to this heaven that Spenser hopes to go with the help of Cupid. Like the Christian God, Cupid was expected to reward his faithful followers. He was the god who gave to each his just reward according to whether they were good or evil in life, that is, good or evil from a courtly point of view.[63] There was an afterlife in which his followers were assigned by him to paradise, purgatory or hell according to their merit as lovers.[64]

In the next two stanzas, Spenser retains the conventional stance of the Petrarchan lover. There is nothing Platonic about this section of the hymn. The poet makes it clear, in fact, that all he wants to do is to win the lady in question:

> Ay me, deare Lord, that euer I might hope,
> For all the paines and woes that I endure,
> To come at length vnto the wished scope
> Of my desire, or might my selfe assure,
> That happie port for euer to recure.
> Then would I thinke these paines no paines at all,
> And all my woes to be but penance small.

But, this cannot be done, of course, without the help of Cupid, so Spenser once again attempts to strike a bargain with this god. Grant me what I want, he says, and

> Then would I sing of thine immortall praise
> An heauenly Hymne, such as the Angels sing,
> And thy triumphant name then would I raise
> Boue all the gods, thee only honoring,
> My guide, my God, my victor, and my king;
> Till then, dread Lord, vouchsafe to take of me
> This simple song, thus fram'd in praise of thee.

In this stanza, once again, Spenser raises Cupid to the level of the Christian God. He says that he will honour him above all the other gods. But, Christians also honour one God and He is a god of Love. Spenser had this analogy in mind while writing these closing stanzas and, indeed, while writing the manuscript hymn itself. Instead of writing a hymn to God, Spenser composed a hymn to Cupid while drawing a potent analogy between the two of them.

This completes my textual analysis of Spenser's Hymne of Love, but I will add some closing comments. Spenser's revisions to the Hymne of Love were not accomplished without considerable cost. He had much better success in the Hymne of Beauty, but not without producing an almost entirely new work in the process. In the Hymne of Love, the poet does not lead us from beginning to end in a logical and coherent manner. His point of view changes radically from time to time; the stanzas have no apparent connections in several places; there are wide fluctuations in tone, and occasionally, complete reversals in setting and atmosphere. Finally, we are left with completely contradictory notions on love, often

within a few lines of each other without the slightest apparent concern for a consistent philosophical position. Repeated reading of this hymn only serves to confirm the conclusion that it was not composed as a single and continuous whole. Spenser revised an earlier poem to make this Hymne of Love.

The original poem was probably written in 1579, from a solely Petrarchan point of view, and it was later revised in the light of Platonic philosophy as Ellrodt has suggested.[65] But, it would be an error to conclude that it is now Platonic. In fact, the Hymne of Love is basically Petrarchan with some Platonic colouring. The importance of the Platonic material has often been exaggerated by previous Spenser critics. It is, in fact, completely confined to a few isolated stanzas and these are insignificant in the context of the larger work. If these stanzas are set aside, the reader will soon discover that the rest of the hymn is heavily Petrarchan and the concepts are those of courtly love.

The Platonic parts were added in 1596 and they are totally surrounded by the earlier Petrarchan material. Both the beginning and the end of this hymn are part of Spenser's manuscript poem and they are thoroughly Petrarchan. It is consequently impossible to interpret the present poem in terms of Plato's ladder of love. Besides, to study the poem

in such a way is to totally overlook the fact that it is a classical literary hymn and not a treatise on love. In order to understand the work, we must start by asking the question: what does Spenser say to Cupid? We must not begin by asking what does Spenser think of love, from a philosophical point of view?

The only material in this hymn which is philosophical in nature is the new material and it does not belong in this poem. Spenser has put the Platonic material into the mouth of the courtly lover and, in doing so, he has left a trail of confusion surrounding the present work. Dr. Welsford says that in the Hymne of Love, Spenser seems to be singing with the tongue of the troubadour, rather than the Platonic philosopher.[66] The truth of the matter is that he is singing with both. In fact, this is precisely why we get a fluctuation in tone. The Hymne in Honour of Beautie is quite another matter. It is full of Platonic material as many scholars have noted. But we must not forget the parts which represent the manuscript work. I will briefly point these out before I start the textual analysis of Spenser's second pair of hymns.

## The Hymne in Honour of Beauty

The first four stanzas of the Hymne of Beauty are part of Spenser's manuscript poem in praise of Venus, the mother

of Cupid. This is partly evident from Spenser's heavy reliance on the direct form of address "thee", "thou" and "thine" in relation to Venus. The first two stanzas of the hymn are addressed to Cupid, while the other two are aimed at Venus. The four of them together provide a connecting link between the first and second hymn and they develop the earlier theme of unrequited love.[67] There has been no progress, then, in terms of Spenser's suit. The poet makes this clear, in fact, in stanza number one in which he speaks to Cupid. He says:

> Ah wither, Loue, wilt thou now carrie mee?
> What wontlesse fury doest thou now inspire
> Into my feeble breast, too full of thee?
> Whylest seeking to aslake thy raging fyre,
> Thou in me kindlest much more great desyre,
> And vp aloft aboue my strength doest rayse
> The wondrous matter of my fyre to prayse.

The hymn he wrote in honour of Cupid did not produce the expected result. The god of Love continues to rage within the poet's heart.

In stanza number two, Spenser mentions the hymn which he had written to Cupid and says that he will now compose a hymn in honour of Venus.

> That as I earst in praise of thine owne name,
> So now in honour of thy Mother deare,
> An honourable Hymne I eke should frame,
> And with the brightnesse of her beautie cleare,
> The rauisht harts of gazefull men might reare,
> To admiration of that heauenly light,
> From whence proceeds such soule enchaunting might.

It is important to note that this particular Venus is not the one of Neo-Platonists. She is, in fact, the mother of Cupid, the god of courtly love, and this will help to further explain the reason for the controversy. The Christian world considered her a symbol of lust and promiscuity and Spenser has described her here as if she were the Virgin Mary. The poet's position in this regard is consistent with the religion of love as outlined in the previous chapter. In medieval courtly poetry, Venus was often depicted as a sort of intercessor between the lover and Cupid, and she was generally considered to be a more sympathetic figure.

All of this, in fact, explains the sequence of the manuscript poems. Spenser appealed to Cupid, first, but Cupid did not advance his interests and that is why he decided to write a hymn in honour of Venus. The invocation to Venus is found in stanza three.

> Thereto do thou great Goddesse, queene of Beauty
> Mother of loue, and all worlds delight,
> Without whose souerayne grace and kindly dewty,
> Nothing on earth seemes fayre to fleshly sight,
> Doe thou vouchsafe with thy loue-kindling light,
> T'illumine my dim and dulled eyne,
> And beautifie this sacred hymne of thyne.

In stanza number four, Spenser explains the purpose of writing the hymn itself. He says:

> That both to thee, to whom I meane it most,
> And eke to her, whose faire immortal beame,
> Hath darted fyre into my feeble ghost,
> That now it wasted is with woes extreame,

> It may so please that she at length will streame
> Some deaw of grace, into my withered hart,
> After long sorrow and consumming smart.

The hymn is addresed to Venus, as well as to the lady, and he is undoubtedly writing it in hopes of winning sexual favours.

I believe that this is where the manuscript ends. The next three stanzas of the hymn are full of Platonic material and they were undoubtedly added to the poem in 1596. They are based on Plato's Timeaus and they account for the presence of beauty in the world around us.

In stanza number five, Spenser mentions the "goodly pattern" or idea of Beauty according to which the Demiurge fashioned all material things. He fashioned them "as comely as he could" and they are consequently beautiful. Then he says that the pattern itself may be hidden here on earth or locked away in heaven to keep it from our sinful eyes. The perfect Beauty, Spenser adds, is far beyond our mortal sense and we cannot describe it. Earthly things are beautiful, he says, insofar as they partake of this perfect pattern of beauty. The more that they partake of it, the more beautiful they appear to be, since the light that comes from perfect Beauty refines their earthly dross. All of this is standard Platonism with the exception of the part in which he says that the pattern of Beauty may be hidden here on earth.

But, it is very poorly connected to the beginning of the hymn and to the stanzas which follow it.

The next two stanzas of the hymn are part of Spenser's manuscript poem and this is evident, once again, from Spenser's heavy reliance on the direct form of address in connection with Venus. I have quoted these stanzas below in order to incorporate all of the material in which these figures are found.

> For through infusion of celestiall powre,
> The duller earth it quickneth with delight,
> And life-full spirits priuily doth powre
> Through all the parts, that to the lookers sight
> They seeme to please. That is thy soueraine might,
> O Cyprian Queene, which flowing from the beame
> Of thy bright starre, thou into them doest streame.
>
> That is the thing which giueth pleasant grace
> To all things faire, that kindleth liuely fyre,
> Light of thy lampe, which shyning in the face,
> Thence to the soule darts amorous desyre,
> And robs the harts of those which it admyre,
> Therewith thou pointest thy Sons poysned arrow,
> That wounds the life, and wastes the inmost marrow.

These two stanzas, in my view, are not connected in any way to those which precede or follow them. The material in these stanzas is also quite Petrarchan.

Stanzas ten to thirty-four are, once again, Platonic and they were undoubtedly added to the poem in 1596. They are concerned with human beauty, as it relates to earthly love. The author starts by saying that it is idle wits who think that beauty is nothing more than just a mixture of

pleasant colours, or of pure complexions, since both of these are transitory and shall quickly fade away. They are also mistaken, he says, to think that beauty is nothing more than just a harmony of the parts which constitutes an object. He adds that these are not the things which rob the sense and reason blind or move a human being to love. It takes more than this, he says, to work such wonders in the minds of men. Human beauty, according to him, is more than just the physical body. For this is highly transitory and it shall soon decay.

One might ask the question, then, of what does human beauty consist? The next six stanzas of the hymn provide a lengthy answer to this. The author says that it consists of the beauty of the soul. The soul will not decay, he says, since it was born in heaven and shall retire there. It was first created by the "great immortal Spright" and it has been embodied here with some of His resplendent light. This light adorns its earthly house which is, of course, the body. The more the soul retains of it, the more beautiful is the body. Human beauty, in this sense, becomes the reflection of a beautiful soul. The poet concludes that

> Therefore where euer that thou doest behold
> A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,
> Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold
> A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed,
> Fit to recieue the seede of vertue strewed.

For all that faire is, is by nature good;
That is a signe to know the gentle blood.

The objection, however, arises that the body is not, as a matter of fact, in all cases an index to the soul, for it may happen that people of fine character are not particularly beautiful.[68] Spenser explains this fact by saying that sometimes the matter out of which the soul has to make the body is disobedient and unyielding.[69] One soul may find suitable material upon earth and mould the body rightly according to its first plan; another because of the unsuitability of the material, bungles or cannot complete its task and so does not make the body according to its true model.[70] The formative energy of the soul is, consequently, hampered by gross or vile material. If on earth it finds material which is sufficiently plastic, its earthly body is very similar to its celestial one; hence it is beautiful.[71]

In spite of this, adds Spenser, it can be abused. But this does not affect the soul according to the poet. And yet, Spenser contradicts himself with reference to this subject. In stanza twenty-four, he advises women not to blot their souls by loving in a reckless manner. The author makes this point, again, in stanza twenty-five. He says that lust will taint their souls and quench the light of their bright star. Indeed, it is here that Spenser draws a very sharp distinction between the concepts of love and

lust. Dr. Jones says that

> this warning against confusing lust with love brings Spenser to the main point of his hymn. So far, he has been trying to please his lady by praising beauty; now he wants to persuade her that women can enhance their loveliness by returning the affection of their lovers. The general purport of this stanza is clear enough; unlike lust, faithful love, especially when reciprocated, enhances beauty and reveals its true nature.[72]

Women, then, are being advised to show their heavenly riches. But, they are also being advised to choose their lovers carefully. Indeed, they are told to choose for lovers only those whose souls were born under the same astral influences. Love is not a matter of chance, according to the poet, but a union of souls ordained by heaven. Spenser says that only those souls who knew each other in heaven should be joined together in love. For, love is not, the poet says, a quick response to physical beauty. The true lover, according to him, looks beyond the outward form. In fact, he creates an image of the lady and this is what he contemplates. He presents this image to the mind and the mind refines it further still. Having refined the image further, the lover beholds in it the beauty of the lady's soul. It is the beauty of her soul which the lover praises and which is the source of love itself.

By praising the beauty of the beloved in such lofty terms, Spenser is able to set off the purity of his love

from any connection with sensual desire. And this, of course, is how he sought to revise the earlier manuscript work. The poet ends this section of the hymn by describing how the lovers communicate through the vehicle of the eyes. The eyes, of course, were considered to be the windows of the soul.

The next three stanzas of the hymn are, once again, Petrarchan and I believe that they are part of Spenser's earlier manuscript poem. The last four stanzas of the hymn are almost certainly so. This is evident, once again, from Spenser's heavy reliance on the direct forms of address "thee", "thou" and "thine" in relation to Venus. This particular section of the hymn forms the peroration of Spenser's earlier manuscript poem and it is blasphemous in nature. The poet had to leave it in because it formed a key component of the structure of the poem. He could not remove this part and still produce a literary hymn.

The lines are addressed to Venus, the goddess of courtly love. In his History of Great Britain, Speed had described this Venus as "a lascivious Adulteresse, the mere mention of whose name should make a Christian blush."[73] We might well imagine, then, how Anne and Margaret had responded to the poet's praise of her within these closing stanzas. They appear at least as scandalous as those of the Hymne of Love:

All those, O Cytherea, and thousands more
Thy handmaides be, which do on thee attend
To decke thy beautie with their dainties store,
That may it more to mortall eyes commend.
And make it more admyr'd of foe and frend;
That in mens harts thou mayst thy throne enstall,
And spred thy louely kingdom ouer all.

Then Io tryumph, O great beauties Queene,
Aduance the banner of thy conquest hie
That all this world, the which thy vassals beene,
May draw to thee, and with dew fealtie,
Adore the powre of thy great Maiestie,
Singing this Hymne in Honour of thy name,
Complyd by me, which thy poore liegeman am.

The following stanza reaffirms that Spenser's suit has not succeeded.

In lieu whereof graunt, O great Soueraine,
That she whose conquering beautie doth captiue
My trembling hart in her eternal chaine,
One drop of grace at length will to me giue,
That I her bounden thrall by her may liue,
And this same life, which first fro me she reaued,
May owe to her, of whom I it receaued.

It is important to note that in this stanza of the hymn the lady is, in fact, competing with the Christian God. For, she is given the ultimate role of dispenser of life and death.

The closing stanza of the hymn includes a prayer to Venus in the Court of Love tradition. The poet prays to her for aid while pointing to his composition:

And you faire Venus dearling, my deare dread,
Fresh flowre of grace, great Goddesse of my life,
When your faire eyes these fearefull lines shal read,
Deigne to let fall one drop of dew reliefe,
That may recure my harts long pyning griefe,
And shew what wondrous powre your beauty hath,
That can restore a damned wight from death.

This completes my textual analysis of Spenser's Hymne of Beauty, but I would like to mention, in closing, a very important article by Dr. Earnest Strathman. I was first attracted to it by virtue of its title "A Manuscript Copy of Spenser's Hymnes." Dr. Strathman's article raised the possibility that he had discovered a copy of Spenser's manuscript hymns in praise of Cupid and Venus. But, it became apparent soon that what he had discovered, in fact, was a different (and abbreviated) version of Spenser's Hymne of Beauty and of the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty. Dr. Strathman said that

> Harleian MS 6910, a well known anthology of Elizabethan verse compiled ca. 1596, contains hitherto unrecorded copies of Spenser's Hymne in Honour of Beautie and Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, printed in 1596. The first is uncatalogued, and the second is listed only under the first line of the poem, 'Rapt with the rage of myne owne rauisht thought.' Both poems are copied in abbreviated versions, with no mention of titles or author, and with no indications that parts are omitted.[74]

In the following paragraphs, Dr. Strathman adds that

> The Hymne of Beautie (fols. 117-119) omits the prologue and begins with line 29, 'What tyme this world's great workmaster did cast' drops two stanzas, lines 50-63, without great violence to the context; and stops with line 161, a not impossible ending.[75]

It is very interesting to note that what the compiler did,

in fact, was to eliminate all those sections of the hymn in which the manuscript material appears. I believe that he was conscious of what was in those sections of the work and that he purposely left them out because they were offensive. Unfortunately, these were the parts which made the poem a classical literary hymn. The rest of the material is versified philosophy and it is poorly connected to the manuscript work.

The dramatic persona in this poem is a courtly lover and it is difficult to believe that he is the one who delivers the lines in which the Platonic material appears. It is just as difficult to see how this poem can be read in terms of Plato's ladder of love. In the ladder of love, the lady is left behind as early as the second step and this is not a step which Spenser has taken in this poem. Indeed, even at the close of the Hymne of Beauty he has not forgotten the lady. But, there can be no question that he has forgotten her in the second set of poems.

What we need to ask ourselves is whether or not she is forgotten while the poet is ascending the Platonic ladder of love. We will have to examine the poems before we try to answer this question.

# The Last Two *Hymnes*

## The Hymne of Heavenly Love

The Hymne of Heavenly Love is a very religious poem and it marks a new beginning in the study of Spenser's Hymnes. The Love that is invoked in stanza number one is not the pagan Cupid, but the Christian heavenly Love. The poet calls on heavenly Love to lift him up from this base world unto "heauens hight" where he may see those "admirable things" which were created by its might and so that he may sing a hymn, not in praise of Cupid, but of the true and living God.[1] The repentent poet, to be sure, has now completely changed his tune.[2]

In stanzas two and three he reproves the manuscript hymns which he had written in his youth. He says:

> Many lewd layes (ah woe is me the more)
> In praise of that mad fit, which fooles call loue,
> I haue in th'heat of youth made heretofore,
> That in light wits did loose affection moue.
> But all those follies now I do reproue,
> And turned haue the tenor of my string,
> The heauenly praises of true loue to sing.
>
> And ye that wont with greedy vaine desire
> To reade my fault, and wondering at my flame,
> To warme your selues at my wide sparkling fire,
> Sith now that heat is quenched, quench my blame,
> And in her ashes shrowd my dying shame:
> For who my passed follies now pursewes,
> Beginnes his owne, and my old fault renewes.

It is with these words in mind that Spenser starts (in stanza four) to sing a hymn in praise of God. He begins by saying that God existed before all time and that the whole creation

is a product of His love. The movement of the spheres and every earthly thing, in fact, is explained in terms of this. It was through this love, as well, that God begot His only Son as Spenser notes in stanza five. The Son was crowned with "equall honour" and reigned with God in heaven together with the Holy Ghost (see stanza number six). All these things, the poet says, are far beyond our mortal grasp and he cannot describe them with his trembling verse. Consequently, he invokes the Holy Ghost to help him with this task (see stanza number seven).

The hymn that Spenser plans to sing will focus on the love of God and all the things that He created. The poet started with this theme in stanza number four and he returns to it again in stanza number eight. In this latter stanza he describes the creation of the angels as an act of love by God. He says:

> Yet being pregnant still with powrefull grace,
> And full of fruitfull loue, that loues to get
> Things like himselfe, and to enlarge his race,
> His second brood though not in powre so great,
> Yet full of beautie, next he did beget
> An infinite increase of Angels bright,
> All glistring glorious in their Makers light.

The next three stanzas of the hymn describe their happy state in heaven. Stanza number twelve deals with their rebellion which was led by Lucifer. The fall of the angels from heaven to hell is mentioned in the subsequent stanza

and it is attributed to the sin of pride in stanza number fourteen. In stanzas fifteen, sixteen and seventeen, Spenser describes the creation of man according to the Christian tradition. The love of God is, once again, a central theme in this creation. It was through His love that God created man to take the place of the fallen angels.

Stanza number eighteen deals with the fall of man and stanza number nineteen deals with his redemption. Stanza number twenty describes the Incarnation, as does stanza twenty-one. All these stanzas, in my view, are nicely summarized by Dr. Welsford. She says that

> the structure of both the Heavenly Hymns depends upon an initial assertion, which is also the central Christian assertion, namely that God is Love. That being so, it follows that true Love is God and that love is essentially the life of the triune Deity. Since, in the unity of the Godhead, Divine Love is inseparable from Divine Beauty and consequently fully grown from all Eternity it follows that its movements in time can only be downwards. It overflows deliberately, and in so doing creates the hierarchic universe, arranged in descending tiers of angels, who, in their 'trinal triplicates' contemplate, praise and serve God. When some of these angels refuse allegiance through pride, their rebellion calls out another downward movement of Divine Love and their place is filled by Man, whom God created by taking 'clay, base, vile, and next to nought', shaping it in his own image and breathing into it the spirit of life. When Man in his turn rebels, the Parental patience is not exhausted; on the contrary, his disobedience calls out the most extreme form of selfless love, and the

> Divine Son Himself actually descends to earth and assumes human flesh, in order to lift fallen man up to Heaven.[3]

The sin was first committed in the flesh and in the flesh it must be satisfied. So God the Father, through the Holy Ghost, takes on flesh and blood to pay for the sins of man. The ultimate source of this material is the gospel of John.

The next two stanzas of the hymn deal with the Crucifixion and the suffering of Christ. They describe how Christ gave Himself up freely to be "rente and torne" for man's redemption. The nature of Christ is boundless love and it finds its chief expression in His sacrifice on the Cross. The wound that He incurred is described in great detail in stanza twenty-three to emphasize His suffering. By showing how He suffered, the poet reveals the extent of Christ's love for man.

In stanza twenty-four Spenser favours the view that Christ has bought us with His blood. He adds that every time we sin the wounds of Christ reopen. In stanza twenty-five Spenser turns to Christ directly while asking Him the question - How can we requite thee? The next six stanzas of the hymn provide an answer to this question. The way in which we can requite Him is to return the love that He has shown for us. We should love Him first, says Spenser, and "next our brethen to his image wrought" (l. 189). God

commanded us to love them for His sake and we should honour His command

> Knowing that whatsoere to them we giue,
> We giue to him, by whom we all doe liue.

We should follow His example and love our brethen as ourselves. By doing so, says Spenser, we show our love for God.

In stanza thirty-two we are asked to contemplate His "soueraine bountie" and His love. The proper place to start is with the birth of Christ:

> Beginne from first, where he encradled was
> In simple cratch, wrapt in a wad of hay,
> Between the toylefull Oxe and humble Asse,
> And in what rags, and in how base aray,
> The glory of our heauenly riches lay,
> When him the silly Shepheards came to see,
> Whom greatest Princes sought on lowest knee.

From here we should consider the story of His life:

> From thence reade on the storie of his life,
> His humble carriage, his vnfaulty wayes,
> His cancred foes, his fights, his toyle, his strife,
> Through which he past his miserable dayes,
> Offending none, and doing good to all,
> Yet being malist both of great and small.

The final object of contemplation is the Crucifixion and we are urged to look at it in stanza thirty-five:

> And looke at last how of most wretched wights,
> He taken was, betrayd, and false accused,
> How with most scornefull taunts, and fell despights
> He was reuyld, disgrast, and foule abused,
> How scourgd, how crownd, how buffeted, how brused;
> And lastly how twixt robbers crucifyde,
> With bitter wounds through hands, through feet and syde.

In these stanzas of the hymn Spenser describes the birth of

Christ as it foreshadows the Crucifixion. He begins with the innocent Child "wrapt in a wad of hay" and by juxtaposing this to the scene of the Crucifixion he dramatically illustrates the innocence of Christ and the injustice of His suffering. At the same time, he describes the life of Christ as one of increasing sorrow leading to a painful death in stanza thirty-five. These three stanzas, in my view, are aimed at us directly and they are meant to illustrate the consequences of our sins. We were the cause of all Christ's suffering and knowledge of this fact should turn our hearts toward Him especially when we consider what He did for us.

In stanza thirty-six Spenser appeals to us directly and tells us how we should respond to the Crucifixion. He says:

> Then let thy flinty hart that feeles no paine,
> Empierced be with pittifull remorse,
> And let thy bowels bleede in euery vaine,
> At sight of his most sacred heauenly corse,
> So torne and mangled with malicious forse,
> And let thy soule, whose sins his sorrows wrought,
> Melt into teares, and grone in grieued thought.

The scene of the Crucifixion is designed to move us deeply and to lead us to a love of Christ (see stanza thirty-seven). He underwent a painful death to show that He loved us.

In stanza thirty-eight Spenser tells the reader to renounce "all other loues" in favour of the love of Christ who through His love redeemed us all:

> With all thy hart, with all thy soule and mind,
> Thou must him loue, and his beheasts embrace:
> All other loues, with which the world doth blind
> Weake fancies, and stirre vp affections base,
> Thou must renounce, and vtterly displace,
> And giue thy selfe vnto him full and free,
> That full and freely gaue himselfe to thee.

The reference here to other loves includes the poet's manuscript hymns and their effect on youth.

In the last three stanzas Spenser tells us what will happen if we give ourselves to Christ. The love of Christ will overwhelm us and we will forget all earthly things to contemplate His glory.

All the preceding stanzas can once again be summarized by quoting Dr. Welsford. She says that

> the subject of the third hymn is the loving activity of God both in the Eternall Trinity and in Christ Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Son. Of course, Jesus Christ, like the Love of the first hymn, grows and matures; but the story of his human life is the story of increasing suffering, culminating in an ignominious death. The inmost nature of the love that moves within the Trinity is revealed in Christ upon the Cross, sharing the death and bearing the sins of men and asking only that men should return this love and love their fellow-men for His sake. Even this desire for reward is altruistic, for it is only after this supreme manifestation of Divine Love has met with a due response of gratitude that the human soul can be enabled by Christ to rise up to the vision of Divine Beauty.[4]

This completes my textual analysis of Spenser's Hymne

of Heavenly Love, but I would like to add a couple of general comments. This particular hymn is not a mystical poem, as such, although it is a Christocentric one. The value of a loving meditation upon the life of Christ was first propounded by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. William of St. Thierry, the two great founders of Cistercian spirituality.[5] In their work it was formally recognized as an initial step in the mystical ascent to union with the Divine.[6] The aim of Spenser's poem is to lead us through a consideration of the visible into a communion with the invisible by a process similar to that used by Christian mystics. Both St. Bernard and St. William of Thierry stress in their instruction the value of a love of Christ as a first stage in contemplation, a love which is to be stimulated by a devout concentration upon His life.[7] This is the manner of meditation for those who cannot yet bear the full blaze of Christ's divinity.[8]

Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Love takes us through this process, starting with the birth of Christ and ending on a note of semi-mystical rapture which suggests communion with the Divine. In the closing stanzas the poet makes the traditional distinction between the man-Christ who is the first object of contemplation for beginners in devotion and the God-Christ, God the Son, as He stands in the bosom of

the Father.[9]

But this is not to say that Spenser is a mystic. I am only suggesting that the Hymne of Heavenly Love is a Christocentric poem. Woodhouse says that

> whatever the degree of continuity between the two pairs of hymns, there can be no doubt of the dependence of the second pair on the long tradition of Christian mysticism, with its ascent, through ordered meditation, to a vision of, and union with the Divine. Such a meditation took two principal forms: a meditation on the love of God as revealed in the Creation, and then in the Incarnation, in Christ's earthly ministry, and his redemption of fallen man, with the response of love which this love demands; and secondly, a meditation on the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator as revealed in the works of His hand: commencing with the beauty of the earth and its creatures, and ascending, through the starry heavens, the spiritual heavens, the hierarchy of the angels, to a contemplation of the divine attributes and notably the divine wisdom which is the supreme beauty, the source of all beauty, and the supreme object of our love. [10]

Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Love ends on a note of semi-mystic rapture. In it, we have moved from the visible, God's love as exemplified in Christ's life, to the invisible, our spirit's seeing "those faire things above" which cannot be seen by most of mankind.[11] With an admission that he cannot truly express these things, Spenser begins his final poem, the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty. In it, he picks up the theme of mystic rapture expressed in the Hymne of Heavenly Love and he develops it further.[12] The last two hymns are,

therefore, closely bound together.[13]

The Hymne of Heavenly Love is not a Platonic poem. It is a strictly Christian one and it was almost certainly written with the manuscript work in mind. Dr. Welsford says that

> I see no reason to doubt that he intended to versify the creed, not of Neo-Platonism, nor, as some scholars surprisingly suggest, of Calvinism, but of what Professor Lewis describes as 'mere Christianity', and this, I think, is true not only of the account of Creation but the whole contents of the last two hymns.[14]

In the same study, Dr. Welsford adds that

> even if the introductory stanzas are dismissed as merely conventional, it is still very difficult to fit the main body of the poem into a Neo-Platonic mould. The Neo-Platonic lover does, as we know, leave his lady behind, but he never ceases to seek a personal satisfaction which he hopes to attain by his own efforts. His lord is not Agape but Eros. In the third hymn this situation is reversed because the object of devotion has changed, and this is made clear from the outset.[15]

The third hymn illustrates a Christian love widely different from the Platonic Eros.[16] The difference is as follows: Christian love, or agape, unlike the Platonic eros, originates in God, not in man and its most characteristic manifestation is self-sacrifice rather than self-fulfillment.[17] The movement in this poem is a downward movement, not an upward movement.[18] Eros ascends because he needs the beloved

while agape descends because the beloved needs him.[19] Dr. Cassirer says that

> the Hymne of Heavenly Love substitutes, and presents in much greater detail, the Hebrew-Christian account of the Creation, linking the Creation to man's redemption as dual manifestations of God's love, which alike demand our whole-hearted love in return: our love of God our Creator, of Christ our Redeemer, and of our brethren, like beings with ourselves, created and redeemed. These are the commonplaces of Christian doctrine, but by the poet vividly experienced.[20]

In this hymn, far more than any of the others, the Platonic elements are minimal and the neo-Platonic theories are almost totally abandoned in a fervent paean of Christian praise.[21] The subject of this peom is the life and death of Christ. The process is one of parallelism rather than ascent. The end is love as taught by St. John and the Christian Church.[22] Indeed, it is difficult to see how one could fit this poem into Plato's ladder of love. Dr. Welsford says that "Spenser is not just continuing a steady ascent, he is turning round and taking a different path."[23] He is leaving the lady behind, but not within the context of Plato's ladder of love. As far as Spenser was concerned there was only one way to reconcile the love of woman with the love of God and that was the giving up of the one in favour of the other. That is precisely what he does in the Hymne of Heavenly Love.

The contrast between this hymn and those which come before it is not merely one between a lower and higher love, in the Platonic sense, but between the love of woman and the love of God, in the Christian sense.[24] Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Love is a thoroughly Christian poem and it departs in major ways from Renaissance Neo-Platonism. I will discuss these ways more fully in the conclusion to this thesis. It is time for us to consider Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beautie.

## The Hymne of Heavenly Beauty

The Hymne of Heavenly Beauty begins where the Hymne of Heavenly Love left off. The poet has turned his thoughts to heaven and he wants to tell us what he sees, but cannot find the words to do it. He says:

> Rapt with the rage of mine own rauisht thought,
> Through contemplation of those goodly sights,
> And glorious images in heauen wrought,
> Whose wondrous beauty breathing sweet delights,
> Do kindle loue in high conceipted sprights:
> I faine to tell the things that I behold,
> But feele my wits to faile, and tongue to fold.

The things that Spenser claims to see appear to be so beautiful that he cannot describe them with his feeble verse. Consequently, he invokes the Holy Ghost to help him with this task. He says:

> Vouchsafe then, O thou most almightie Spright,
> From whom all guifts of wit and knowledge flow,

> To shed into my breast some sparkling light
> Of thine eternall Truth, that I may show
> Some litle beames to mortall eyes below,
> Of that immortall beautie, there with thee,
> Which in my weake distraughted mynd I see.

The poet plans to write a hymn in praise of that immortal beauty which is found in heaven. The reason why he wants to do so is explained in stanza three: he hopes to lead the hearts of men away from earthly loves to a love of God by showing them this beauty.

He tells us where we should begin in stanza number four. The proper place to start is with the world around us. We should study it, he says, and "mount aloft by order dew" to contemplation of the sky. From here we should consider the vastness of the universe and all the kinds of creatures which are found within it. For, they reflect the beauty of God and His endless bounty (see stanza number five). Next we should consider the four essential elements of which the universe is composed. They are earth, water, air, and fire. Earth is the lowest of the elements - water comes next; surrounding them both is air, and above air is fire, the most refined of the four.[25] The final thing that we should contemplate is that mighty "christall wall" which encompasses the universe (see stanza number six). This appears to be a reference to the Crystalline sphere between the firmament of the fixed stars and the primum mobile in the Ptolemiac universe (see

figure 1).[26]

The hymn itself, in my opinion, describes the larger system which was composed of three different worlds: one below the moon, a second above the moon, and a third beyond the limits of the visible universe (see figure 2).[27] This conception of the three worlds was a common one, as Dr. Bennett suggests, and it provides the framework for Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beauty.[28]

In stanza number seven he is still describing things within the visible universe. He explains how all these things take on greater brightness as they approach that purest beauty which is found in God. There are two important things to note about this stanza: the first concerns the imagery of light while the second concerns the upward movement mentioned by the poet. I believe that these two things are the most significant features of the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty.

The movement in this poem is an upward movement, as well as a circular one, and it is being accompanied by ever-increasing light. The farther away from earth we move, the brighter the light appears to be and light, of course, is closely related to the theories of beauty and knowledge in the Christian tradition.

In stanza number eight, we are asked to contemplate


Fig. 28. *The geocentric universe according to Apian.*

Fig. I

*QVANT A CE QVE CHACVN DES TROIS mondes eſt pourueu de ſa racine, quarré & Cube, tout ainſi que l'Vniuers, comme il apparoiſt par les nombres qui ſont hors les rondeaux, par là peux-tu entendre l'Armonie & conuenance de tout, & comme peut eſtre vray le dire d'Anaxagore, qui mettoit* omnia in omnibus & ſingula in ſingulis.

*Ceſte ſuitte de nombres procedant de 1. a. 28. ſecond nombre parfaict & Cube du 3. declare le ſecret & myſtere de l'ame & du mõde deſcript & demõſtré par Platon au Timée.*

*Note le myſtere des lettres Hebraiques, chacune deſquelles vaut autant que le nombre qu'elle a pres de ſoy enclos dans vn petit rõd.*

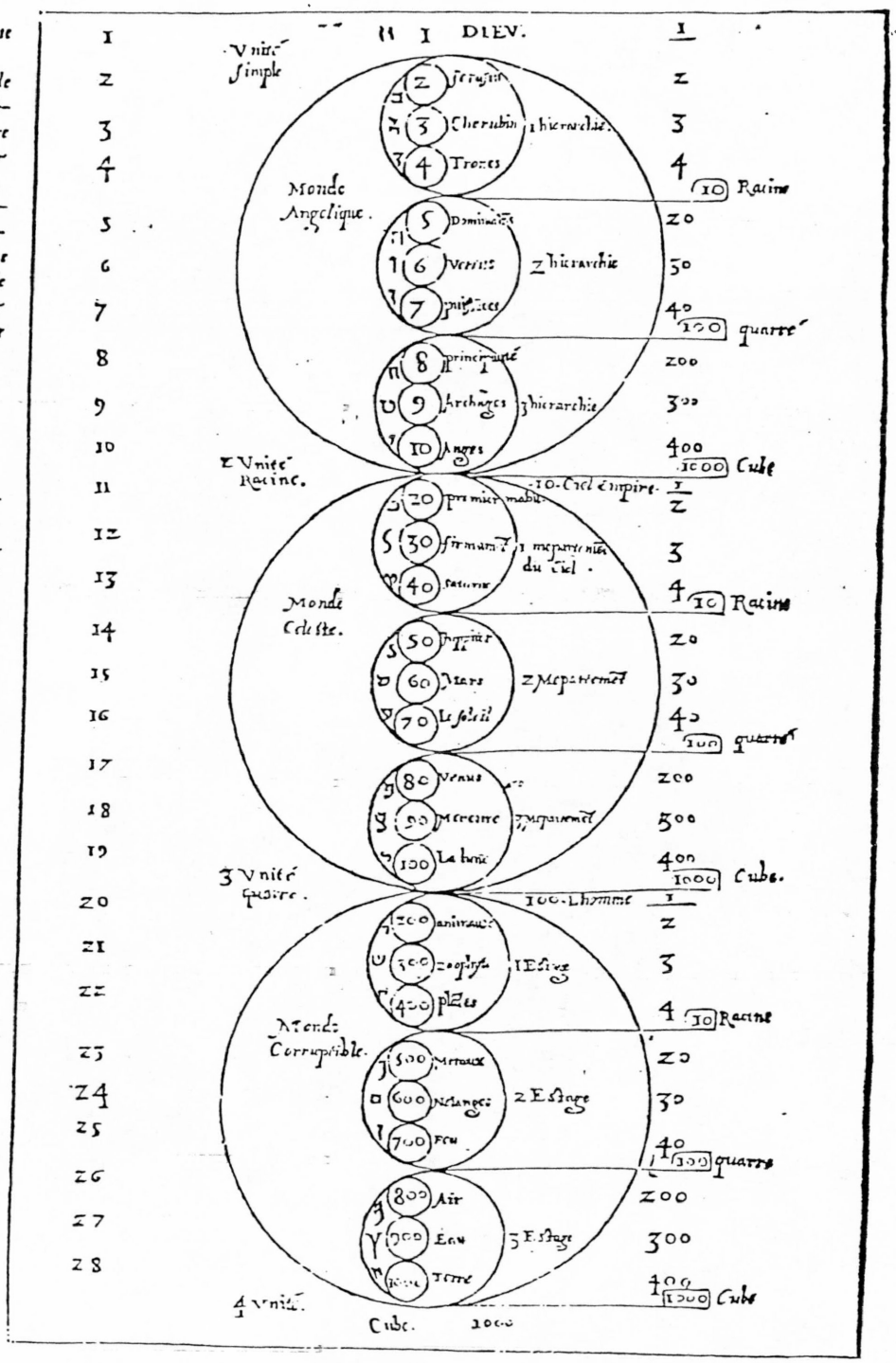


Fig. 55. *The cabalistic hierarchy of beings from LeFèvre after Pico della Mirandola.*

Fig. 2

the stars within the sky. They surpass each other in brightness, according to the poet, and he compares them here to the sun and moon. In stanza number nine, Spenser turns to us and asks: to what can we compare their beauty? They are truly beautiful, he says, but they are overshadowed still by something much more bright and pure. It is with these words in mind that Spenser moves beyond the Ptolemiac universe to the supercelestial world. The progress to this higher world is, once again, described in terms of ever-increasing light and of greater purity. He says:

> For far aboue these heauens which here we see,
> Be others farre exceeding these in light,
> Not bounded, not corrupt, as these same bee,
> But infinite in largenesse and in hight,
> Vnmouing, vncorrupt, and spotlesse bright,
> That need no Sunne t'illuminate their spheres,
> But their owne natiue light farre passing theirs.

At the start of stanza eleven, Spenser seems to return for a moment to the visible universe and its nine concentric spheres. They include the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Firmament of the fixed stars, and the Crystalline sphere. Beyond them is the primum mobile which separates the spheres from the Empyrean heaven which is the abode of God. Dr. Tillyard says that

> opinion varied on the precise constitution of the created universe. The number of spheres that composed it could be nine, ten or eleven; but no one doubted that round a central earth revolved with differing motions spheres of diameters ever increasing from the moon's

> through other planets to that of the fixed stars, and that there was a sphere called the primum mobile, outside that of the fixed stars, which dictated the motions proper to all the rest.[29]

The role of the primum mobile which is mentioned in stanza eleven (l. 72) is further explained by Theodore Spencer. He says that

> the heavens are bounded by the primum mobile, the first mover, the outer rim of the created universe. It makes a complete revolution every twenty-four hours from west to east, and by doing so, sets the nine spheres below it whirling in the opposite direction. It is the direct cause of all heavenly movement, and since the planetary spheres have so great an influence on the earth - the indirect cause of all earthly movement as well; it is the circumference of the circle of which the earth is the center. Outside it is a third realm, with which Nature has nothing to do. This is the Empyrean heaven, eternal and infinite, the abode of God, and after the Last Judgement the dwelling of the blessed.[30]

Spenser describes the circular motion of the nine concentric spheres in the first four lines of stanza eleven. A quote from Dr. Valency will clarify their meaning. He says that

> God, who is Love, created the universe through love, and all His creation is move by love of Him. Thus a tide of love circulates unceasingly through the universe. It flows from the Father towards his creatures and it flows back in the universal longing of the creatures for the Creator, the first and final cause. Physically, this amatory cycle is perceptible in the revolution of the spheres, on which all earthly motion depends. The prime mover is that sphere which in Dante's words,

> 'has no other place than the divine soul in which is kindled the love which makes it turn and the influence which it transmits.' As Dante puts it, the reason why this sphere turns, carrying the entire cosmos with it, is that each of its parts wishes constantly to unite with each part of the tenth heaven, the abode of God, and it turns toward this last with such desire that its velocity is almost incomprehensible.[31]

Dr. Greenlaw says that Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beauty has "rich suggestions of Dante."[32] This, I think, is true not only of its imagery, but of its circular and linear rhythm if not of its general contents.[33] The concepts of light and love and beauty are tightly fused in Spenser's poem just as they are in the Paradiso. In speaking of the latter work, Dr. Mazzeo says that as we follow Dante's journey (through the heavenly hierarchy) the spheres which increase in size, excellence and blessedness also become more luminous.[34] This is exactly what occurs in the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty. But there is one important difference. Dante is climbing the ladder of love with the help of Beatrice while Spenser's ascent is not propelled by the love of a woman. Instead, he is attempting to reach the Divine through the beauties of nature and the created universe.

What we have in Spenser's hymn is not a ladder of love (like the one in Plato), but a ladder of light and beauty instead. With the increase in light, comes an increase in knowledge and beauty as Spenser ascends in a circular fashion

from one celestial sphere to another. This circular process is characteristic of the ascent from heaven to heaven and ends only when the Infinite Eternal Light is reached.[35] The identical pattern can be found in the Paradiso. Dr. Mazzeo says that

> this circularity is, then, both a convenient metaphor and a structural rhythm permeating the Paradiso, at once the pattern of expanding consciousness and of ascent through the intelligible universe. The expanding spiral of growing awareness has a triadic structure, being constituted of moments of increasing light-beauty, followed by growth of love and knowledge, and of a fresh desire which demands greater beauty. Each ascent is accompanied by an increase in knowledge, and so leads towards God through the intelligible universe.[36]

At the end of stanza eleven Spenser switches back to the supercelestial world or to the angelic spheres beyond the physical universe. In stanza number twelve he begins to describe what is in the angelic spheres. The first of these contains a strange assortment of figures as Dr. Tillyard has noted.[37] They include the souls of the righteous and the Ideas of Plato, as well as the Intelligence which direct the movement of the spheres.[38] Above these figures can be found the angels who attend on God. According to the theories of the age they were divided into nine hierarchies corresponding to the nine moving spheres. Within this larger structure they were further divided into groups of three. Dr. Lewis says

that

> they are ordered in nine classes which are arranged in three groups of three classes each. The top hierarchy, which consists of the creatures classified as Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones, looks exclusively God-wards, absorbed in contemplation of the Divine essense, and unconcerned with the created universe. The next hierarchy (Dominations, Virtues and Powers) has some responsibility for the general order of nature. The lowest hierarchy deals with human affairs; Principalities with the destiny of nations, Archangels and Angels, in varying ways with those of individuals.[39]

This hierarchy of angels is badly confused in Spenser's hymn as several critics have noted.[40] In fact, the poet reverses the order completely placing the angels and archangels nearest to God.

In stanza number fifteen he describes the angelic hierarchy in terms of ever-increasing light leading to that Eternal Light which is equated with God. He says:

> These thus in faire each other farre excelling,
> As to the Highest they approach more neare,
> Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
> Fairer then all the rest which there appeare,
> Though all their beauties ioynd together were:
> How then can mortall tongue hope to expresse
> The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?

This particular stanza, as Dr. Welsford suggests, marks a turning point in the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty.[41] Her statement on this subject also includes a summary of the next four stanzas of the poem. She says that

> So far Spenser has been describing the beauty of the universe, but as he approaches God, he realizes that he is approaching what can neither be imagined nor described. So he begins to reflect, and his first reflection is that if God's 'utmost parts' (i.e. the creation) are beautiful, his 'essential parts' (i.e. the attributes, the qualities that are part of his nature) must be even more so. His attributes of truth, love, etc. are desplayed to his sinful creatures in his gracious dealings with them, and we can get some glimpses of his goodness, by studying the beauty of the creation, for goodness and beauty are inseparable.[42]

That the essential parts of God are seen in His creation is a commonplace Christian thought and Spenser is expressing it within this section of the hymn. It would not be possible, he says, to look on God's own beauty with the naked eye or to pry directly into His essence.[43] Even the angels, Spenser says, cannot endure His sight (see stanza number seventeen). The means by which we can behold Him is to study nature and the things which He created (see stanza number nineteen). God reveals Himself to us through the things which He created and it is the function of beauty in them to proclaim His power, wisdom and goodness.[44] The source of this material is the Holy Bible (see Romans 1:20).

The next seven stanzas of the hymn can, once again, be summarized by quoting Dr. Welsford. She says that

> the aspiring mind in quest of the beatific vision needs to begin by looking intently

> at the created universe and deducing from it the goodness of its Creator. This will enable him to dismiss the world from his thought and turn all his attention to God Himself, just as the eagle according to traditional superstition was able to look directly at the sun. The result of this vision is, as the next stanza shows, not pride in achievement, but abject humility and an acute consciousness of sin, and the need for redemption.[45]

This particular section of the hymn is heavily moralistic in tone and it was almost certainly written with the manuscript work in mind. In it, Spenser deals at greater length with some of the major attributes of God. The major attribute mentioned here is the one of Truth and it refers the reader back to stanza number two. God is the Supreme Truth, as well as the Eternal Light which shines on us from heaven. Indeed, the light that Spenser mentions here is the light of the Truth of God. But he does not pretend to see the Lord directly and here is where he differs from the Neo-Platonists as Dr. Welsford has noted. She says that

> once more we see the divergence of Spenser from orthodox Neo-Platonism. The poet turns his attention to God, but he never actually sees Him, but only his surroundings, His encompassing light, and Sapience sitting in His bosom. It is interesting that from now on everything that Spenser says about God or wisdom is based on the Scriptures. Although he never explicitly says so, it looks as though the first part of the poem deals with what well-conducted natural reason can discover about God, the second with revealed truth which supplements but does not contradict it.[46]

One important question remains: who or what is the figure of Sapience in stanza twenty-seven to stanza thirty-eight? It is impossible to discuss all the theories on Sapience in the space alloted here and some of them, as Welsford suggests, can be dismissed without further ado.[47] She says that

> it is most unlikely that an Elizabethan Protestant would have identified Sapience with the Virgin Mary and there is no reason to suppose that Spenser resorted to the Gnostics or the Cabala, or even the Neo-Platonic treatises when all the information he needed was to be found in the Biblical Wisdom literature and most of it in Proverbs, Chapter 8, and the Wisdom of Solomon, Chapters 7 and 8. The female figure of Wisdom, 'more beautiful than the Sun, and over all the order of Stars', created by the Lord before all other things and greatly beloved by Him, presented Spenser with the perfect Heavenly counterpart of his Earthly Beauty and one, moreover, which would already be familiar to every educated reader of the Bible.[48]

"But difficulties remain," says Welsford, "is this Wisdom a personification of a Divine Attribute, or is she one of the Persons of the Trinity and, if so, which one?"[49] The identification of Sapience with the Holy Ghost is artistically impossible according to Dr. Welsford.[50] I find it equally difficult, she says, to identify her with the Logos.

> Spenser knew perfectly well that the Logos was also the Son, Second Person of the Trinity; whereas Sapience, though described as sovereign and heavenly, is

> always distinguished from the Supreme Being, who in this context, is called God or Deity, not sire or Father.[51]

The conclusion that Dr. Welsford reaches is that Sapience represents the Idea or thought in accordance with which the Divine Reason has created the universe.[52] Dr. Welsford adds that

> the figure of Sapience is, therefore, a personification of a Divine attribute, but an attribute particularly associated with the Second Person of the Trinity, and an Attribute that tends to lose its distinctness for us, as we catch a partial, transient glimpse of the beautiful and mysteriously rich simplicity of God.[53]

I agree entirely with Dr. Welsford's analysis. The figure of Sapience in this hymn is a personified attribute of God. At the same time, she accounts for all the things which Spenser describes within this hymn. For it was through His wisdom (i.e. Sapience) that God created the universe and all the creatures in it.

The figure of Sapience first appears in stanza twenty-seven where she sits in the bosom of God, clad like a queen in royal robes. Upon her head is found a crown of "purest gold" and she holds a scepter in her hands, a symbol of her power. It is with this scepter that she rules "the house of God on hy" and the "ever-moving sky". Both heaven and earth obey her will, as do all the creatures, for God created them according to her "high behest" (i.e. according to His

wisdom). The fairness of her face is far beyond description and it is not to be compared with anything on earth (see stanza number thirty).

The next two stanzas of the hymn remind us of the manuscript poems since they contain a reference to Venus. The poet draws a comparison, in fact, between the pagan Venus and the heavenly Sapience in these stanzas of the hymn. Furthermore, he concludes from this comparison that Venus is no match for Sapience. At the same time, he advises poets not to waste their skills on writing poems in praise of Venus. They should use their skills, he says, to praise the heavenly Sapience instead for she is far more beautiful and worthy of their praise.

In stanza thirty-three he says that he is personally unable to describe the beauty of Sapience and it is with this point in mind that he decides (in the subsequent stanza) to let the angels sing her praises. It is enough for me, he says, to lose myself in love of Sapience.

In stanza thirty-five Spenser describes the happy souls whom God has graced with sight of her and in the subsequent stanza he describes how Sapience pours her "heavenly riches" on them. But, these are only made available to those who "thereof worthy bee" (see stanza thirty-six). It would not be possible, he says, to see the face of Sapience without

the help of God. But, those who get to see it experience such delight that they are virtually transported from "the flesh into the spright". Once this happens, Spenser says, they perceive such "admirable sights" as to carry them into an ecstasy and to make them forget all earthly things and focus all their thoughts on her (see stanza thirty-eight).

The last five stanzas of the hymn are similar to those of the previous poem. In them Spenser renounces earthly love and further repents his manuscript poems. The clearest reference to those poems is found in stanza forty-two in which he makes the following statement:

> Ah then my hungry soul, which long has fed
> On idle fancies of thy follish thought,
> And with false beauties flattering bait misled,
> Hast after vaine deceiptful shadowes sought,
> Which all are fled, and now have left thee nought,
> But late repentance through thy follies prief;
> Ah cease to gaze on matter of thy grief.

The final stanza of the hymn is highly reminiscent of the mutability cantos. In it Spenser expresses a deep desire for eternal rest in communion with God.[54]

This completes my textual analysis of the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty, but I would like to add a couple of general comments. The Hymne of Heavenly Beauty is a theocentric poem and it is basically Christian in content. In it Spenser adopts the position that we can achieve a union with God through contemplation of nature and the created universe.

Like the previous hymn it is not a mystical poem although it follows this tradition as Mr. Broadbent has noted. He says that

> the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty rehearses the beauties of God's creation, through the earthly and angelic hierarchies. These procedures follow the tradition of Christian mysticism which was already related to Platonism. The mystic might ascend through the stages of purification and contemplation to unification, by meditating either on the life and nature of Christ (the Christocentric method as in Heavenly Love) or on the creative works, and finally the attributes of God (the Theocentric as in Heavenly Beauty).[55]

This final hymn, in my opinion, is a more Platonic poem than the Hymn of Heavenly Love, but it cannot be read in terms of Plato's ladder. In fact, I would like to suggest that Plato's ladder of love is not to be found in Spenser's Hymnes whether we study them individually or as a collection. I will explain my position on this in the conclusion to the thesis. I will also use the conclusion to make some general comments about the collection as a whole.

# Conclusion

I will conclude this study of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes by making some general comments about the collection as a whole. Almost all the critics agree that the four existing hymns are closely inter-related and that they were intended to be studied as a unit. The second pair was consequently intended to have some relationship with the first and a general design covering the four of them as a unit was almost certainly part of Spenser's original plan.

The first thing that we note, however, is the division between the poems. They are basically divided into two separate pairs of hymns. The first pair is concerned with earthly love and earthly beauty while the second pair is concerned with heavenly love and heavenly beauty. Dr. Bennett says that this division

> arises directly out of the Platonic conception of two loves and two beauties one earthly and the other heavenly in each case yet not in opposition for earthly love and beauty are a reflection or image of heavenly love and beauty.[1]

This two-fold division for the Hymnes probably came from Plato, just as Dr. Bennett suggests, but I do not believe that Spenser's approach to love and beauty is platonic in these poems. For Spenser was not a Platonist or a Neo-Platonist, but rather as Dr. Bush suggests, an evangelical Christian.[2]

The study of Spenser's Hymnes, in fact, is a study of

the differences between the philosophy of Platonism and the religion of Christianity. Dr. Ellrodt says that there are wide gaps between the two both in doctrine and in spirit and we must know where these occur in order to understand the poems.[3] I will mention some of these gaps within this final chapter in order to show that Spenser's Hymnes are not Platonic in nature. At the same time, I will comment briefly on the pattern of these poems.

The basic pattern of the Hymnes is explained by Dr. Welsford. She says that

> whatever the past history of the first two poems may have been, it is obvious that the Fowre Hymnes as published in 1596 were meant to form a poetic whole, and the poet emphasizes the relationship between the two pairs by the same methodical use of correspondences, contrasts, and connecting stanzas which he employs to link Love with Beauty, and Heavenly Love with Heavenly Beauty. The pattern is symmetrical and, as Ellrodt points out, is best seen as a diptych. The two leaves of the main diptych are on the one hand Love and Beauty, on the other hand Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty; but each of these leaves contains a corresponding but smaller diptych whose leaves are Love and Beauty, Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty, respectively.[4]

The two pairs of hymns are thus divided down the middle. The second pair, in my opinion, marks a new beginning and it must not be viewed as a continuation of the first. There is a break between the pairs and this is clearly indicated in

the pattern of the diptych.

This pattern seems to be the one that Spenser originally had in mind, but another pattern has been offered. A number of critics hold the view that Spenser's Hymnes are patterned on Plato's ladder of love and that there is a continuous progression from the beginning to the end. Dr. Bennett takes this view in her dissertation, as well as in her scholarly debates with Professor Padelford.[5]

Dr. Bennett's theory presents a couple of problems: the first of these concerns the pattern of the Hymnes while the second concerns their subject matter. If the Platonic ladder of love is to be found in Spenser's Hymnes, as Dr. Bennett suggests, then this entire collection of poems assumes a different pattern from the one suggested above (i.e. the diptych). The second problem, however, is more serious than the first. By reading the ladder into the Hymnes, Dr. Bennett tries to show that Spenser's approach to love and beauty is basically Neo-Platonic. In one of her papers, in fact, she has openly stated that the last two hymns at least are "essentially Neo-Platonic with a slight Christian colouring."[6] I do not think that she is right. Dr. Padelford says that they are "basically Christian with a mere colouring of Neo-Platonism," and this, I think is closer to the truth.[7]

The scholarly debate around the Hymnes is, in fact,

divided around these very issues. The question of whether or not the ladder appears in Spenser's Hymnes is, therefore, important to our study. The critics who think it does have generally given these poems a Neo-Platonic interpretation while those who find no evidence of it have given the work a Christian reading. Of these two positions the latter is clearly the stronger one. It is not only supported more convincingly by the text, but it is more consistent with the Spenser of The Faerie Queene and the Epithalamion.

The ladder formed the nucleus of the Neo-Platonic philosophy of love and it is found in various forms in the work of the Renaissance poets, Ficino, Pico and Benivieni. It consists of six basic steps and these are described by Rensseler Lee. He says that according to the Neo-Platonists the soul ascends to a vision of Heavenly Beauty by six degrees:

> In the first, the lover beholds, then straightway loves a beautiful woman; in the second, he idealizes her beauty, his mind endowing it with a higher spiritual quality than it actually possesses; in the third, he further refines the particular beauty of his lady into a universal concept of the beauty that appears in all ladies; in the fourth, closing the eyes of the body and opening those of the soul, he contemplates the image of the pure Heavenly Beauty in his own mind; in the fifth, he rises from the image in his mind to behold the Heavenly Beauty itself; and in the sixth, his soul enters into mystic union with the Heavenly Beauty.[8]

These are the steps in the ladder of love and Dr. Bennett thinks that Spenser's Hymnes are patterned on them. I do not think that she is right. In fact, it appears that her analysis supports my own conclusions. Dr. Bennett claims that the first two steps in the ladder of love appear in the initial hymn. Then she says that the second step is repeated in the second poem. This, in itself, would seem to indicate that Dr. Bennett is mistaken since we would have to accept the conclusion that the second step is mentioned twice.

Dr. Bennett also claims that the third step of the ladder appears in Spenser's second poem. I do not think that this is so. In fact, the closing stanzas of this hymn seem to clearly indicate that the lover has not progressed beyond the second step if he is on the ladder at all. This is the part of the hymn which contains the manuscript material and it is firmly anchored to the earth. Indeed, in speaking of this poem Dr. Sattertwaite says that

> the poem as a whole not only fails to get its feet off the ground in proper neo-Platonic fashion; it seems even deliberately to refuse such flights. In the beginning, the middle, and the end, the poem is held firmly to the earthly situation. Whatever emendations or corrections Spenser may have made in the text in order to please the ladies of the dedication, at least he has not cut his ground anchor.

The material to which this statement points is the manuscript material and it is the presence of this material which makes

it impossible to interpret the hymn in terms of Plato's ladder. The same can be said of the Hymne of Love.

The first two hymns, in my opinion, are not Platonic poems. They are basically Petrarchan, as I have shown in my analysis, although they contain some Platonic material. In speaking of these poems, Dr. Lewis says that

> it is we after all, not Spenser, who have called these poems Platonic. They are substantially meditations on chivalrous, monogamous English love, enriched with colourings from Plato, Ficino, Lucretius, and the Medieval poets. If we speak of the Platonic colourings at all we have to do so at some length because they are difficult, not because they are of immense importance.[10]

In reference to Dr. Ellrodt, Dr. Lewis adds that

> even in the Hymnes themselves Dr. Ellrodt finds the strictly Neo-Platonic elements to be less and less important, than some suppose. He justly stresses the Ovidian, medieval and Petrarchan strains in the first two.[11]

This point is echoed by Dr. Harrison. He says that "the professed aim of Spenser in these hymns differs in no wise from the purpose of the Petrarchan lover. Both are written to ease the torments of an unrequited passion."[12] Harrison adds that "in the closing stanzas, the poet expresses the wish of coming at last to the object of his desire."[13] At the same time, it is evident from these stanzas that Spenser is still preoccupied with a particular lady. He has not

abandoned her to climb the Platonic ladder of love. Lewis says:

> I believe that the Four Hymnes defy all attempts to read them as an exposition of the Ladder in the Symposium. The first two do not provide steps or rungs by which to climb to the position adopted in the third and fourth...Some scholars have thought that even if there is no ladder in the Hymnes as a whole, some rungs can be discovered in the first two. I cannot agree.[14]

Dr. Ellrodt thinks that Spenser touched the first two steps, but he concludes by saying that even if he did

> one thing is clear: he did not go beyond the second step. The formation of a concept of universal beauty out of various beauties is nowhere stated nor even suggested, whereas it is essential to the third step, not only in Castiglione, but also in Benivieni and Pico. The fourth step does not appear either.[15]

I do not believe that Spenser wrote the first two Hymnes with Plato's ladder in mind. The Platonic ladder of love was not congenial to Spenser because it failed to make allowance for the value of earthly love. Spenser always expresses a frank and open attitude to human, physical love and the Christian ideal of married love is loudly applauded in his work. His frank acceptance of earthly love sets him off from the Renaissance Platonists some of whom displayed an open revulsion to physical love.[16]

The poet's acceptance of earthly love also led him to

reject "the higher flights of mysticism."[17] The Platonic ladder of love was far too mystical for Spenser. His approach to love in general had an earth bound orientation. But, there is an even sharper distinction between our poet and the Platonists. If we look at the ladder of love we will see that the soul's ascent is prompted by a beautiful woman. In fact, the woman is the vehicle through which the soul ascends to God and this was clearly a pattern which Spenser could never accept because he was a Christian. Dr. Ellrodt says that it is wrong for a Christian to attempt a union with God through the love of a woman.[18]

In addition to this, it is hard to see how Cupid and Venus could be fitted into Plato's ladder. The first two Hymnes are poems in praise of Cupid and Venus and neither of them, in my opinion, has a place in the ladder of love.

But what about the last two Hymnes? Dr. Bennett thinks that they preserve the final steps of Plato's ladder of love. She says that

> This arrangement of the steps seems to be preserved in the last pair of hymns also since the fourth and fifth steps are described in the third hymn and the fifth and the sixth in the fourth hymn.[19]

If this is the case, as Dr. Bennett suggests, then we would have another overlap in the second pair of poems. The third hymn apparently contains the fifth step which is repeated in

the fourth. I do not think that Spenser would have been so careless if he had the ladder in mind.

Dr. Bennett believes that the unity of the Hymnes themselves is owing to the ladder and I cannot agree with this. In fact, the continuous pattern of ascent implied by Plato's ladder of love is totally contradictory to the actual pattern of the poems. Furthermore, it leaves us with a Spenser who is markedly inconsistent with the poet of The Faerie Queene and the Epithalamion.

Dr. Bennett's theory is shared by Dr. Padelford. He claims that the first four steps of the ladder can be found in the first two hymns.[20] But, he is reluctant to extend this analysis to the second set of poems. Dr. Padelford must have realized that they were not Platonic.

The truth of the matter is that Plato's ladder of love is not to be found in the first two hymns, nor is it to be found in the second set of poems. There is no progression from the first pair into the second, at least not in terms of the ladder of love. Dr. Bush concludes that the first two hymns could never lead to Spenser's third "with its devout account of Christ and the redemption of man."[21] The last two hymns, in his opinion, "belong to a different order of vision and experience."[22] This point is echoed by Dr. Moreau.

He says that

> en abordant les deux derniers Hymnes nous entrons dans un monde toute différent qui n'est plus celui de l'amour profance, mais celui de la théologie. Sans doute ce monde rêve-t-il encore des aspect platoniciens et néo-platonicien, mais la pensée qui inspire le poète est essentiellement chrétienne. Cette expression platonicienne de la pensée chrétienne n'a rien de suprenant.[23]

The Hymne of Heavenly Love deals with Christian theology, not with Platonic philosophy and it is heavily indebted to the Holy Scriptures. Dr. Lewis says that

> in the Heavenly Love we bid farewell to Platonism almost completely. Most of this poem is a straight account of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption, such as any child in a Christian family learns before he is twelve.[24]

This point is echoed by Dr. LeBel who considers the hymn to be basically theological and purely Christian. She says that

> Spenser's theological treatment of Man, then, is purely Christian; the reason for his creation, his likeness to God, his state before the Fall, his Fall and its consequences, his need of a redeemer, the fitness of God's becoming man to redeem him, the Incarnation of God the Son, and the Redemption of man - all these theological subjects enter into Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Love and reveal our poet to have possessed more than a passing interest in Christian theology.[25]

The third hymn, then, is purely Christian and it cannot be read in terms of Plato's ladder of love. The love depicted in this hymn is not Platonic love. Dr. Moreau says that

> il est évident que l'Amour célèbre dans cet Hymne n'est pas l'Eros platonicien l'aspiration de la créature indigents vers le bien absolu et infini; c'est la surbondance de l'Amour divin que se penche vers la créature, et l'amour qui nous est reclamé en retour exige d'abord de nous un renoncement une soumission tout opposé en apparence aux appétites de notre nature.[26]

Dr. Johnson says that the God of the Neo-Platonists has no love except for Himself. He is remote, uncaring, and uninvolved.[27] The Christian God, on the other hand, is full of love for man. In reference to the third hymn, Dr. LeBel concludes that

> God is described as personal, endowed with attributes. He is conscious of and knows his thoughts and actions. This too, indicates the Christian God not the Platonic.[28]

Spenser's God, as we can see, is first and foremost, a personal Being.[29] On the basis of this alone it is safe to conclude that the God in the Hymne of Heavenly Love is the Christian God and not the One of the Neo-Platonists. Indeed, the entire contents of this poem are, in fact, completely alien to Renaissance Neo-Platonism and the ladder of love. Dr. Ellrodt says that

> in the Hymne of Heavenly Love, Spenser emphasizes the very dogmas which the Renaissance Platonists acknowledged to be basically different from Platonic doctrine: The Christian Trinity and the Incarnation. And the Christian characteristic of personality is throughout present, in the fourth as

> well as the third hymn. For the Platonic One or Good, the poet substitutes a Christian and popular God Almighty; for the idea of the beautiful, a Biblical and personified Sapience. It cannot be doubted that he felt and thought like a Christian.[30]

The final hymn, in my opinion, is also basically Christian. It is more Platonic than the Hymne of Heavenly Love but we must not confuse its Platonism with the ladder of love. Dr. Welsford says that

> of all four hymns, Of Heavenly Beauty is the one which appears to conform most clearly to the usual Neo-Platonic pattern; for in it the soul soars further and further away from Earth until it arrives at a vision of perfect beauty and a condition of ecstatic love of God. Nevertheless, this upward movement is not really to be equated with the mounting of the Neo-Platonic ladder; for the journeys begin and end differently. The Christian mountaineer starts by admiring, not a particular woman, but the order of Nature, and when he arrives at his goal, he experiences not an apotheois, but a prostrating sense of creaturely nothingness.[31]

In this final hymn, Spenser leads the reader through the Christian universe to the very throne of God. But, his procedure in this regard is not to be confused with Plato's ladder. Dr. Sattertwaite says that "Spenser's ascent is not through woman in this hymn; it is through all of God's evidence in the world and this is a very different matter."[32] The same point is made in Dr. Ellrodt's study. Dr. Ellrodt takes the position that Spenser is a Christian and not a

Neo-Platonist. He says that

> confirmation of my thesis is offered by Spenser's choice of the visible fabric of the universe as the means of beholding the beauty of the Lord. In their orthodox expositions of the Neoplatonic philosophy Pico and Benivieni chose the metaphysical 'scala' leading from the beauty of human bodies, not nature, to conceptual beauty and, lastly, intellectual beauty, attained by mystical experience.[33]

Several other critics have echoed Ellrodt's comments, but all of them agree that the Hymne of Heavenly Beauty is a Christian poem and not a Neo-Platonic one as Dr. Bennett suggests. The last two hymns together, then, are funamentally Christian both in phrasing and conception.[34] The two of them reflect, in part, the medieval mystical tradition. The third is Christocentric while the fourth is Theocentric. But, I do not believe that either of them is highly mystical.

I agree with Dr. Bush that "Spenser is neither a mystic, nor a peudo-mystic, but an evangelical Christian with a Platonic ethical strain."[35]

The terms Christocentric and Theocentric must therefore be employed in a general sense to describe the last two hymns. The terms are convenient terms for describing the objects of contemplation inherent in each of these poems.

I would like to conclude this thesis by making some general comments about the author himself. I believe that Spenser was a Christian at heart. Everything in the Hymnes,

at least, would seem to point to this conclusion. This is particularly true in the case of the last two hymns. These are not Platonic poems. Dr. LeBel says that

> As far as the last two hymns are concerned, wherever Platonism and Christian dogma clash, Spenser avoids Platonism and adheres to Christianity. He is not then 'first a Platonist and then a Christian'. His ultimate guide was his faith.[36]

The same point is made by Dr. G. R. Elliot. In speaking of Spenser generally Dr. Elliot says that

> I term him 'the Christian poet' because far too much has been made of his Platonism and far too little of his Christianity, in which alone his Platonism lived and moved and had its being.[37]

The Hymnes have more than once been offered as proof of Spenser's Platonism and I do not believe that they are highly Platonic in nature. On the other hand, I am not prepared to say that all of them are Christian poems. The presence of the manuscript material in the first two hymns prohibits this conclusion.

The first two hymns are basically Petrarchan while the last two hymns are basically Prostestant. In the final analysis, there is little in these poems to suggest that Spenser was a Platonist. Dr. Ellrodt asks: Was Spenser a Platonizing Christian or a Christian Platonist?

> Time and again the former has proved the right answer. The hymns of heavenly love and heavenly beauty are purely Christian in spirit since love is presented either as an immediate answer to the personal love of God, or as the desire of enjoying, not the vision of the idea of the Beautiful or the Good, but the beauty of a personal Christ and a personal Sapience.[38]

In the same breath, Dr. Ellrodt adds that whatever Platonism has found its way into the Hymnes, it is thoroughly subdued to Christianity.[39] Dr. Kuhn concludes that the early Renaissance, like the Middle Ages, subordinated Platonism to the Christian religion.[40] Spenser's Hymnes, in my opinion, serve to buttress this conclusion.

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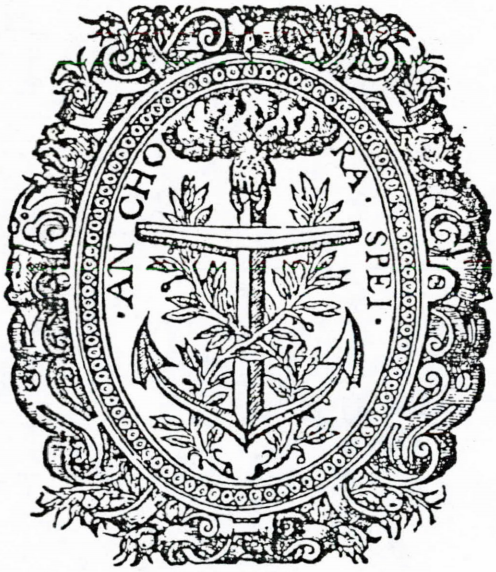
Text

# Fovvre Hymnes,

MADE BY

EDM. SPENSER.




LONDON,
Printed for VVilliam Ponſonby.
1596.

# TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE AND MOST VERtuous Ladies, the Ladie Margaret Countesse of Cumberland, and the Ladie Marie Countesse of Warwicke.

*HAuing in the greener times of my youth, composed these former two Hymnes in the praise of Loue and beautie, and finding that the same too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which being too vehemently caried with that kind of affection, do rather sucke out poyson to their strong passion, then hony to their honest delight, I was moued by the one of you two most excellent Ladies, to call in the same. But being vnable so to doe, by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad, I resolued at least to amend, and by way of retractation to reforme them, making in stead of those two Hymnes of earthly or naturall loue and beautie, two others of heauenly and celestiall. The which I doe dedicate ioyntly vnto you two honorable sisters, as to the most excellent and rare ornaments of all true loue and beautie, both in the one and the other kinde, humbly beseeching you to vouchsafe the patronage of them, and to accept this my humble seruice, in lieu of the great graces and honourable fauours which ye dayly shew vnto me, vntill such time as I may by better meanes yeeld you some more notable testimonie of my thankfull mind and dutifull deuotion.*

*And euen so I pray for your happinesse.*
*Greenwich this first of September.*
1596.

*Your Honors most bounden euer*
*in all humble seruice.*

Ed. Sp.

# AN HYMNE IN HONOVR OF LOVE.

LOue, that long since hast to thy mighty powre,
Perforce subdude my poore captiued hart,
And raging now therein with restlesse stowre,
Doest tyrannize in euerie weaker part;
Faine would I seeke to ease my bitter smart,
By any seruice I might do to thee,
Or ought that else might to thee pleasing bee.

And now t'asswage the force of this new flame,
And make thee more propitious in my need,
I meane to sing the praises of thy name,
And thy victorious conquests to areed;
By which thou madest many harts to bleed
Of mighty Victors, with wyde wounds embrewed,
And by thy cruell darts to thee subdewed.

Onely I feare my wits enfeebled late,
Through the sharpe sorrowes, which thou hast me bred,
Should faint, and words should faile me, to relate
The wondrous triumphs of thy great godhed.
But if thou wouldst vouchsafe to ouerspred
Me with the shadow of thy gentle wing,
I should enabled be thy actes to sing.

Come then, O come, thou mightie God of loue,
Out of thy siluer bowres and secret blisse,
Where thou doest sit in *Venus* lap aboue,
Bathing thy wings in her ambrosiall kisse,
That sweeter farre then any Nectar is;
Come softly, and my feeble breast inspire
With gentle furie, kindled of thy fire.

And ye sweet Muses, which haue often proued
The piercing points of his auengefull darts;

## AN HYMNE

And ye faire Nimphs, which oftentimes haue loued
The cruell worker of your kindly smarts,
Prepare your selues, and open wide your harts,
For to receiue the triumph of your glorie,
That made you merie oft, when ye were sorie.

And ye faire blossomes of youths wanton breed,
Which in the conquests of your beautie bost,
Wherewith your louers feeble eyes you feed,
But sterue their harts, that needeth nourture most,
Prepare your selues, to march amongst his host,
And all the way this sacred hymne do sing,
Made in the honor of your Soueraigne king.

GReat god of might, that reignest in the mynd,
And all the bodie to thy hest doest frame,
Victor of gods, subduer of mankynd,
That doest the Lions and fell Tigers tame,
Making their cruell rage thy scornefull game,
And in their roring taking great delight;
Who can expresse the glorie of thy might?

Or who aliue can perfectly declare,
The wondrous cradle of thine infancie?
When thy great mother *Venus* first thee bare,
Begot of Plentie and of Penurie,
Though elder then thine owne natiuitie;
And yet a chyld, renewing still thy yeares;
And yet the eldest of the heauenly Peares.

For ere this worlds still mouing mightie masse,
Out of great *Chaos* vgly prison crept,
In which his goodly face long hidden was
From heauens view, and in deepe darknesse kept,
Loue, that had now long time securely slept
In *Venus* lap, vnarmed then and naked,
Gan reare his head, by *Clotho* being waked.

And taking to him wings of his owne heate,
Kindled at first from heauens life-giuing fyre,

He gan to moue out of his idle seate,
Weakely at first, but after with desyre
Lifted aloft, he gan to mount vp hyre,
And like fresh Eagle, make his hardie flight
Through all that great wide wast, yet wanting light.

Yet wanting light to guide his wandring way,
His owne faire mother, for all creatures sake,
Did lend him light from her owne goodly ray:
Then through the world his way he gan to take,
The world that was not till he did it make;
Whose sundrie parts he from them selues did seuer,
The which before had lyen confused euer.

The earth, the ayre, the water, and the fyre,
Then gan to raunge them selues in huge array,
And with contrary forces to conspyre
Each against other, by all meanes they may,
Threatning their owne confusion and decay:
Ayre hated earth, and water hated fyre,
Till Loue relented their rebellious yre.

He then them tooke, and tempering goodly well
Their contrary dislikes with loued meanes,
Did place them all in order, and compell
To keepe them selues within their sundrie raines,
Together linkt with Adamantine chaines;
Yet so, as that in euery liuing wight
They mixe themselues, and shew their kindly might.

So euer since they firmely haue remained,
And duly well obserued his beheast;
Through which now all these things that are contained
Within this goodly cope, both most and least
Their being haue, and dayly are increast,
Through secret sparks of his infused fyre,
Which in the barraine cold he doth inspyre.

Thereby they all do liue, and moued are
To multiply the likenesse of their kynd,
Whilest they seeke onely, without further care,

To quench the flame, which they in burning fynd:
But man, that breathes a more immortall mynd,
Not for lusts sake, but for eternitie,
Seekes to enlarge his lasting progenie.

For hauing yet in his deducted spright,
Some sparks remaining of that heauenly fyre,
He is enlumind with that goodly light,
Vnto like goodly semblant to aspyre:
Therefore in choice of loue, he doth desyre
That seemes on earth most heauenly, to embrace,
That same is Beautie, borne of heauenly race.

For sure of all, that in this mortall frame
Contained is, nought more diuine doth seeme,
Or that resembleth more th'immortall flame
Of heauenly light, then Beauties glorious beame.
What wonder then, if with such rage extreme
Fraile men, whose eyes seek heauenly things to see,
At sight thereof so much enrauisht bee?

Which well perceiuing, that imperious boy
Doth therwith tip his sharp empoisned darts;
Which glancing through the eyes with countenance coy,
Rest not, till they haue pierst the trembling harts,
And kindled flame in all their inner parts,
Which suckes the blood, and drinketh vp the lyfe
Of carefull wretches with consuming griefe.

Thenceforth they playne, and make ful piteous mone
Vnto the author of their balefull bane;
The daies they waste, the nights they grieue and grone,
Their liues they loath, and heauens light disdaine;
No light but that, whose lampe doth yet remaine
Fresh burning in the image of their eye,
They deigne to see, and seeing it still dye.

The whylst thou tyrant Loue doest laugh and scorne
At their complaints, making their paine thy play;
Whylest they lye languishing like thrals forlorne,

The whyles thou doest triumph in their decay,
And otherwhyles, their dying to delay,
Thou doest emmarble the proud hart of her,
Whose loue before their life they doe prefer.

So hast thou often done (ay me the more)
To me thy vassall, whose yet bleeding hart,
With thousand wounds thou mangled hast so sore
That whole remaines scarse any little part,
Yet to augment the anguish of my smart,
Thou hast enfrosen her disdainefull brest,
That no one drop of pitie there doth rest.

Why then do I this honor vnto thee,
Thus to ennoble thy victorious name,
Since thou doest shew no fauour vnto mee,
Ne once moue ruth in that rebellious Dame,
Somewhat to slacke the rigour of my flame?
Certes small glory doest thou winne hereby,
To let her liue thus free, and me to dy.

But if thou be indeede, as men thee call,
The worlds great Parent, the most kind preseruer
Of liuing wights, the soueraine Lord of all,
How falles it then, that with thy furious feruour,
Thou doest afflict as well the not deseruer,
As him that doeth thy louely heasts despize,
And on thy subiects most doest tyrannize?

Yet herein eke thy glory seemeth more,
By so hard handling those which best thee serue,
That ere thou doest them vnto grace restore,
Thou mayest well trie if they will euer swerue,
And mayest them make it better to deserue,
And hauing got it, may it more esteeme,
For things hard gotten, men more dearely deeme.

So hard those heauenly beauties be enfyred,
As things diuine, least passions doe impresse,
The more of stedfast mynds to be admyred,

The more they stayed be on stedfastnesse:
But baseborne mynds such lamps regard the lesse,
Which at first blowing take not hastie fyre,
Such fancies feele no loue, but loose desyre.

For loue is Lord of truth and loialtie,
Lifting himselfe out of the lowly dust,
On golden plumes vp to the purest skie,
Aboue the reach of loathly sinfull lust,
Whose base affect through cowardly distrust
Of his weake wings, dare not to heauen fly,
But like a moldwarpe in the earth doth ly.

His dunghill thoughts, which do themselues enure
To dirtie drosse, no higher dare aspyre,
Ne can his feeble earthly eyes endure
The flaming light of that celestiall fyre,
Which kindleth loue in generous desyre,
And makes him mount aboue the natiue might
Of heauie earth, vp to the heauens hight.

Such is the powre of that sweet passion,
That it all sordid basenesse doth expell,
And the refyned mynd doth newly fashion
Vnto a fairer forme, which now doth dwell
In his high thought, that would it selfe excell;
Which he beholding still with constant sight,
Admires the mirrour of so heauenly light.

Whose image printing in his deepest wit,
He thereon feeds his hungrie fantasy,
Still full, yet neuer satisfyde with it,
Like *Tantale*, that in store doth sterued ly:
So doth he pine in most satiety,
For nought may quench his infinite desyre,
Once kindled through that first conceiued fyre.

Thereon his mynd affixed wholly is,
Ne thinks on ought, but how it to attaine;
His care, his ioy, his hope is all on this,

That seemes in it all blisses to containe,
In sight whereof, all other blisse seemes vaine.
Thrise happie man, might he the same possesse;
He faines himselfe, and doth his fortune blesse.

And though he do not win his wish to end,
Yet thus farre happie he him selfe doth weene,
That heauens such happie grace did to him lend,
As thing on earth so heauenly, to haue seene,
His harts enshrined saint, his heauens queene,
Fairer then fairest, in his fayning eye,
Whose sole aspect he counts felicitye.

Then forth he casts in his vnquiet thought,
What he may do, her fauour to obtaine;
What braue exploit, what perill hardly wrought,
What puissant conquest, what aduenturous paine,
May please her best, and grace vnto him gaine:
He dreads no danger, nor misfortune feares,
His faith, his fortune, in his breast he beares.

Thou art his god, thou art his mightie guyde,
Thou being blind, letst him not see his feares,
But cariest him to that which he hath eyde,
Through seas, through flames, through thousand swords and speares:
Ne ought so strong that may his force withstand,
With which thou armest his resistlesse hand.

Witnesse *Leander*, in the Euxine waues,
And stout *Æneas* in the Troiane fyre,
*Achilles* preassing through the Phrygian glaiues,
And *Orpheus* daring to prouoke the yre
Of damned fiends, to get his loue retyre:
For both through heauen and hell thou makest way,
To win them worship which to thee obay.

And if by all these perils and these paynes,
He may but purchase lyking in her eye,
What heauens of ioy, then to himselfe he faynes,

Eftsoones he wypes quite out of memory,
What euer ill before he did aby:
Had it bene death, yet would he die againe,
To liue thus happie as her grace to gaine.

Yet when he hath found fauour to his will,
He nathemore can so contented rest,
But forceth further on, and striueth still
T'approch more neare, till in her inmost brest,
He may embosomd bee, and loued best;
And yet not best, but to be lou'd alone,
For loue can not endure a Paragone.

The feare whereof, O how doth it torment
His troubled mynd with more then hellish paine!
And to his fayning fansie represent
Sights neuer seene, and thousand shadowes vaine,
To breake his sleepe, and waste his ydle braine;
Thou that hast neuer lou'd canst not beleeue
Least part of th'euils which poore louers greeue.

The gnawing enuie, the hart-fretting feare,
The vaine surmizes, the distrustfull showes,
The false reports that flying tales doe beare,
The doubts, the daungers, the delayes, the woes,
The fayned friends, the vnassured foes,
With thousands more then any tongue can tell,
Doe make a louers life a wretches hell.

Yet is there one more cursed then they all,
That cancker worme, that monster Gelosie,
Which eates the hart, and feedes vpon the gall,
Turning all loues delight to miserie,
Through feare of loosing his felicitie.
Ah Gods, that euer ye that monster placed
In gentle loue, that all his ioyes defaced.

By these, O Loue, thou doest thy entrance make,
Vnto thy heauen, and doest the more endeere
Thy pleasures vnto those which them partake,
As after stormes when clouds begin to cleare,

The Sunne more bright and glorious doth appeare;
So thou thy folke, through paines of Purgatorie,
Dost beare vnto thy blisse, and heauens glorie.

There thou them placest in a Paradize
Of all delight, and ioyous happie rest,
Where they doe feede on Nectar heauenly wize,
With *Hercules* and *Hebe,* and the rest
Of *Venus* dearlings, through her bountie blest,
And lie like Gods in yuorie beds arayd,
With rose and lillies ouer them displayd.

There with thy daughter *Pleasure* they doe play
Their hurtlesse sports, without rebuke or blame,
And in her snowy bosome boldly lay
Their quiet heads, deuoyd of guilty shame,
After full ioyance of their gentle game,
Then her they crowne their Goddesse and their Queene,
And decke with floures thy altars well beseene.

Ay me, deare Lord, that euer I might hope,
For all the paines and woes that I endure,
To come at length vnto the wished scope
Of my desire, or might my selfe assure,
That happie port for euer to recure.
Then would I thinke these paines no paines at all,
And all my woes to be but penance small.

Then would I sing of thine immortall praise
An heauenly Hymne, such as the Angels sing,
And thy triumphant name then would I raise
Boue all the gods, thee onely honoring,
My guide, my God, my victor, and my king;
Till then, dread Lord, vouchsafe to take of me
This simple song, thus fram'd in praise of thee.

*FINIS.*

# AN HYMNE IN HONOVR OF BEAVTIE.

AH whither, Loue, wilt thou now carrie mee?
What wontlesse fury dost thou now inspire
Into my feeble breast, too full of thee?
Whylest seeking to aslake thy raging fyre,
Thou in me kindlest much more great desyre,
And vp aloft aboue my strength doest rayse
The wondrous matter of my fyre to prayse.

That as I earst in praise of thine owne name,
So now in honour of thy Mother deare,
An honourable Hymne I eke should frame,
And with the brightnesse of her beautie cleare,
The rauisht harts of gazefull men might reare,
To admiration of that heauenly light,
From whence proceeds such soule enchaunting might.

Therto do thou great Goddesse, queene of Beauty,
Mother of loue, and of all worlds delight,
Without whose souerayne grace and kindly dewty,
Nothing on earth seemes fayre to fleshly sight,
Doe thou vouchsafe with thy loue-kindling light,
T'illuminate my dim and dulled eyne,
And beautifie this sacred hymne of thyne.

That both to thee, to whom I meane it most,
And eke to her, whose faire immortall beame,
Hath darted fyre into my feeble ghost,
That now it wasted is with woes extreame,
It may so please that she at length will streame
Some deaw of grace, into my withered hart,
After long sorrow and consuming smart.

WHat time this worlds great workmaister did cast
To make al things, such as we now behold,
It seemes that he before his eyes had plast
A goodly Paterne to whose perfect mould,
He fashiond them as comely as he could,
That now so faire and seemely they appeare,
As nought may be amended any wheare.

That wondrous Paterne wheresoere it bee,
Whether in earth layd vp in secret store,
Or else in heauen, that no man may it see
With sinfull eyes, for feare it to deflore,
Is perfect Beautie which all men adore,
Whose face and feature doth so much excell
All mortall sence, that none the same may tell.

Thereof as euery earthly thing partakes,
Or more or lesse by influence diuine,
So it more faire accordingly it makes,
And the grosse matter of this earthly myne,
Which clotheth it, thereafter doth refyne,
Doing away the drosse which dims the light
Of that faire beame, which therein is empight.

For through infusion of celestiall powre,
The duller earth it quickneth with delight,
And life-full spirits priuily doth powre
Through all the parts, that to the lookers sight
They seeme to please. That is thy soueraine might,
O *Cyprian* Queene, which flowing from the beame
Of thy bright starre, thou into them doest streame.

That is the thing which giueth pleasant grace
To all things faire, that kindleth liuely fyre,
Light of thy lampe, which shyning in the face,
Thence to the soule darts amorous desyre,
And robs the harts of those which it admyre,
Therewith thou pointest thy Sons poysned arrow,
That wounds the life, and wastes the inmost marrow.

## AN HYMNE

How vainely then doe ydle wits inuent,
That beautie is nought else, but mixture made
Of colours faire, and goodly temp'rament
Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade
And passe away, like to a sommers shade,
Or that it is but comely composition
Of parts well measurd, with meet disposition.

Hath white and red in it such wondrous powre,
That it can pierce through th'eyes vnto the hart,
And therein stirre such rage and restlesse stowre,
As nought but death can stint his dolours smart?
Or can proportion of the outward part,
Moue such affection in the inward mynd,
That it can rob both sense and reason blynd?

Why doe not then the blossomes of the field,
Which are arayd with much more orient hew,
And to the sense most daintie odours yield,
Worke like impression in the lookers vew?
Or why doe not faire pictures like powre shew,
In which oftimes, we Nature see of Art
Exceld, in perfect limming euery part.

But ah, beleeue me, there is more then so
That workes such wonders in the minds of men.
I that have often prou'd, too well it know;
And who so list the like assayes to ken,
Shall find by tryall, and confesse it then,
That Beautie is not, as fond men misdeeme,
An outward shew of things, that onely seeme.

For that same goodly hew of white and red,
With which the cheekes are sprinckled, shal decay,
And those sweete rosy leaues so fairely spred
Vpon the lips, shall fade and fall away
To that they were, euen to corrupted clay.
That golden wyre, those sparckling stars so bright
Shall turne to dust, and loose their goodly light.

But that faire lampe, from whose celestiall ray
That light proceedes, which kindleth louers fire,
Shal neuer be extinguisht nor decay,
But when the vitall spirits doe expyre,
Vnto her natiue planet shall retyre,
For it is heauenly borne and can not die,
Being a parcell of the purest skie.

For when the soule, the which deriued was
At first, out of that great immortall Spright,
By whom all liue to loue, whilome did pas
Downe from the top of purest heauens hight,
To be embodied here, it then tooke light
And liuely spirits from that fayrest starre,
Which lights the world forth from his firie carre.

Which powre retayning still or more or lesse,
When she in fleshly seede is eft enraced,
Through euery part she doth the same impresse,
According as the heauens haue her graced,
And frames her house, in which she will be placed,
Fit for her selfe, adorning it with spoyle
Of th'heauenly riches, which she robd erewhyle.

Therof it comes, that these faire soules, which haue
The most resemblance of that heauenly light,
Frame to themselues most beautifull and braue
Their fleshly bowre, most fit for their delight,
And the grosse matter by a soueraine might
Tempers so trim, that it may well be seene,
A pallace fit for such a virgin Queene.

So euery spirit, as it is most pure,
And hath in it the more of heauenly light,
So it the fairer bodie doth procure
To habit in, and it more fairely dight
With chearefull grace and amiable sight.
For of the soule the bodie forme doth take:
For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make.

Therefore where euer that thou doest behold
A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,
Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold
A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed,
Fit to receiue the seede of vertue strewed.
For all that faire is, is by nature good;
That is a signe to know the gentle blood.

Yet oft it falles, that many a gentle mynd
Dwels in deformed tabernacle drownd,
Either by chaunce, against the course of kynd,
Or through vnaptnesse in the substance fownd,
Which it assumed of some stubborne grownd,
That will not yield vnto her formes direction,
But is perform'd with some foule imperfection.

And oft it falles (ay me the more to rew)
That goodly beautie, albe heauenly borne,
Is foule abusd, and that celestiall hew,
Which doth the world with her delight adorne,
Made but the bait of sinne, and sinners scorne;
Whilest euery one doth seeke and sew to haue it,
But euery one doth seeke, but to depraue it.

Yet nathemore is that faire beauties blame,
But theirs that do abuse it vnto ill:
Nothing so good, but that through guilty shame
May be corrupt, and wrested vnto will.
Nathelesse the soule is faire and beauteous still,
How ever fleshes fault it filthy make:
For things immortall no corruption take.

But ye faire Dames, the worlds deare ornaments,
And liuely images of heauens light,
Let not your beames with such disparagements
Be dimd, and your bright glorie darkned quight,
But mindfull still of your first countries sight,
Doe still preserue your first informed grace,
Whose shadow yet shynes in your beauteous face.

Loath that foule blot, that hellish fierbrand,
Disloiall lust, faire beauties foulest blame,
That base affections, which your eares would bland,
Commend to you by loues abused name;
But is indeede the bondslaue of defame,
Which will the garland of your glorie marre,
And quench the light of your bright shyning starre.

But gentle Loue, that loiall is and trew,
Will more illumine your resplendent ray,
And adde more brightnesse to your goodly hew,
From light of his pure fire, which by like way
Kindled of yours, your likenesse doth display,
Like as two mirrours by opposd reflexion,
Doe both expresse the faces first impression.

Therefore to make your beautie more appeare,
It you behoues to loue, and forth to lay
That heauenly riches, which in you ye beare,
That men the more admyre their fountaine may,
For else what booteth that celestiall ray,
If it in darknesse be enshrined euer,
That it of louing eyes be vewed neuer?

But in your choice of Loues, this well aduize,
That likest to your selues ye them select,
The which your forms first sourse may sympathize,
And with like beauties parts be inly deckt:
For if you loosely loue without respect,
It is no loue, but a discordant warre,
Whose vnlike parts amongst themselues do iarre.

For Loue is a celestiall harmonie,
Of likely harts composd of starres concent,
Which ioyne together in sweete sympathie,
To worke ech others ioy and true content,
Which they haue harbourd since their first descent
Out of their heauenly bowres, where they did see
And know ech other here belou'd to bee.

Then wrong it were that any other twaine
Should in loues gentle band combyned bee,
But those whom heauen did at first ordaine,
And made out of one mould the more t'agree:
For all that like the beautie which they see,
Streight do not loue: for loue is not so light,
As streight to burne at first beholders sight.

But they which loue indeede, looke otherwise,
With pure regard and spotlesse true intent,
Drawing out of the obiect of their eyes,
A more refyned forme, which they present
Vnto their mind, voide of all blemishment;
Which it reducing to her first perfection,
Beholdeth free from fleshes frayle infection.

And then conforming it vnto the light,
Which in it selfe it hath remaining still
Of that first Sunne, yet sparckling in his sight,
Thereof he fashions in his higher skill,
An heauenly beautie to his fancies will,
And it embracing in his mind entyre,
The mirrour of his owne thought doth admyre.

Which seeing now so inly faire to be,
As outward it appeareth to the eye,
And with his spirits proportion to agree,
He thereon fixeth all his fantasie,
And fully setteth his felicitie,
Counting it fairer, then it is indeede,
And yet indeede her fairenesse doth exceede.

For louers eyes more sharply sighted bee
Then other mens, and in deare loues delight
See more then any other eyes can see,
Through mutuall receipt of beames bright,
Which carrie priuie message to the spright,
And to their eyes that inmost faire display,
As plaine as light discouers dawning day.

Therein they see through amorous eye-glaunces,
Armies of loues still flying too and fro,
Which dart at them their litle fierie launces,
Whom hauing wounded, backe againe they go,
Carrying compassion to their louely foe;
Who seeing her faire eyes so sharpe effect,
Cures all their sorrowes with one sweete aspect.

In which how many wonders doe they reede
To their conceipt, that others neuer see,
Now of her smiles, with which their soules they feede,
Like Gods with Nectar in their bankets free,
Now of her lookes, which like to Cordials bee;
But when her words embassade forth she sends,
Lord how sweete musicke that vnto them lends.

Sometimes vpon her forhead they behold
A thousand Graces masking in delight,
Sometimes within her eye-lids they vnfold
Ten thousand sweet belgards, which to their sight
Doe seeme like twinckling starres in frostie night:
But on her lips like rosy buds in May,
So many millions of chaste pleasures play.

All those, O *Cytherea*, and thousands more
Thy handmaides be, which do on thee attend
To decke thy beautie with their dainties store,
That may it more to mortall eyes commend,
And make it more admyr'd of foe and frend;
That in mens harts thou mayst thy throne enstall,
And spred thy louely kingdome ouer all.

Then *Iö tryumph*, O great beauties Queene,
Aduance the banner of thy conquest hie,
That all this world, the which thy vassals beene,
May draw to thee, and with dew fealtie,
Adore the powre of thy great Maiestie,
Singing this Hymne in honour of thy name,
Compyld by me, which thy poore liegeman am.

In lieu whereof graunt, O great Soueraine,
That she whose conquering beautie doth captiue
My trembling hart in her eternall chaine,
One drop of grace at length will to me giue,
That I her bounden thrall by her may liue,
And this same life, which first fro me she reaued,
May owe to her, of whom I it receaued.

And you faire *Venus* dearling, my deare dread,
Fresh flowre of grace, great Goddesse of my life,
When your faire eyes these fearefull lines shal read,
Deigne to let fall one drop of dew reliefe,
That may recure my harts long pyning griefe,
And shew what wondrous powre your beauty hath,
That can restore a damned wight from death.

*FINIS.*

# AN HYMNE OF HEAVENLY LOVE.

LOue, lift me vp vpon thy golden wings,
From this base world vnto thy heauens hight,
Where I may see those admirable things,
Which there thou workest by thy soueraine might,
Farre aboue feeble reach of earthly sight,
That I thereof an heauenly Hymne may sing
Vnto the god of Loue, high heauens king.

Many lewd layes (ah woe is me the more)
In praise of that mad fit, which fooles call loue,
I haue in th'heat of youth made heretofore,
That in light wits did loose affection moue.
But all those follies now I do reproue,
And turned haue the tenor of my string,
The heauenly prayses of true loue to sing.

And ye that wont with greedy vaine desire
To reade my fault, and wondring at my flame,
To warme your selues at my wide sparckling fire,
Sith now that heat is quenched, quench my blame,
And in her ashes shrowd my dying shame:
For who my passed follies now pursewes,
Beginnes his owne, and my old fault renewes.

# AN HYMNE OF

BEfore this worlds great frame, in which al things
Are now containd, found any being place,
Ere flitting Time could wag his eyas wings
About that mightie bound, which doth embrace
The rolling Spheres, and parts their houres by space,
That high eternall powre, which now doth moue
In all these things, mou'd in it selfe by loue.

It lou'd it selfe, because it selfe was faire;
(For faire is lou'd;) and of it selfe begot
Like to it selfe his eldest sonne and heire,
Eternall, pure, and voide of sinfull blot,
The firstling of his ioy, in whom no iot
Of loues dislike, or pride was to be found,
Whom he therefore with equall honour crownd.

With him he raignd, before all time prescribed,
In endlesse glorie and immortall might,
Together with that third from them deriued,
Most wise, most holy, most almightie Spright,
Whose kingdomes throne no thought of earthly wight
Can comprehend, much lesse my trembling verse
With equall words can hope it to reherse.

Yet O most blessed Spirit, pure lampe of light,
Eternall spring of grace and wisedome trew,
Vouchsafe to shed into my barren spright,
Some little drop of thy celestiall dew,
That may my rymes with sweet infuse embrew,
And giue me words equall vnto my thought,
To tell the marueiles by thy mercie wrought.

Yet being pregnant still with powrefull grace,
And full of fruitfull loue, that loues to get
Things like himselfe, and to enlarge his race,
His second brood though not in powre so great,
Yet full of beautie, next he did beget
An infinite increase of Angels bright,
All glistring glorious in their Makers light.

To them the heauens illimitable hight,
Not this round heauen, which we from hence behold,
Adornd with thousand lamps of burning light,
And with ten thousand gemmes of shyning gold,
He gaue as their inheritance to hold,
That they might serue him in eternall blis,
And be partakers of those ioyes of his.

There they in their trinall triplicities
About him wait, and on his will depend,
Either with nimble wings to cut the skies,
When he them on his messages doth send,
Or on his owne dread presence to attend,
Where they behold the glorie of his light,
And caroll Hymnes of loue both day and night.

Both day and night is vnto them all one,
For he his beames doth still to them extend,
That darknesse there appeareth neuer none,
Ne hath their day, ne hath their blisse an end,
But there their termelesse time in pleasure spend,
Ne euer should their happinesse decay,
Had not they dar'd their Lord to disobay.

But pride impatient of long resting peace,
Did puffe them vp with greedy bold ambition,
That they gan cast their state how to increase,
Aboue the fortune of their first condition,
And sit in Gods owne seat without commission:
The brightest Angell, euen the Child of light
Drew millions more against their God to fight.

Th'Almighty seeing their so bold assay,
Kindled the flame of his consuming yre,
And with his onely breath them blew away
From heauens hight, to which they did aspyre,
To deepest hell, and lake of damned fyre;
Where they in darknesse and dread horror dwell,
Hating the happie light from which they fell.

So that next off-spring of the Makers loue,
Next to himselfe in glorious degree,
Degendering to hate fell from aboue
Through pride; (for pride and loue may ill agree)
And now of sinne to all ensample bee:
How then can sinfull flesh it selfe assure,
Sith purest Angels fell to be impure?

But that eternall fount of loue and grace,
Still flowing forth his goodnesse vnto all,
Now seeing left a waste and emptie place
In his wyde Pallace, through those Angels fall,
Cast to supply the same, and to enstall
A new vnknowen Colony therein,
Whose root from earths base groundworke shold begin.

Therefore of clay, base, vile, and next to nought,
Yet form'd by wondrous skill, and by his might:
According to an heauenly patterne wrought,
Which he had fashiond in his wise foresight,
He man did make, and breathd a liuing spright
Into his face most beautifull and fayre,
Endewd with wisedomes riches, heauenly, rare.

Such he him made, that he resemble might
Himselfe, as mortall thing immortall could;
Him to be Lord of euery liuing wight,
He made by loue out of his owne like mould,
In whom he might his mightie selfe behould:
For loue doth loue the thing belou'd to see,
That like it selfe in louely shape may bee.

But man forgetfull of his makers grace,
No lesse then Angels, whom he did ensew,
Fell from the hope of promist heauenly place,
Into the mouth of death to sinners dew,
And all his off-spring into thraldome threw:
Where they for euer should in bonds remaine,
Of neuer dead, yet euer dying paine.

Till that great Lord of Loue, which him at first
Made of meere loue, and after liked well,
Seeing him lie like creature long accurst,
In that deepe horror of despeyred hell,
Him wretch in doole would let no lenger dwell,
But cast out of that bondage to redeeme,
And pay the price, all were his debt extreeme.

Out of the bosome of eternall blisse,
In which he reigned with his glorious syre,
He downe descended, like a most demisse
And abiect thrall, in fleshes fraile attyre,
That he for him might pay sinnes deadly hyre,
And him restore vnto that happie state,
In which he stood before his haplesse fate.

In flesh at first the guilt committed was,
Therefore in flesh it must be satisfyde:
Nor spirit, nor Angell, though they man surpas,
Could make amends to God for mans misguyde,
But onely man himselfe, who selfe did slyde.
So taking flesh of sacred virgins wombe,
For mans deare sake he did a man become.

And that most blessed bodie, which was borne
Without all blemish or reprochfull blame,
He freely gaue to be both rent and torne
Of cruell hands, who with despightfull shame
Reuyling him, that them most vile became,
At length him nayled on a gallow tree,
And slew the iust, by most vniust decree.

O huge and most vnspeakeable impression
Of loues deepe wound, that pierst the piteous hart
Of that deare Lord with so entyre affection,
And sharply launching euery inner part,
Dolours of death into his soule did dart;
Doing him die, that neuer it deserued,
To free his foes, that from his heast had swerued.

What hart can feele least touch of so sore launch,
Or thought can think the depth of so deare wound?
Whose bleeding sourse their streames yet neuer staunch,
But stil do flow, and freshly still redound,
To heale the sores of sinfull soules vnsound,
And clense the guilt of that infected cryme,
Which was enrooted in all fleshly slyme.

O blessed well of loue, O floure of grace,
O glorious Morning starre, O lampe of light,
Most liuely image of thy fathers face,
Eternall King of glorie, Lord of might,
Meeke lambe of God before all worlds behight,
How can we thee requite for all this good?
Or what can prize that thy most precious blood?

Yet nought thou ask'st in lieu of all this loue,
But loue of vs for guerdon of thy paine.
Ay me; what can vs lesse then that behoue?
Had he required life of vs againe,
Had it beene wrong to aske his owne with gaine?
He gaue vs life, he it restored lost;
Then life were least, that vs so litle cost.

But he our life hath left vnto vs free,
Free that was thrall, and blessed that was band;
Ne ought demaunds, but that we louing bee,
As he himselfe hath lou'd vs afore hand,
And bound therto with an eternall band,
Him first to loue, that vs so dearely bought,
And next, our brethren to his image wrought.

Him first to loue, great right and reason is,
Who first to vs our life and being gaue;
And after when we fared had amisse,
Vs wretches from the second death did saue;
And last the food of life, which now we haue,
Euen himselfe in his deare sacrament,
To feede our hungry soules vnto vs lent.

Then next to loue our brethren, that were made
Of that selfe mould, and that selfe makers hand,
That we, and to the same againe shall fade,
Where they shall haue like heritage of land,
How euer here on higher steps we stand;
Which also were with selfe same price redeemed
That we, how euer of vs light esteemed.

And were they not, yet since that louing Lord
Commaunded vs to loue them for his sake,
Euen for his sake, and for his sacred word,
Which in his last bequest he to vs spake,
We should them loue, and with their needs partake;
Knowing that whatsoere to them we giue,
We giue to him, by whom we all doe liue.

Such mercy he by his most holy reede
Vnto vs taught, and to approue it trew,
Ensampled it by his most righteous deede,
Shewing vs mercie miserable crew,
That we the like should to the wretches shew,
And loue our brethren; thereby to approue,
How much himselfe that loued vs, we loue.

Then rouze thy selfe, O earth, out of thy soyle,
In which thou wallowest like to filthy swyne,
And doest thy mynd in durty pleasures moyle,
Vnmindfull of that dearest Lord of thyne;
Lift vp to him thy heauie clouded eyne,
That thou his soueraine bountie mayst behold,
And read through loue his mercies manifold.

Beginne from first, where he encradled was
In simple cratch, wrapt in a wad of hay,
Betweene the toylefull Oxe and humble Asse,
And in what rags, and in how base aray,
The glory of our heauenly riches lay,
When him the silly Shepheards came to see,
Whom greatest Princes sought on lowest knee.

From thence reade on the storie of his life,
His humble carriage, his vnfaulty wayes,
His cancred foes, his fights, his toyle, his strife,
His paines, his pouertie, his sharpe assayes,
Through which he past his miserable dayes,
Offending none, and doing good to all,
Yet being malist both of great and small.

And looke at last how of most wretched wights,
He taken was, betrayd, and false accused,
How with most scornefull taunts, and fell despights
He was reuyld, disgrast, and foule abused,
How scourgd, how crownd, how buffeted, how brused;
And lastly how twixt robbers crucifyde,
With bitter wounds through hands, through feet and syde.

Then let thy flinty hart that feeles no paine,
Empierced be with pittifull remorse,
And let thy bowels bleede in euery vaine,
At sight of his most sacred heauenly corse,
So torne and mangled with malicious forse,
And let thy soule, whose sins his sorrows wrought,
Melt into teares, and grone in grieued thought.

With sence whereof whilest so thy softened spirit
Is inly toucht, and humbled with meeke zeale,
Through meditation of his endlesse merit,
Lift vp thy mind to th'author of thy weale,
And to his soueraine mercie doe appeale;
Learne him to loue, that loued thee so deare,
And in thy brest his blessed image beare.

With all thy hart, with all thy soule and mind,
Thou must him loue, and his beheasts embrace:
All other loues, with which the world doth blind
Weake fancies, and stirre vp affections base,
Thou must renounce, and vtterly displace,
And giue thy selfe vnto him full and free,
That full and freely gaue himselfe to thee.

Then shalt thou feele thy spirit so possest,
And rauisht with deuouring great desire
Of his deare selfe, that shall thy feeble brest
Inflame with loue, and set thee all on fire
With burning zeale, through euery part entire,
That in no earthly thing thou shalt delight,
But in his sweet and amiable sight.

Thenceforth all worlds desire will in thee dye,
And all earthes glorie on which men do gaze,
Seeme durt and drosse in thy pure sighted eye,
Compar'd to that celestiall beauties blaze,
Whose glorious beames all fleshly sense doth daze
With admiration of their passing light,
Blinding the eyes and lumining the spright.

Then shall thy rauisht soule inspired bee
With heauenly thoughts, farre aboue humane skil,
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainely see
Th'Idee of his pure glorie present still,
Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
With sweete enragement of celestiall loue,
Kindled through sight of those faire things aboue.

*FINIS.*

# AN HYMNE OF HEAVENLY BEAVTIE.

RApt with the rage of mine own rauisht thought,
Through contemplation of those goodly sights,
And glorious images in heauen wrought,
Whose wondrous beauty breathing sweet delights,
Do kindle loue in high conceipted sprights:
I faine to tell the things that I behold,
But feele my wits to faile, and tongue to fold.

Vouchsafe then, O thou most almightie Spright,
From whom all guifts of wit and knowledge flow,
To shed into my breast some sparkling light
Of thine eternall Truth, that I may show
Some litle beames to mortall eyes below,
Of that immortall beautie, there with thee,
Which in my weake distraughted mynd I see.

That with the glorie of so goodly sight,
The hearts of men, which fondly here admyre
Faire seeming shewes, and feed on vaine delight,
Transported with celestiall desyre
Of those faire formes, may lift themselues vp hyer,
And learne to loue with zealous humble dewty
Th'eternall fountaine of that heauenly beauty.

BEginning then below, with th'easie vew
Of this base world, subiect to fleshly eye,
From thence to mount aloft by order dew,
To contemplation of th'immortall sky,
Of the soare faulcon so I learne to fly,
That flags awhile her fluttering wings beneath,
Till she her selfe for stronger flight can breath.

Then looke who list, thy gazefull eyes to feed
With sight of that is faire, looke on the frame
Of this wyde *vniuerse*, and therein reed
The endlesse kinds of creatures, which by name
Thou canst not count, much lesse their natures aime:
All which are made with wondrous wise respect,
And all with admirable beautie deckt.

First th'Earth, on adamantine pillers founded,
Amid the Sea engirt with brasen bands;
Then th'Aire still flitting, but yet firmely bounded
On euerie side, with pyles of flaming brands,
Neuer consum'd nor quencht with mortall hands;
And last, that mightie shining christall wall,
Wherewith he hath encompassed this All.

By view whereof, it plainly may appeare,
That still as euery thing doth vpward tend,
And further is from earth, so still more cleare
And faire it growes, till to his perfect end
Of purest beautie, it at last ascend:
Ayre more then water, fire much more then ayre,
And heauen then fire appeares more pure and fayre.

Looke thou no further, but affixe thine eye
On that bright shynie round still mouing Masse,
The house of blessed Gods, which men call *Skye*,
All sowd with glistring stars more thicke then grasse,

Whereof each other doth in brightnesse passe;
But those two most, which ruling night and day,
As King and Queene, the heauens Empire sway.

And tell me then, what hast thou euer seene,
That to their beautie may compared bee,
Or can the sight that is most sharpe and keene,
Endure their Captains flaming head to see?
How much lesse those, much higher in degree,
And so much fairer, and much more then these,
As these are fairer then the land and seas?

For farre aboue these heauens which here we see,
Be others farre exceeding these in light,
Not bounded, not corrupt, as these same bee,
But infinite in largenesse and in hight,
Vnmouing, vncorrupt, and spotlesse bright,
That need no Sunne t'illuminate their spheres,
But their owne natiue light farre passing theirs.

And as these heauens still by degrees arize,
Vntill they come to their first Mouers bound,
That in his mightie compasse doth comprize,
And carrie all the rest with him around,
So those likewise doe by degrees redound,
And rise more faire, till they at last ariue
To the most faire, whereto they all do striue.

Faire is the heauen, where happy soules haue place,
In full enioyment of felicitie,
Whence they doe still behold the glorious face
Of the diuine eternall Maiestie;
More faire is that, where those *Idees* on hie
Enraunged be, which *Plato* so admyred,
And pure *Intelligences* from God inspyred.

Yet fairer is that heauen, in which doe raine
The soueraine *Powres* and mightie *Potentates*,
Which in their high protections doe containe
All mortall Princes, and imperiall States;

And fayrer yet, whereas the royall Seates
And heauenly *Dominations* are set,
From whom all earthly gouernance is fet.

Yet farre more faire be those bright *Cherubins*,
Which all with golden wings are ouerdight,
And those eternall burning *Seraphins*,
Which from their faces dart out fierie light;
Yet fairer then they both, and much more bright
Be th'Angels and Archangels, which attend
On Gods owne person, without rest or end.

These thus in faire each other farre excelling,
As to the Highest they approch more neare,
Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
Fairer then all the rest which there appeare,
Though all their beauties ioynd together were:
How then can mortall tongue hope to expresse
The image of such endlesse perfectnesse?

Cease then my tongue, and lend vnto my mynd
Leaue to bethinke how great that beautie is,
Whose vtmost parts so beautifull I fynd,
How much more those essentiall parts of his,
His truth, his loue, his wisedome, and his blis,
His grace, his doome, his mercy and his might,
By which he lends vs of himselfe a sight.

Those vnto all he daily doth display,
And shew himselfe in th'image of his grace,
As in a looking glasse, through which he may
Be seene, of all his creatures vile and base,
That are vnable else to see his face,
His glorious face which glistereth else so bright,
That th'Angels selues can not endure his sight.

But we fraile wights, whose sight cannot sustaine
The Suns bright beames, when he on vs doth shyne,
But that their points rebutted backe againe
Are duld, how can we see with feeble eyne,

The glory of that Maiestie diuine,
In sight of whom both Sun and Moone are darke,
Compared to his least resplendent sparke?

The meanes therefore which vnto vs is lent,
Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
And in the same, as in a brasen booke,
To reade enregistred in euery nooke
His goodnesse, which his beautie doth declare,
For all thats good, is beautifull and faire.

Thence gathering plumes of perfect speculation,
To impe the wings of thy high flying mynd,
Mount vp aloft through heauenly contemplation,
From this darke world, whose damps the soule do blynd,
And like the natiue brood of Eagles kynd,
On that bright Sunne of glorie fixe thine eyes,
Clear'd from grosse mists of fraile infirmities.

Humbled with feare and awfull reuerence,
Before the footestoole of his Maiestie,
Throw thy selfe downe with trembling innocence,
Ne dare looke vp with corruptible eye,
On the dred face of that great *Deity*,
For feare, lest if he chaunce to looke on thee,
Thou turne to nought, and quite confounded be.

But lowly fall before his mercie seate,
Close couered with the Lambes integrity,
From the iust wrath of his auengefull threate,
That sits vpon the righteous throne on hy:
His throne is built vpon Eternity,
More firme and durable then steele or brasse,
Or the hard diamond, which them both doth passe.

His scepter is the rod of Righteousnesse,
With which he bruseth all his foes to dust,
And the great Dragon strongly doth represse,
Vnder the rigour of his iudgement iust;

His seate is Truth, to which the faithfull trust;
From whence proceed her beames so pure and bright,
That all about him sheddeth glorious light.

Light farre exceeding that bright blazing sparke,
Which darted is from *Titans* flaming head,
That with his beames enlumineth the darke
And dampish aire, wherby al things are red:
Whose nature yet so much is maruelled
Of mortall wits, that it doth much amaze
The greatest wisards, which thereon do gaze.

But that immortall light which there doth shine,
Is many thousand times more bright, more cleare,
More excellent, more glorious, more diuine,
Through which to God all mortall actions here,
And euen the thoughts of men, do plaine appeare:
For from th'eternall Truth it doth proceed,
Through heauenly vertue, which her beames doe breed.

With the great glorie of that wondrous light,
His throne is all encompassed around,
And hid in his owne brightnesse from the sight
Of all that looke thereon with eyes vnsound:
And vnderneath his feet are to be found
Thunder, and lightning, and tempestuous fyre,
The instruments of his auenging yre.

There in his bosome *Sapience* doth sit,
The soueraine dearling of the *Deity,*
Clad like a Queene in royall robes, most fit
For so great powre and peerelesse maiesty.
And all with gemmes and iewels gorgeously
Adornd, that brighter then the starres appeare,
And make her natiue brightnes seem more cleare.

And on her head a crowne of purest gold
Is set, in signe of highest soueraignty,
And in her hand a scepter she doth hold,
With which she rules the house of God on hy,

And menageth the euer-mouing sky,
And in the same these lower creatures all,
Subiected to her powre imperiall.

Both heauen and earth obey vnto her will,
And all the creatures which they both containe:
For of her fulnesse which the world doth fill,
They all partake, and do in state remaine,
As their great Maker did at first ordaine,
Through obseruation of her high beheast,
By which they first were made, and still increast.

The fairenesse of her face no tongue can tell,
For she the daughters of all wemens race,
And Angels eke, in beautie doth excell,
Sparkled on her from Gods owne glorious face,
And more increast by her owne goodly grace,
That it doth farre exceed all humane thought,
Ne can on earth compared be to ought.

Ne could that Painter (had he liued yet)
Which pictured *Venus* with so curious quill,
That all posteritie admyred it,
Haue purtrayd this, for all his maistring skill;
Ne she her selfe, had she remained still,
And were as faire, as fabling wits do fayne,
Could once come neare this beauty souerayne.

But had those wits the wonders of their dayes,
Or that sweete *Teian* Poet which did spend
His plenteous vaine in setting forth her prayse,
Seene but a glims of this, which I pretend,
How wondrously would he her face commend,
Aboue that Idole of his fayning thought,
That all the world shold with his rimes be fraught?

How then dare I, the nouice of his Art,
Presume to picture so diuine a wight,
Or hope t'expresse her least perfections part,
Whose beautie filles the heauens with her light,

And darkes the earth with shadow of her sight?
Ah gentle Muse thou art too weake and faint,
The pourtraict of so heauenly hew to paint.

Let Angels which her goodly face behold
And see at will, her soueraigne praises sing,
And those most sacred mysteries vnfold,
Of that faire loue of mightie heauens king.
Enough is me t'admyre so heauenly thing,
And being thus with her huge loue possest,
In th'only wonder of her selfe to rest.

But who so may, thrise happie man him hold,
Of all on earth, whom God so much doth grace,
And lets his owne Beloued to behold:
For in the view of her celestiall face,
All ioy, all blisse, all happinesse haue place,
Ne ought on earth can want vnto the wight,
Who of her selfe can win the wishfull sight.

For she out of her secret threasury,
Plentie of riches forth on him will powre,
Euen heauenly riches, which there hidden ly
Within the closet of her chastest bowre,
Th'eternall portion of her precious dowre,
Which mighty God hath giuen to her free,
And to all those which thereof worthy bee.

None thereof worthy be, but those whom shee
Vouchsafeth to her presence to receaue,
And letteth them her louely face to see,
Wherof such wondrous pleasures they conceaue,
And sweete contentment, that it doth bereaue
Their soule of sense, through infinite delight,
And them transport from flesh into the spright.

In which they see such admirable things,
As carries them into an extasy,
And heare such heauenly notes, and carolings
Of Gods high praise, that filles the brasen sky,

And feele such ioy and pleasure inwardly,
That maketh them all worldly cares forget,
And onely thinke on that before them set.

Ne from thenceforth doth any fleshly sense,
Or idle thought of earthly things remaine,
But all that earst seemd sweet, seemes now offense,
And all that pleased earst, now seemes to paine.
Their ioy, their comfort, their desire, their gaine,
Is fixed all on that which now they see,
All other sights but fayned shadowes bee.

And that faire lampe, which vseth to enflame
The hearts of men with selfe consuming fyre,
Thenceforth seemes fowle, and full of sinfull blame;
And all that pompe, to which proud minds aspyre
By name of honor, and so much desyre,
Seemes to them basenesse, and all riches drosse,
And all mirth sadnesse, and all lucre losse.

So full their eyes are of that glorious sight,
And senses fraught with such satietie,
That in nought else on earth they can delight,
But in th'aspect of that felicitie,
Which they haue written in their inward ey;
On which they feed, and in their fastened mynd
All happie ioy and full contentment fynd.

Ah then my hungry soule, which long hast fed
On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,
And with false beauties flattring bait misled,
Hast after vaine deceiptfull shadowes sought,
Which all are fled, and now haue left thee nought,
But late repentance through thy follies prief;
Ah ceasse to gaze on matter of thy grief.

And looke at last vp to that soueraine light,
From whose pure beams al perfect beauty springs,
That kindleth loue in euery godly spright,
Euen the loue of God, which loathing brings
Of this vile world, and these gay seeming things;
With whose sweete pleasures being so possest,
Thy straying thoughts henceforth for euer rest.