

《仙后》 与英国文艺复兴时期的释经传统

The Scriptures
and
The Faerie Queene

赵冬 著

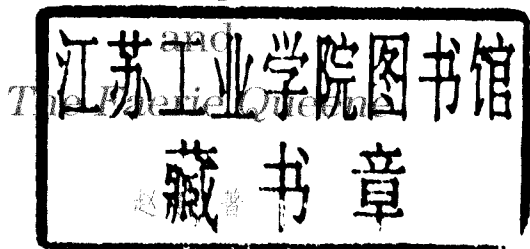
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Abstract

Despite the abundance of materials, or rather as a result of it, the religious ideas expressed in Edmund Spenser's poetry have constituted a recurring and controversial issue for Spenser's critics. Spenser's ecclesiastical and theological views have provoked abundant scholarly discussion. The first attempt to discuss Spenser's religious concept dates back to as early as the 18th century, when critics like John Upton took the lead in analyzing the poet's religious views. Those early and recent critics who designate Spenser as a Puritan include John Upton, James Russell Lowell, H. J. Todd, C. H. Herford, James Higginson, W. L. Renwick, B. E. C. Davis, and Leicester Brander, while James D. Boulger, Lillian Winstanley, Jefferson A. Fletcher, Frederick Morgan Padelford, and Paul N. Siegel more assertively and more specifically define him as a Calvinist. In contrast, critics like Ralph Church, E. Hickey, Edwin Greenlaw, and Paul E. Maclane have argued that Spenser was a stout Anglican or, to go one step further, a high church man in Maclane's terms. Finally, to complete this confusing picture, Nelan Thomas in his dissertation, *Catholic Doctrines in Spenser's Poetry*, argues vehemently that Spenser's religious position is nothing other than Catholic. More recently, Spenser's poetry has been considered to be so syncretistic or deliberately paradoxical that interpretation of his religious attitude is either presumptuous or impossible. In fact, recent criticism has broadened the terms of the question to ask whether his poetry even presents a coherent statement of his personally held religious beliefs. Such attempts to align Spenser with various religious groups or movements are weak at best, if not fallacious.

Spenser's critics diverge widely in their assessment of his religious views, and their studies of Spenser's religious ideas have suffered from various problems: focusing narrowly on his affinity with particular doctrines or sects, relying highly on inferential biographical arguments and labeling him with historically questionable terms such as "Puritan," "Calvinist" and "Anglican" instead of assessing the extent to which he was influenced by these ideas. Two related problematic areas are largely responsible for these problems: terminology and doctrinal focus. First, an underlying problem is that there is no consensus upon terminology. As various critics have evidenced, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find agreement on what is meant by "Puritan," "Calvinist," "Anglican," etc. Thus, to label Spenser with sectarian or doctrinal titles such as "Puritan," or even more specifically, a "Calvinist," would be partial and inadequate, since Spenser's works nowhere provide direct and definite statements of his doctrinal position. This fact means that critics trying to pinpoint the poet's religious ideas must be careful not to confuse general Christian themes derived from the Bible with those of individual sects or persuasions.

Therefore, as a corrective to such approaches, this thesis, by resorting to the Bible, attempts to provide a textual, thematic and historical approach to *The Faerie Queene* from a broader perspective that avoids doctrinal or sectarian leanings—since some present-day scholars of literature, are not unlike Chaucer's "doctour of phisik" whose "studie was but litel on the Bible."¹ The first two books of *The Faerie Queene* will be given more emphasis because their subject matter provides a comprehensive and carefully worked out statement of Spenser's religious ideas, and more particularly, because scholars have, in the last two centuries, speculated upon Book I's doctrinal

1 Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," *Canterbury Tales*, ed. A. C. Cawley (London: Dent, 1975).

dependency and have come to such diverse opinions as to leave the questions of its religious resource still unsettled. In examining his religious predilections, one might expect to gain further evidence from a careful study of his use of the Bible under the Elizabethan historical context. To me, a valid study of the Bible and biblically inspired literature can only be achieved adequately when they are contextualized within the relevant social history of the Christian tradition. Moreover, Spenser is not only a literary man, but also a moral, religious, social and political man, a courtier committed to the ethical well-being of England, and it is these concerns that directed—even dictated—his attention to the biblical tradition.

So as both a corrective to and improvement upon the above-mentioned critical trends, the present thesis insists that only through the Bible itself, the Elizabethan biblical exegesis, and a special emphasis on the biblical presentation of the Queen as the center of the whole *The Faerie Queene*, can the religious views of Spenser be adequately addressed. It is the historical and apocalyptic significance of the Bible, not abstract religious doctrines, that the poet holds as fundamental to his conception of *The Faerie Queene*. The seven chapters of this dissertation intend to show that Edmund Spenser has discovered in the Bible a historical-apocalyptic (Chapter II), stylistic (Chapter III), and thematic (Chapters IV, V and VI) basis for his masterpiece *The Faerie Queene*. The poet's literary excellence and innovations owe much to his idiosyncratic and ingenious biblical readings and borrowings. That is, the Bible provides a context for Spenser within which *The Faerie Queene* reveals its fullest meanings to the reader.

The first chapter reviews, analyzes, and criticizes the prevalent and conflicting schools of Spenser's religious views. Their inadequacies will be detected and solutions will be provided. The second chapter, or what I call a Spenserian Apocalypse, focuses on

how the Elizabethan compromise of power as co-inherent in Bible, Church and the Queen (especially her Apocalyptic significance as derived from the Revelation) affected poets like Spenser, Shakespeare, and the Fletchers and their works. In this aspect it can be argued that these authors took more seriously the literary goal of representing Christianity in the English national context. The third chapter examines how Spenser stylistically used the Bible to shape the religious language featured prominently in his poetic style. Spenser relies heavily on biblical texts in the books of *The Faerie Queene*, whether in the form of explicit quotations, allusions or more veiled allegorical structuring. Chapters IV, V and VI argue that the Bible and the hermeneutic adopted by the Elizabethan exegetes are an essential part of the meaning the poet elicits from the biblical text, and this interpretative method can provide clues to the way the Elizabethan readers interpreted *The Faerie Queene*. In order to ascertain how biblical texts contribute to the meaning of the whole poem, this part tries to reconstruct the Elizabethan exegetical tradition around the biblical references Spenser makes. Meanwhile, this part tries to define the representation of Gloriana/Elizabeth I as the structural and thematic focus of *The Faerie Queene* through biblical typology. It aims to argue with critics who believe that the titular heroine Glorianna is not fully developed, and that the thematic significance of the “faerie” queen in its continued allegory is too negligible to be worth more than incidental, fleeting mention. Through biblical typology we can argue that Glorianna is the structural and thematic focus of *The Faerie Queene*, and thus functions as a unifying principle for the whole epic. All the above evidences are possible only to the poet whose mind is so thoroughly saturated in the Scriptures that it forms a background that supports his poetics and illuminates his thought.

内容提要

本文拟从《圣经》文本及英国文艺复兴时期对《圣经》的阐释两方面来解读该时期重要诗人埃德蒙·斯宾塞的长诗《仙后》。现今批评家们对斯宾塞的评论多专注于他作品中所表现出的古典主义印记。另一方面，也有为数不多的批评者们对他所受的基督教影响进行了研究，但这些研究似乎仅停留在把斯宾塞归到某个特定的基督教派别下，把他的作品定位为受到该派别的宗教教义影响。约翰·厄普顿等人将斯宾塞定义为一个典型的清教主义者；詹姆士·伯格等批评者则把他纳入加尔文主义者；埃德温·格林劳等人却认定他应隶属于英国国教的麾下；同时使该问题更加复杂化的是，尼兰·托马斯在他的博士毕业论文中，列举了大量事实来论证天主教教义对斯宾塞作品的决定性影响。

针对以上各批评流派的观点，以及另一些怀疑斯宾塞是否在其作品中系统性地阐述了自己的宗教观的各种论断，本文在综合并拓展相关研究的基础上，通过论述基督教的唯一经典著作《圣经》对长诗《仙后》的影响来阐述斯宾塞的宗教观。重点论述英国女王伊丽莎白一世统治时期，《圣经》（尤其是其中的“启示录”）对该时代历史的影响在《仙后》及同时期文学作品中的显著反映。本文第一章综述了近几个世纪以来批评家们对斯宾塞宗教观的论述，指出其不足之处并尝试提供解决方法。第二章从女王伊丽莎白一世统治时期的《圣经》、教会及女王三权合一的历史大背景出发，

论证了斯宾塞等代表性诗人作品中所表现出的天启与末世思想的历史观。第三章着重论述《圣经》作为文本对斯宾塞写作风格的影响，归纳并分析了斯宾塞数种援引《圣经》的方式及表现。第四、五、六章以《圣经》文本及当时的《圣经》阐释为依据，解读了整首长诗《仙后》的主题及意义，是系统地利用《圣经》对该诗进行全面解读的首次尝试。

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Chapter I Introduction

As a casual browse of bibliographic materials will show, critics on Spenser have not often been concerned with the interaction between the poet and the Scriptures. Spenser's poetry has traditionally been discussed in terms of classical genres. In fact, the modern Spenser scholarship has always been on his moral allegory, his classical and mythological indebtedness, and his fashioning of a chivalric tradition.¹ To complement this trend, some outstanding studies on the religious aspects of his poetry have emerged, since we have to admit that much of Spenser's poetry is rooted in Christianity.² Such scholarly work has contributed enormously to our understanding of *The Faerie Queene* and the age that produced this great epic poem. After all, the 16th century was a religious age and Spenser was a religious man. That Spenser was greatly concerned with the religious problems of his day can be seen in the subjects of his *Shepherd's Calendar*, *Fowre Hymns*, *Amoretti* and, most important and manifest

1 For a comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography of Spenserian criticism, see A. C. Hamilton, ed., *Spenser Encyclopedia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 790–809.

2 Recently published books on religious ideas in Spenser's poetry include Virgil Whitaker, *The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950); Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Josephine Bennett, *The Evolution of The Faerie Queene* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1942); etc. A comprehensive review of the doctrinal discussions of Spenser, to which I am much indebted for my own review of literature, can be found in Gwen Ellen Ladd's "The Novice of His Art: Spenser's Poetic Typology in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*," unpublished thesis, University of Kansas, 1983: 1–39.

of all, in the subject of *The Faerie Queene*.

Despite the abundance of materials, or rather as a result of it, the religious ideas expressed in Spenser's poetry have constituted a recurring and controversial issue for Spenser's critics. Spenser's ecclesiastical and theological views have provoked abundant scholarly discussion. The first attempt to discuss Spenser's religious concept can be traced back to as early as the 18th century when critics like John Upton started to comment on the poet's religious views for the first time in English literary history. Those early and recent critics who designate Spenser as a Puritan include John Upton, James Russell Lowell, H. J. Todd, C. H. Hereford, James Higginson, W. L. Renwick, B. E. C. Davis, and Leicester Brander, while James D. Boulger, Lillian Winstanley, Jefferson A. Fletcher, Frederick Morgan Padelford, and Paul N. Siegel more assertively and more specifically define him as a Calvinist. In contrast, critics like Ralph Church, E. Hickey, Edwin Greenlaw, and Paul E. Maclane have argued that Spenser was a stout Anglican or, to go one step further, a high church man in Maclane's terms. Finally, to complete this confusing picture, Nelan Thomas in his dissertation, *Catholic Doctrines in Spenser's Poetry*, argues vehemently that Spenser's religious position is nothing other than Catholic. More recently, Spenser's poetry has been considered to be so syncretistic or deliberately paradoxical that interpretation of his religious attitude is either presumptuous or impossible. In fact, recent criticism has broadened the terms of the question to ask whether his poetry even presents a coherent statement of his personally held religious beliefs. Such attempts to align Spenser with various religious groups or movements are weak at best, if not fallacious.

All the attempts to align Spenser with Puritanism are marked by their biographical arguments, inferring from presumed evidence about the poet's life and his personal relationships. The view of Spenser as a Puritan has been given the strongest emphasis and has been "perhaps ... most influential of all," according to Virgil Whitaker.¹ Such arguments are largely biographical in nature as they primarily center on the influence of Spenser's years at Cambridge from 1569 to 1576. Cambridge then was a stronghold of Puritanism during Spenser's residence there and throughout his life. H. J. Todd presents the evidence of Spenser's Puritan connections with people like Archbishop Grindal and the Earl of Leicester. He also mentions Spenser's attendance at Cambridge during the Puritan controversies there. In his unelaborated statements, Todd provides some evidences that help to decide the issue of Spenser's Puritanism on the basis of his associates. At one place, he records, "Cartwright was a noted non-conformist as well as a scholar, and is said to have been encouraged by the Earl of Leicester (Spenser's friend)."² The other place in which Todd infers Spenser's Puritan leanings is also indirect. The discussions center on a letter of Gabriel Harvey, which talks about "the puritanical controversies that had existed at Cambridge." Todd quotes from Harvey: "No more adoe about cappes and surpleases: Master Cartwright nighe forgotten: The man you wrote of, conformable, with his square cappe on his round heade, and non-resident at pleasure, etc."³ To Todd, this message conveys the indication that Spenser

1 Virgil Whitaker, *The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950), 229.

2 H. J. Todd, ed., *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, 8 vols. (London: Rivington, 1805), I, xli, note x.

3 Ibid.

desires to be kept informed about the continued influence of the non-conformists after he left Cambridge. In sum, Todd's recordings amount to this net result: linking the names of Cartwright (a Puritan), Grindal (supposedly a Puritan), and Leicester (a supporter of the Puritans), with Spenser.

More recently, this biographical treatment of Spenser's Puritanism becomes even more obvious. A prevalent opinion is that Spenser is not merely an ordinary Puritan but an extreme one like a Presbyterian. This view has been supported by the historical fact that Thomas Cartwright, the Presbyterian leader, was Professor of divinity at Cambridge in 1569, the year at which Spenser entered the university. Many critics tend to build their arguments on Spenser's biographical facts especially his years at Cambridge, from 1569–1576, when the religious disputes were fervent there. Leicester Brander, in his *Edmund Spenser and The Faerie Queene*, argues that Spenser must have been strongly affiliated with Puritanism because of his association with Pembroke Hall, a college “most devoted to religious and ecclesiastical reform.”¹ Bradner goes on to contend that Cartwright's radical church reform “found a sympathetic hearer in the young freshman who was later to devote the first book of his great poem to the subject of holiness.”² In addition, some critics argue that Spenser's personal friendship with Gabriel Harvey during his Cambridge days is also an indicator of his Puritanical bent. To Albert Tolman, through this intimate friendship Spenser's religious views substantially agreed with those of Harvey, a “broadminded”

1 Leicester Brander, *Edmund Spenser and The Faerie Queene* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 19.

2 Ibid.

Puritan.¹ Tolman's logic is simply that "with religious controversy so clamorous and omnipresent at Cambridge, it is entirely improbable that Spenser and Harvey could have maintained complete friendship and sympathy unless their religious views were identical."²

In addition, critics like James Higginson, Jefferson Fletcher, Nancy Hoffman, F. M. Padelford, and James Russell Lowell come to find Spenser's puritan bent in his attacks on the corruptions of the Anglican Church and in his criticisms of certain individuals. Historically, such conflicts between the Puritans and the Anglican church were caused by the so-called "vestment controversy," the objection of the Puritans to Anglican Church's approval of wearing the surplice and cap in the conduct of divine service, which was considered by Puritans as the Popish dregs. In this spirit, the Puritan ministers, regarding the Anglican Church as only one step removed from the Catholic, refused to obey the injunctions of the bishops. Cambridge University, where Spenser got his BA and MA degrees, was a hotbed of this controversy during Elizabeth's reign. Going a step beyond the mere vestment issue, Cartwright, Senior Fellow of Trinity College and Professor of Divinity, was criticizing "the distinctive characteristic of the English church ... the institution of archbishops and bishops, of archdeacons and deacons ..."³ He ended up by being dispelled out of Cambridge by his arch-opponent Whitgift, the Vice-Chancellor.

1 See Albert Tolman, "The Relationship of Spenser and Harvey to Puritanism," *Modern Philology*, 15 (1918): 165-180; and Alexander Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser*, in Vol. 8 of the *Variorum Spenser* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1945), 33.

2 Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser*, 556.

3 James Bass Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge from the Royal Injunctions of 1535 to the Accession of Charles the First* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), I, 207.