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The Psychological Continuity Within Discontinuity of Spenser's Four Hymns

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTINUITY WITHIN DISCONTINUITY

OF SPENSER'S FOUR HYMNS

BY

SARA PETTIGREW ADAMS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

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OF

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the question of whether there is a psychological continuity in the Four Hymns. When the problem of continuity arises, most critics see a sharp break between the first two and the final two hymns, a complete change in the nature of vision.

Textual analysis and the study of secondary materials reveal that most critics fail, except in matters of parallel poetic structure, to see how interdependent the hymns are. If there is an ascent, they see an ultimate goal from which there must be no looking back: a Platonic ladder ascending from mere shadows to the realm of Ideas, carnal to spiritual love, Pagan to Christian love, the purgative to the unitive stage of Christian mysticism.

Spenser's use of the language of myth in the hymns, his use of the roles of Cupid, Venus, Christ and Sapience as the central figures of the first through the fourth hymn, the role of the dramatic speaker, and the similarities between the development of the lover in the hymns and the development of the Red Cross Knight in Book I of the Fairy Queen, are explored in this study. Each of these facets of the hymns is in harmony with the notion of a teeming cosmos moved and linked by love. The functions of all of the central figures are closely interwoven, yet the functions of each figure include and are more comprehensive

than those of the previous one. As the poet-speaker learns to love each central figure his perspective expands to embrace what he understands of their functions. Gradually he becomes more like the objects he loves. His understanding of them can be seen as a projection of his own ability to love, and is reflected by the degree to which he shows his love for his fellow men in the hymns.

The order of the central figures in the hymns is seen as a kind of cumulative, expanding wisdom which the poet-speaker's development mirrors. Each phase of development, whether shown by the central figure or by the poet-speaker, improves upon but does not negate what goes before. While the poet-speaker seems at several points in the hymns to reject what has gone before in favor of each new vision, he does so only temporarily. His growth is entirely consistent with the definition of change given by Dame Nature in the "Mutability Cantos" as the perfection and expansion of that which changes.

In conclusion, the psychological development of the poet-lover is shown by the degree to which he is able to reach out toward other men. His growth in love in terms of each of the central figures is reflected in his love and understanding of himself and other men. His expanding consciousness is fundamental to the unity of the hymns.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
I. MYTHOLOGY IN THE <u>FOUR HYMNS</u>	7
II. THE DISCIPLINE OF LOVE IN THE FIRST TWO HYMNS .	20
III. THE FULFILLMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FINAL TWO HYMNS	36
IV. THE ROLE OF THE DRAMATIC SPEAKER IN THE HYMNS .	49
V. EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CON- TINUITY IN THE HYMNS	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	71

INTRODUCTION

Spenser's Four Hymns were published in 1596. Many critics view the first two hymns as distinct and separate from the final two hymns. Robert Ellrodt in his Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser,¹ C. S. Lewis in his review of Ellrodt's book,² and Douglas Bush in his Religion and the Renaissance Tradition³ agree that the final two hymns are of a different order of experience and vision from the first two. Ellrodt, in discussing a dramatic contrast between the two sets of hymns, mentions that God must be adored apart from woman, although woman must not be loved apart from God,⁴ and refers to Augustine's treatise On the Trinity for support in this matter. It is the purpose of this study to show that the continuity of Spenser's Four Hymns is evidenced in the psychological development of the lover in the hymns. In the light of this psychological development there is no dramatic contrast between the first two and the final two hymns. Rather, man's sympathies expand gradually to include the eternal. The

¹Geneva, 1960, p. 180.

²"Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser," Etudes Anglaises, 14 (1961), 108.

³New York, 1963, p. 118.

⁴Ellrodt, pp. 140 and 148.

lover does not leave behind all that he has previously loved and thought beautiful, with each new and clearer vision of the eternal, except when actually experiencing his visions. Each vision of Divine Beauty renders all other considerations irrelevant for man at that time, but none of his visions permanently removes man from the world of men. The hymns describe a cumulative change in perspective possible for all men. The ultimate vision, the vision of Sapience, includes all that has gone before it in the hymns. Sapience governs the heavens and the earth. She is the pattern, Perfect Beauty, which the Great Workmaster used to frame the created universe. She is the most perfect reflection of the beauty of God the Trinity, and it is her influence in the universe by which men come to know what they can of God.

The first chapter of this study gives support to the idea of a psychological continuity in the hymns by showing how Spenser's awareness of the nature of the language of myth pervades the hymns. Shifting levels of meaning embraced by a single symbol (in myth and in poetry, which Spenser equated with myth), the whole moving cosmos linked by love, the ease with which each of the central figures of the hymns becomes absorbed by the next --all of these are in harmony with the kind of changes the lover undergoes.

The second chapter deals with the nature of love in the first two hymns and the question of how the love of beauty can lead man to perceive the divine in himself and in the universe around him. The roles of Cupid as the central figure in the first hymn, and of Venus as the central figure in the second hymn are examined. Cupid and Venus are seen as symbolic of the Divinity at work within the lover and the beloved. They are projections of the inner urges of lover and beloved toward physical and spiritual marriage, with all the trials which conventionally precede such a union. The love described in the first two hymns is shown to be a love of the eternal insofar as divine beauty is manifest in the created universe. The divine is the life force of the mortal in these hymns, and man's discovery of the divine present in the mortal prepares him for further expansion toward the divine.

The third chapter deals with the expansion of man's consciousness described in the final two hymns. Man learns to love Christ in the third hymn and, by extension, has learned to love all men. In the fourth hymn man is granted a vision of Sapience, the God Christ,⁵ by which his love expands to the cosmos and toward God the Trinity. Even though man's vision is of the eternal, and even though man becomes like what he perceives and loves and so becomes more perfect, his visions are limited by his mortality.

⁵Ibid., pp. 164-167.

This mortality is underscored by the way his visions are described and by his initial reactions to all that he has previously loved when confronted with a newer, clearer vision of the eternal. Man's mortality is also emphasized by those stanzas in which the poet-as-narrator reveals his own falling short of the ideal. At the end of the first, second and fourth hymns, for example, the poet exhibits his personal distance from the ideal and thus brings the reader abruptly into the world of men after a moment in infinity.

Chapter IV deals with the role of the dramatic speaker in the hymns. The speaker does not fully understand the matters he takes up in the hymns except at those times when he speaks directly to his readers. He has gathered together current notions of love and beauty in each hymn, but he does not demonstrate active belief in what he has said until he is urging others to follow his example that they may see what he sees. Much of each hymn, while true, does not characterize the poet's own stage of development at that time.

Chapter V introduces evidence from the Fairy Queen to support a psychological continuity in the hymns. Book I, the legend of the Red Cross Knight or of holiness, is used to show a similarity between the continuous growth of the Knight's consciousness and the psychological development of the lover in the Four Hymns. Dame Nature in her speech at the end of the Mutability Cantos defines change as an expansion and perfection of that which changes. Such

a definition of change is consistent with psychological change in Book I and in the Four Hymns. It is by the changes the knight and lover undergo that they become more perfectly themselves and, therefore, more perfectly like God.

There are several references to Augustine's treatise On the Trinity made in this study, especially with regard to Spenser's use of the images man sees of his beloved, of Christ and of Sapience. Raymond Klibansky in The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition During the Middle Ages⁶ points out that Augustine was a key figure in the continuation of the Latin Platonic tradition largely by way of the works of such people as Seneca and the Latin translations of Plotinus and Porphyry. Spenser makes specific reference to Plato in the hymns (H.H.B. st. 12)⁷ and several critics have shown evidence of Platonic elements in the hymns, especially in the first two. I accept Ellrodt's conclusion that Spenser was first a Christian in the hymns, and that the Platonic elements which do occur in the hymns are secondary and are derived largely from the diffused Platonic

⁶London, 1950, p. 23.

⁷Edmund Spenser, The Four Hymns, in The Shepherd's Calendar and Other Poems (Everyman ed.), London, 1962. In subsequent references the hymns shall be abbreviated as follows: "Hymn in Honour of Love" (H.L.), "Hymn in Honour of Beauty" (H.B.), "Hymn of Heavenly Love" (H.H.L.), "Hymn of Heavenly Beauty" (H.H.B.).

traditions present in the Renaissance.⁸ Since I accept Ellrodt's relegation of Spenser's Platonism in the hymns to a place of secondary importance, there is little mention of Platonism in this study.

⁸Ellrodt, pp. 154 and 161. C.S. Lewis, p. 107.

MYTHOLOGY IN THE FOUR HYMNS

Fundamental to a study of the psychological continuity of the Four Hymns is some understanding of Spenser's use of mythology in the hymns. As important as his actual use of mythological characters is his general awareness of the function of the language of myth evidenced in the hymns. Mythology conveys poetic truths, psychological truths found in the paradox, change, and conflict which characterize life forces in the universe. The language of myth, to encompass more than literal meaning, operates metaphorically. It offers a vocabulary which expands by association to include seemingly contradictory extremes.

As Henry G. Lotspeich stresses in his Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser,¹ Spenser was inclined by his poetic sensibilities and by the commentators on mythology, especially Boccaccio and Natalis Comes, to interpret mythology and poetry morally and allegorically. Consistent with his equation of myth and poetry, and with his understanding of myth as having a variety of interpretations at once, is Spenser's own eclectic temperament. He tended to associate ideas in a positive fashion rather than to emphasize distinctions. This tendency gave him a

¹2nd ed. (New York, 1965), pp. 14, 16, and 22.

certain fluidity of thinking which was quite in harmony with the constantly shifting levels of meaning one finds in his poetry. No one philosophical, mythological, psychological or theological theory or bit of dogma is used to the exclusion of the others. Rather, all sorts of interpretations become relevant to each theory or symbol he uses.

The language of myth as Spenser understood it is entirely suitable to his purpose in the Four Hymns. It gives the reader insight into his use of certain theories, for example, the heavenly origin of souls. Such a theory is to be taken metaphorically. On the surface, it is a factual explanation of why man's soul is so overwhelmed by whatever beauty it perceives in this world. Anything which reminds the soul of the beauty it once beheld becomes the object of man's desire. The soul's origin with Perfect Beauty is structurally useful in the hymns. The theory is also a subtle indication of the whole nature of the soul's intuition. The phenomenon of man intuiting the existence of love and beauty still beyond his capacity to perceive and know is alluded to in this way.

There are many other consequences of Spenser's awareness of the function of the language of myth in the Four Hymns. The rich suggestiveness of the theories and symbols he uses precludes his finding tenable any one, limited stand. For example, he necessarily avoids so abstracting human love that it becomes bodiless. He would agree

with Speroni's statement in the Dialoghi di Amore that the love which is proper to man rightly includes the body as well as the intellect.

The senses are a ladder and a path to the reason; whence whoever is so foolish in love that he takes no care of their respective appetites, but like a pure intelligence with no body tries simply to satisfy the mind alone, may be said to resemble the person who, gulping down some food without touching it or chewing it, grows weaker rather than gains nourishment.²

Spenser also avoids the other extreme which would allow love to degenerate into a mannered quest for the satisfaction of merely sensual desire. To love a woman who is beautiful in body and in soul, the lover described in the hymns must become ethically disciplined. The intense pleasure which the lover may share with his beloved cannot exist unless the lover's understanding has begun to penetrate to the divine principle of being present in her and in himself. He must become worthy of his beloved, not by performing polite services for her according to some courtly code, but through a self-discipline which comes from a growing appreciation of her beauty and of his own. The discipline of love as it relates to the lover's consciousness will be examined more closely in chapter II of this study.

That Spenser avoids the concept of the divinity as only transcendent above His creation is also compatible

²Quoted by John C. Nelson, Renaissance Theory of Love, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963), p. 128.

with his use of the language of myth. God in the hymns is both transcendent and immanent. He is the Great Workmaster, the Glad Creator, whose presence can be felt throughout the particulars of the universe--especially within man himself. The presence of God in His creation can be seen through any of the four hymns, from the ordering of the elements and the subduing of men's minds (H.L. sts. 7, 12, 13) by the God of Love in the first hymn, to the will of Sapience the God-Christ, described in the fourth hymn as governing both heaven and earth (H.H.B. st. 29). God is also transcendent, utterly beyond His creation, eternal, immutable. As the Divine Eternal Majesty in the fourth hymn, God grants permission to those who are worthy to see the radiant beauty of Sapience. God Himself is not seen by man or even by angels (H.H.B. st. 17). Rather, He is seen by man only in "th' image of his grace" (st. 17) either in the vision of the beauty of Sapience or in the apprehension by man of His attributes at work in the world: Mercy, Eternity, Righteousness and the Light of Truth (sts. 22-25).

The two aspects of the Divinity, immanence and transcendence, give two supports to the psychological development of man in Spenser's hymns. First, man feels the necessity to transcend himself, to fulfill his potential to become himself by becoming like God. The desire to expand in love is prompted by the soul's intuition of beauty beyond what it knows, and can only be sated in the infinite.

The promptings of the soul's intuition might also be viewed, incidentally, as a manifestation of God's grace. Second, man's intense love of particular objects along the path which rises to infinity is justified. Man loves because the objects of his love to some degree embody Perfect Beauty. Beauty in body and spirit is a manifestation of the Glad Creator in His universe, and is therefore worthy of man's love. The influence of Spenser's understanding of myth and his natural elasticity of thinking is manifest in the enormous range of being open to man in the image of God's Being.

There is much in Spenser's use of mythology in the first two hymns which is intended to take on dimensions suggested by history. The order of the central figures of the hymns, Cupid in the first, Venus in the second, Christ in the third and Sapience in the fourth, brings to mind the general development taken by Western civilization in its movement from the Pagan to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Speculation on the extent to which the Pagan world prefigured of divine necessity the Christian one would be appropriate to the hymns. For example, it is possible that the love symbolized by Cupid and Venus necessarily precede the love symbolized by Christ and Sapience relative to man's growing awareness of the divine.³ The immanence and

³For the view that various data and facts of history appear as signs and symbols which are symptomatic of a deeper understanding of the origin, growth, and change of

transcendence of both Cupid and Venus as portrayed in the first two hymns can be seen as a necessary prelude to man's recognition of Christ and of the one God in the final two hymns.

The central figures in the hymns do represent successive stages in man's apprehension of love, a point which will be examined in chapters II, III and IV of this study. Each of these figures is a part of a continuous process by which man becomes more perfect, more like God. As Enid Welsford implies in Spenser: Fowre Hymnes, Epithalamion, Ficino's cosmology is relevant in illuminating the kind of close association among these central figures which Spenser achieves.

Each order of Being imparts, without loss to itself, something of its properties to the order below it, and each order of Being changes from chaos to cosmos by turning in love to the order above it. So Love or Eros is the great power which animates, orders and beautifies the whole universe.⁴

This fluid cosmology within which all being is linked by love serves Spenser well in the Four Hymns since he never completely isolates from one another the experiences in love or the central figures he portrays in the hymns. For example, although the poet-speaker of the first two hymns does not yet see Cupid and Venus as either projections of his own psyche or extensions of the one God, he has

consciousness, see Frederick Heibel, The Gospel of Hellas (New York, 1949).

⁴Quoted by Welsford, New York, 1967, p. 20.

achieved a large enough perspective by the end of the fourth hymn to do so.

Lotspeich says that Spenser shows himself to be completely at home with Ovid's technique of metamorphosis, and cites Arachne's metamorphosis in "Mulepotmos" and that of Astery in the same poem.⁵ The former is taken from Ovid, the latter is Spenser's own creation. In any use of this technique a large, poetic awareness of the changes and developments which are inherent in the life force is implied. Important here is the use of parallel ideas and character traits within the hymns which will help reveal the psychological development of the poet-speaker.

The speaker's perspective expands in the hymns. What he sees in the first hymn is all he can see at that time. What he sees in the second hymn adds dimension to the matters of the first hymn. The third hymn evidences greater perspective still, and the fourth hymn reveals an even larger perspective than the third. Since Spenser tends to assemble different and often conflicting ideas under one mythological symbol (either Cupid or Venus, for example),⁶ correspondence among the interpretations of his symbols is almost bound to occur. In the hymns these similarities are deliberate. Cupid becomes Venus becomes Christ becomes Sapience in the mind of the poet-speaker. Although the speaker in the hymns at first rejects all that

⁵Lotspeich, pp. 11-12. ⁶Ibid., p. 26.

has gone before in favor of the newest object of his love, what has gone before is eventually, implicitly, drawn into the new and larger perspective. Also, the relationship between Cupid and Venus foreshadows the relationship between Christ and Sapience. It was mentioned above that this foreshadowing may be of historical significance. In any case, there is a parallel between Cupid as pre-existing before the world was made, begotten of Plenty and Penury, and the Son of God existing before creation, begotten of God the All. The account of Cupid's birth in the "Hymn to Love" is especially interesting, and offers intriguing similarities to the birth of Christ. In the first hymn Spenser mixes the idea of Cupid born "without syre" of Venus "both male and female"--an account which he uses in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again"--with the idea of Cupid's birth from Plenty and Penury from Plato's Symposium. He combines these accounts with the idea of Cupid being the eldest of all the gods, an idea in the Symposium which follows Hesiod's Theogony, and the youngest of the gods, another borrowing from the Symposium. As Lotspeich points out, Natalis Comes also combines these same ideas in his Mythologiae,⁷ with which Spenser was certainly familiar. Spenser's account of the birth of Christ in the third hymn suggests that his account of Cupid's origins was intended to prefigure it.

⁷Ibid., pp. 48-49.

That High Eternal Power, which now doth move
In all these things, moved in itself by love.

It loved itself, because itself was fair;
(For fair is loved) and of itself begot,
Like to itself his eldest son and heir,

H.H.L. sts. 4-5

The male and female Venus becomes the High Eternal Power.

The eldest of the gods becomes the eldest son and heir.

The youngest of the gods becomes Christ as he entered the
world of men.

Till that great Lord of Love, which him at first
Made of mere love, and after liked well,
Seeing him lie like creature long accurst
In that deep horror of despaired hell,
Him, wretch, in dole would let no longer dwell,
But cast out of that bondage to redeem,
And pay the price, all were his debt extreme.

Out of the bosom of eternal blis,
In which he reigned with his glorious Sire,
He down descended, like a most demiss
And abject thrall, in flesh's frail attire

.

H.H.L. sts. 19-20

So, taking flesh of sacred virgin's womb,
For man's dear sake he did a man become.

H.H.L. st. 21

Not only the births but the actions of Cupid and Christ are
enough alike in the hymns to suggest that an understanding
of the nature of Cupid is a useful preparation for the per-
sonal confrontation with Christ. Spenser describes Cupid
emerging from Chaos on "wings of his own heat" (st. 10),
putting the elements in order, and inspiring physical
passion in animals and, for a larger purpose, in man.
Christ descends from heaven of his own will to save man-
kind, inspiring love in man for Himself and toward other

men (H.H.L. sts. 19, 20, 27).

There are also strong similarities between Venus in the second hymn and Sapience in the fourth. In stanzas 4 through 10 of the second hymn Venus appears as "the divine Idea of Beauty," on the pattern of which God created the cosmos. In the same stanzas Venus is also the power which darts amorous desire to the soul--desire with which she tips her son's arrows (H.B. st. 9). As Lotspeich points out, the Italian Neo-Platonists were largely responsible for the mystical identification of Plato's Venus Urania with the Idea of Beauty and with the world of Ideas generally. In common with the Neo-Platonists and with Natalis Comes, Spenser adds the idea that Venus "is also the celestial influence emanating from the perfect pattern of the world, creating beauty in earthly forms" (H.B. sts. 7-9).⁸ Prompted by the Neo-Platonists, later writers saw to it that the platonic Urania, the philosophical Muse concerned with divine thought, became the Christian Muse Urania. A good example of the concept of the Christian Urania common in Spenser's day can be found in Du Bartas' Weeks and Works translated by Joshua Sylvester in 1605.⁹ She has lost by this time all her pagan elements to be exclusively the Christian Muse, aiding true poets in speaking of purely divine matters.

Urania the Muse of Astronomy had been taken over as the

⁸Lotspeich, pp. 25 and 116. ⁹Florida, 1965.

Christian Muse, and as Milton began the seventh book of Paradise Lost, his description echoed the associations that had grown up about her: not of nine muses, but heavenly born before the making of the earth. She conversed with Eternal Wisdom, her sister, and played with Wisdom in the presence of the Almighty Father who was pleased with her song.¹⁰

It is easy to see how Spenser's adroit combination of Pagan goddess and Christian Muse prefigures the portrait of Sapience given in the fourth of his hymns. Sapience is Perfect Beauty. She is God the Son, often characterized, in the Book of Wisdom of the Apocrypha, for example, as Beauty. She is the most perfect reflection of God's beauty and she governs heaven and earth (H.H.B. sts. 27-30). Her function in the cosmos is an extension of that attributed to Venus in the second hymn.

Both heaven and earth obey unto her will,
And all the creatures which they both contain:
For of her fullness which the world doth fill
They all partake, and do in state remain
As their great Maker did at first ordain,
Through observation of her high behest,
By which they first were made, and still increast.

H.H.B. st. 29

It is well to note also that there is a similarity between Cupid's ordering of the elements and inciting animals and man to procreate and the great Maker of the above stanza ordering all creatures to remain in state.

Generally speaking, Spenser's use of mythology helps evoke a sense of community which is made most explicit in the third hymn in the love of Christ. The same

¹⁰Lily B. Campbell, Divine Poetry and Drama in Sixteenth Century England (Cambridge, England, 1959), p. 1.

universality which applies to mythology applies as well to the hymns. The readers of the first two hymns can intuit a common bond with all human beings insofar as all men can love, love beauty, and suffer if they love. A sense of community with all men is the necessary consequence of the love of Christ, particularly when man has perceived the "Idea" of Christ (H.H.L. st. 41) which unfolds at the end of the third hymn. Once man has felt the very personal impact of Christ's sacrifice, which is dramatically realized in the third hymn, he is prepared to glimpse the meaning of that sacrifice for all men. He sees the divine beauty of that love.

The more man's perspective enlarges toward the infinite outside himself, the more his perspective penetrates to the infinite inside himself. Sapience governs the heavens and the earth (H.H.L. st. 28). Man's vision of Sapience is the clearest image of the eternal he can experience. The gift of a vision of Perfect Beauty is also an acknowledgement of man's newly integrated personality. He is at one with himself and with the universe. His entire person is ravished by the sight of Perfect Beauty of whom all other beauties partake. Not a face-to-face confrontation with God the Trinity, a confrontation which can only occur when man is wholly participant in infinity, this vision of Sapience penetrates at once to man's own essence and to the one principle of beauty present in the created

universe. A sense of community is unavoidable at this point since man feels an identity with the essential unity of the cosmos.

Spenser's understanding of the value of the language of myth is of primary importance in understanding the psychological continuity of the hymns. His attitude toward myth is easily supported by his affinity for the fluid cosmos of Ficino and other Italian Neo-Platonists and by his own proclivity for the positive association of varied ideas. Change, cosmos, the particular caught up in the universal--all these go far in helping the reader of the hymns to understand the psychological development of the poet-speaker.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LOVE IN THE FIRST TWO HYMNS

Augustine points out repeatedly in his On the Trinity that man's desire for infinity could not exist without some prior knowledge of infinity, since one does not desire what one is entirely ignorant of.¹ Man's initial knowledge of infinity must be awakened from within himself. Of primary importance to the growth of love in the first two hymns is man's desire for the eternal, for the perfectly beautiful. His desire for the eternal gives man the energy to reach out beyond himself, to expand his sympathies and thus expand himself. God in the hymns is transcendent and immanent and is still utterly Himself. Man in the hymns must expand his sympathies outside himself toward God in order to become himself. The explanation of the process by which man can expand to love outside himself and to love himself is begun in the first two of Spenser's Four Hymns.

In the hymns the universality of man's desire for perfect love and beauty presupposes two related ideas. The first is that of the origin of man's soul in infinity before the soul's incarnation. Although this idea is to be

¹The Basic Writings of St. Augustine, II, ed. Whitney J. Oates (New York, 1948), pp. 781-782.

taken as a metaphor for the soul's intuition of beauty beyond the beauty he knows, the theory is structurally useful even if taken at face value. Part of whatever knowledge man has of the infinite is knowledge possessed by his soul at birth. The second, and related, idea is the universal path by which man ascends to the infinite realm where his soul originated. The apprehension of beauty provides the way for all men to return to the infinite, because everything beautiful manifests Perfect Beauty. Like Ficino and Plotinus, Spenser says that all men love the beautiful, and the beautiful manifests Divinity or Perfect Beauty. All beauty kindles fierce desire in man because of the origin of his soul in the infinite, and because all beauty manifests Perfect Beauty. Man is rightly inspired by whatever beauty he is able to apprehend. He loves the beautiful, not because of some superficial proportion of colors or shapes, but because of the kinship his soul feels toward anything reminiscent of its origin. Perfect Beauty may be reflected in the proportion of shapes and colors of the body, but cannot be defined in terms of them.

In the first hymn Spenser speaks of the heavenly origin of man's soul and of the link between that origin and man's intense desire for what seems beautiful to him.

For having yet in his deducted sprite
 Some sparks remaining of that heavenly fire,
 He is enlumined with that goodly light,
 Unto like goodly semblant to aspire,
 Therefore in choice of love he doth desire

That seems on earth most heavenly to embrace,
That same is Beauty born of heavenly race.

For sure of all that in this mortal frame
Contained is, nought more divine doth seem
Or that resembleth more th' immortal flame
Of heavenly light, than Beauty's glorious beam.
What wonder then, if with such rage extreme
Frail men whose eyes seek heavenly things to see,
At sight thereof so much enravished be?

H.L. sts. 16-17

In the second hymn, Spenser tells of the pattern, Perfect Beauty, which the Great Workmaster used in creating the universe--a pattern of which all earthly things partake by divine influence. All men manifest and love Perfect Beauty to some degree.

That wondrous pattern, wheresoe'er it be,
Whether in earth laid up in secret store,
Or else in heaven that no man may it see
With sinful eyes, for fear it to deflore,
Is Perfect Beauty which all men adore;
Whose face and feature doth so much excel
All mortal sense, that none the same may tell.

Thereof as every earthly thing partakes
Or more or less, by influence divine

.

H.B. sts. 6-7

Also in the second hymn, Spenser restates the relationship between the eternal origin of the soul, "the which derived was/At first, out of that great immortal Sprite,/by whom all live to love" (H.B. st. 16), and the nature of real beauty which will not decay like an "outward show of things that only seem" (H.B. st. 13) but will return to its origin, for "it is heavenly born and cannot die" (H.B. st. 15).

An intense love of beauty provides a path returning to the Perfect Beauty which man's soul once beheld, because

man's desire, once kindled, can only be sated in the infinite. Spenser makes it clear in the first hymn that man's desire will not rest in anything but Perfect Beauty.

For nought may quench his infinite desire
Once kindled through that first conceived fire.

H.L. st. 29

The compelling desire to see and love Perfect Beauty aids man in transcending himself. If a man's immediate goal is the love of a particular woman, it is because she represents Perfect Beauty to his eyes. She is an example of the effect of divine influence in the mortal realm, and cannot be the final end of man's quest for ideal love and beauty.

The easiest extremes of desire in the sense that neither requires rigorous self-discipline, are pure lust and the desire for the infinite which has no connection with the created universe. The former is entirely sensual, and the latter pretends to be entirely spiritual. Between these extremes is human love which requires a harmony between body and spirit which is far more difficult for man to attain than either lust or bodiless love. Right love between a man and a woman requires the integration of body and mind. In the first two of Spenser's Four Hymns, the sphere of competence of Cupid and Venus is the establishment of harmony between body and soul within man, and between man and woman. Spenser shows in these hymns that earthly love is a love of infinite beauty, a love of the divine. The influence of Cupid and Venus, therefore, is

not to be confined to the merely terrestrial. Instead, the figures of Cupid and Venus are symbolically necessary to the whole rise of man's consciousness and his return to infinity. Cupid and Venus in the hymns are taken from cultural history to explain how man is able to become ethically disciplined and why such a discipline is necessary. In the first two hymns, man sees Cupid and Venus as responsible for his trials and successes in love and for the intensity of his desire. Spenser does not show them to be responsible for man's capacity to be inspired by beauty, but shows them governing the intensity of man's desire for a particular woman. It is through the torments and blisses man thinks they impose that he becomes able to define earthly beauty. Whether or not man at that stage in his development is aware of the larger framework toward which his discoveries are leading him, the reader of these hymns is invited to be.

The positions of Cupid and Venus in the universe mirror man's in the first two hymns. Love is defined by Socrates in Plato's Symposium as a spirit which mediates between the divine and the mortal. Cupid and Venus each mediate between the divine and men in the sense that they lead men to a better understanding of the divine within and beyond themselves. They help man become aware of his own worth as a human being and of the infinite nature of love and beauty. The realms of Cupid and Venus in the hymns

symbolize stages in man's expansion toward infinity, and the figures themselves are projections of man's own psychological states. Initially, the poet-speaker sees Cupid as responsible for his success or failure with the lady. It is only later in the hymns that the poet becomes more aware of the Cupid in himself. In the second hymn the poet sees Venus as his only hope for success with his suit. He gains spiritual insight in the second hymn, in spite of losing his suit to the lady, which he does not recognize until the third hymn. The poet's spiritual development becomes the only means available to him to fulfill his love for a woman. The same spiritual development is the natural consequence of his apprehension of his own worth relative to the divinity of his beloved. The lover and beloved each contain both Cupid and Venus within themselves.

In the first hymn, "A Hymn in Honor of Love," man grasps the significance of Cupid, as that God of Love has traditionally appeared with certain specific attributes. Cupid reigns in the mind and in the body. He is the victor of gods and the subduer of mankind. His might also extends over the animals.

Great God of Might, that reignest in the mind,
 And all the body to thy 'hest dost frame,
 Victor of gods, subduer of mankind,
 That dost the lions and fell tigers tame,
 Making their cruel rage thy scornful game,
 And in their roaring taking great delight;
 Who can express the glory of thy might?

H.L. st. 7

Cupid's influence stretches over all of nature and beyond to the very gods. His power over elements maintains their proper order and incites them to increase (st. 14). He inspires the urge to procreate in animals (st. 15). Man's desire for progeny springs from man's desire to regain the infinity which his soul possessed before its incarnation. Although not responsible for man's innate desire for infinity, Cupid is aware of it and uses it to lead man toward the divine. Spenser describes man's desire for the eternal in terms of a vestigial heavenly fire (st. 16) which remains in man's soul after the soul's incarnation and causes him to desire what seems beautiful to him. Cupid expands man's rapture at the sight of beauty, so that man's whole body is ravished by the flame.

Which well perceiving, that imperious boy
 Doth therewith tip his sharp empois'ned darts
 Which glancing through the eyes with countenance coy
 Rest not till they have pierced the trembling hearts,
 And kindled flame in all their inner parts,
 Which sucks the blood and drinketh up the life
 Of careful wretches with consuming grief.

H.L. st. 18

Stanzas 18 through 20 portray the conventional God of Love, familiar since Plato's Symposium and operating in a manner repeated often in the love treatises of the Italian Renaissance as well as in the sonnets of Petrarch. Love enters through the eyes and causes intense suffering to the lover. Here also is the Phaedrus tradition which describes man as transcending himself in a kind of ecstasy, prompted

by the sight of the beautiful which reminds the soul of the Perfect Beauty it once beheld. This transcending of self, when all thoughts converge on the image of the beloved which burns in the mind, and all ordinary considerations are set aside, is not the disintegration of self it might seem to be. Instead it is part of the process by which man becomes newly conscious of himself as well. He becomes like the object he loves.

The question is raised in stanzas 22 and 23 of why this seemingly arbitrary God of Love, afflicting all men with the cruel torments of his "furious fervour," deserves the praises contained in this first hymn. The answer is found in the refinement which man undergoes as he remains steadfast in his love through the suffering he thinks Cupid inflicts. Quite simply, the more difficult the prize is to win, the more esteemed it will be when won (st. 24). The purer passion which survives the tests imposed by Cupid is at once more worthy of love and a superior love. This passion is a far cry from leathly Lust (st. 26), for example, who lacks the courage to rise above his dunghill thoughts. Man's mind is refined by his passion and forms a clearer image of the beloved, one which more nearly resembles the Perfect Beauty man's soul once beheld (st. 28). Yet the new and clearer image is not sufficient to quench his desire, for it only "seems in it all blisses to contain" (st. 30).

In stanzas 31 and following, man is gloriously blind to everything but how he may win the affections of his beloved. He is ready to attempt heroic deeds like those of Leander, Aeneas, Achilles and Orpheus (st. 34), and Cupid sees to it that man remains unaware of the dangers involved in such deeds. Once again, however, Cupid puts man into torment. No sooner does man find "favour to his will" than he succumbs to the pains of envy, rumor, doubt, and worst of all, jealousy (st. 39). Only after these sufferings, each of which tests the quality of man's passion and prods him into a real appreciation of love, does Cupid allow man to delight in the love of his beloved.

By these, O Love! thou dost thy entrance make
 Unto thy heaven, and dost the more endear
 Thy pleasures unto those which them partake,
 As after storms, when clouds begin to clear,
 The sun more bright and glorious doth appear;
 So thou thy folk through pains of purgatory
 Dost bear unto thy bliss, and heaven's glory.

H.L. st. 40

The following stanzas are a beautiful picture of man who has become more whole, brought to joy and bliss with one whose divinity is now understood to be equalled by his own. The reward of Pleasure² has been well earned because man has become more perfectly himself and more like God in the winning of it. Unlike loathly Lust who hasn't

²Note that Pleasure is the daughter of Cupid and Psyche. Psyche is traditionally interpreted in mythology as the human soul. Also, she can only fulfill her love relationship with Cupid after she has completed the tasks imposed on her by Venus and after the gods have made her immortal.

the courage to become anything but the coward he already and most effortlessly is, man in this hymn has become able to love and worthy of love, fulfilling instead of refusing to acknowledge the potential he was created to fulfill.

There thou them placest in a paradise
Of all delight and joyous happy rest,
Where they do feed on nectar heavenly-wise,
With Hercules and Hebe, and the rest
Of Venus' darlings, through her bounty blest;
And lie like gods in ivory beds arrayed,
With rose and lilies over them displayed.

There with thy daughter Pleasure they do play
Their hurtless sports, without rebuke or blame,
And in her snowy bosom boldly lay
Their quiet heads devoid of guilty shame;
After full joyance of their gentle game;
Then her they crown their goddess and their queen,
And deck with flowers thy alters well beseen.

H.L. sts. 41-42

One interesting aspect of Cupid's role in the first hymn, is that he protects the beloved from the unworthy. Cupid is a representative for the lady insofar as he imposes disciplines on the lover which the lady herself requires of him. Cupid, the lady, and man's own soul combine as one force to help the lover become more completely himself. The refined lover now better reflects the divine in himself and in his beloved. He has become like the object of his love. In praising Cupid, man praises the Creator, that "great immortal Sprite,/By whom all live to love" (H.B. st. 16), the infinite beauty which is the origin of souls. In praising Cupid man also praises both the beloved and himself, since each manifests Divinity, and each is

actually responsible for the fulfillment of earthly love.

This first hymn, in honor of love, is a sketch of man's discovery of the divine manifested in the created universe. The infinite desire kindled by this discovery, can only be sated in Perfect Beauty, the divine infinity. The hand of Cupid is the hand of the Glad Creator, preparing the way for all men to understand the imperfections and the divinity of the human condition. Love, the gift of God, enables man to forget his fears in the heroic reach for the divine, for the truly beautiful. The fear of being unworthy, in the face of the divinity of the beloved, of the self, and of the universe, is sinful because disabling. In fear, man refuses to try to become the man he was created to become. Love can overcome the fear of being unworthy. In love man becomes conscious of the refinements of himself. He becomes more worthy of love and more able to love as his passion refines away his cowardly fears and the safety of the dunghill thoughts which keep loathly Lust lying in the earth like a moldwarp. This hymn in honor of love depicts man changing from within, fulfilling the potential to love with which he was created, overcoming obstacles set in the path of his desire by the same divine hand which gave him the potential power to overcome them.

The role of Venus in the second hymn, "The Hymn in Honor of Beauty," adds dimension to the role of Cupid in the first hymn. The complex relationship between the

origin of man's soul and the intense desire he has for whatever seems beautiful to him, is worked out in greater detail in this hymn. Venus, Queen of Beauty, is the "Mother of love" (st. 13). Without Venus, nothing on earth would seem beautiful to man, and he would never be led into the discovery and love of real beauty. She is a symbolic figure, used in the hymns to represent the divinity at work in the universe, especially within the lover and beloved.

This world's great Workmaster used Perfect Beauty as a pattern for his creation (H.B. sts. 5-6). An earthly object appears more beautiful the more it partakes of Perfect Beauty. It is the celestial power of Perfect Beauty which refines whatever surrounds it, making the outer shapes and colors of bodies clearer reflections of the inner beauty they contain.

Thereof as every earthly thing partakes
 Or more or less by influence divine,
 So it more fair accordingly it makes,
 And the gross matter of this earthly mine
 Which clotheth it, thereafter doth refine,
 Doing away the dross which dims the light
 Of that fair beam which therein is empight.

For, through infusion of celestial power,
 The duller earth it quick'neth with delight,
 And lifeiful spirits privily doth pour
 Through all the parts, that to the looker's sight
 They seem to please. . . .

H.B. sts. 7-8

Perfect Beauty which is infinite, is possessed to one degree or another by every earthly thing. It is a life force, quickening dull matter with its energy. Venus is

not responsible for the original presence of this lifeful beauty in the universe. Rather, it is within her sphere of competence to assist the spread of Beauty's influence throughout the body, that inner beauty may be discoverable by man. The final lines of stanza eight in the second hymn suggest that the governing of lifeful spirits is an aspect of Venus' divinity, her royal power.

That is thy sovereign might,
O Cyprian Queen! which flowing from the beam
Of thy bright star, thou into them dost stream.
H.B. st. 8

Venus, planet and goddess, sees to it that beauty as a life force streams throughout the body, adding grace and life to the body in accordance with its inner beauty. The pleasant grace and lively fire of the beloved kindle desire in the beholder.

That is the thing which giveth pleasant grace
To all things fair, that kindleth lively fire,
Light of thy lamp, which, shining in the face
Thence to the soul darts amorous desire,
And robs the hearts of these which it admire;
Therewith thou pointest thy son's pois'ned arrow,
That wounds the life, and wastes the inmost marrow.
H.B. st. 9

Venus is responsible for the attractiveness of the outer beauties man first becomes aware of, that through them man might discover real beauty. Cupid, augmenting the heavenly flame which man has always possessed, causes man's whole body to be ravished by the sight of the outer beauty of the beloved over which Venus has sway. Together, Cupid and Venus set the stage within and outside man for him to

discover the infinity of his soul's origin and the Perfect Beauty which his beloved and he manifest.

Venus' role is exactly like that of the human soul insofar as each can be seen to be responsible for the bodily reflection of inner beauty. This outer beauty cannot be the resting place of man's desire, as Spenser shows when he reiterates the standard arguments against colors and shapes as sufficient causes of beauty (H.B. sts. 10-20).³

In stanza 19, the beauty of the body is clearly stated to be caused by the soul. Since the soul makes the body according to its own purity, a beautiful body is indicative of a beautiful soul.

Therefore wherever that thou dost behold
A comely corpse, with beauty fair endued
Know this for certain, that the same doth hold
A beauteous soul, with fair conditions thewed,
Fit to receive the seed of virtue strewed.
For all that fair is, is by nature good;
That is a sign to know the gentle blood.

H.B. st. 20

There are, of course, regrettable exceptions to this rule, exceptions which Spenser cites in stanzas 21 through 25. The first exception occurs when a "gentle mind" is for some reason housed in an imperfect, even deformed, body. The second exception occurs when woman abuses her beauty and chooses to give herself to lust instead of to steadfast passion. The sum of the statements in these stanzas reveals that all souls are pure, incorruptible, and immortal.

³Pico's commentary on Benivieni's ode, Bruno, Ficino, and Castiglione are usually cited as precedents.

The body may inadequately reveal the beautiful soul within it, or a woman may use the beauty of her body in a way which refuses to acknowledge the beauty of her soul.

Venus may be understood to reveal the role of the soul in augmenting woman's beauty. She may also be understood as woman herself, since all women can augment their own beauty if they avoid that love which is mere lust, and choose instead a truer love.

But gentle love, that loyal is and true,
Will more illumine your resplendent ray,
And add more brightness to your goodly hue,
From light of his pure fire; which, by like way
Kindled of yours, your likeness doth display;
Like as two mirrors, by opposed reflection,
Do both express the face's first impression.

H.B. st. 26

Unlike the beauty which has been sacrificed to Lust (H.B. st. 23), the beauty which is given openly to purer love is made more radiant because it is recreated in the lover (st. 26). It is by rightly loving and being loved that the true beauty of woman is fulfilled. As in the first hymn, ethical restraints are self-imposed because of the inner recognition of one's own worth and the worth of the lover or beloved.

Venus' power as bestower of beautiful graces and lifeful spirits to the body links her with heavenly functions such as the powers attributed to the planet Venus (st. 16) which are shared by each soul, and the power of Perfect Beauty itself. But Venus' power is not fulfilled

unless Cupid's is as well. These two figures symbolize the changes which are actually effected by the lover and beloved in an evolving love relationship. The real beauty of woman goes undiscovered except in love. The purer passion of man cannot exist unless the beloved is aware of its potential existence and refuses to yield to lust. Both Cupid and Venus can be regarded as metaphors for the new personal awareness of love and beauty developed in the first two hymns. Cupid and Venus are essential parts of a whole fabric representing the rise of man's consciousness of the divine present in himself, his beloved and the universe. The discipline of earthly love prepares man for further expansion toward God, prepares him to become even more completely himself.

THE FULFILLMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FINAL TWO HYMNS

The "Hymn to Heavenly Love" and the "Hymn to Heavenly Beauty" are the final two of Spenser's Four Hymns. Love in these last two hymns is usually defined as divine love. In these hymns there are two sources of love. The first is involved with the concept of a transcendent but personal God who reaches out to man through the person of the man-Christ and through His grant to man of the vision of Sapience, the God-Christ. The second is man's growing love of God exemplified within these final hymns in his love for the man-Christ, the God-Christ, and God the Trinity. Since this study deals with a psychological continuity in the hymns, the latter love will be emphasized. These hymns describe a continuation of the growth of man's consciousness and love of the eternal begun in the first two hymns.

The psychological continuity of the hymns is in part determined by the nature of the visions in the heavenly hymns. Although love in the final two hymns may be characterized as spiritual or divine, it is as sensuous as it is spiritual because it is man's mind which puts together his experiences and in which vision is achieved. Man sees in terms of what he knows. His concept of the universe

tends to be in spatially architectural terms, for example, whether he imagines Cupid rising out of Chaos and subduing the warring elements as in the first of Spenser's hymns, or whether he envisions God, beyond time and space. Man's vision and love are anchored to the mortal world, even when man is granted vision of the eternal. He cannot envision divine beauty without first having discovered bodily and spiritual beauty in a woman. He cannot gain insight into the immediacy and timelessness of Christ's love for man without love of the man-Christ. He cannot gain insight into the eternal beauty, radiance and unity of Truth and Wisdom unless he has learned to love the God-Christ. Mortal man experiences insight into the eternal in terms of concrete, finite images. Even when he is in a state of ecstasy, beyond himself, man's vision is in terms of what he has known. The consummation of man's love for God and of God's love for man is wholly beyond man's vision because no sum of finite parts, in terms of which man sees, makes up a sufficient analogue to God the Trinity, the All. Man must wait until he partakes permanently of eternity to experience the ultimate fulfillment of the love he is promised by the wonder of the universe.

In the Four Hymns all love is a love of the eternal. The divine pervades the objects of love and the love relationships in the first two hymns. The divine is the object of man's love in the final two, specifically

Christian, hymns. In the hymns man is not ascending a ladder of hierarchical values leaving all he has known behind at each new vision. He is expanding his sympathies to encompass more and more of the cosmos. He is like a man growing older every year, learning more each year, remaining the same person yet not the same. He is becoming himself.

In the Divine Comedy Dante ultimately subordinates reason to revelation. Virgil accompanies Dante in his journey through hell and purgatory giving him strength of reason and insight, helping him to regain the Earthly Paradise which he was created to enjoy. Although Virgil acts at the request of Beatrice, it is not until Beatrice herself accompanies Dante that Dante is initiated into revealed truths. Marsilio Ficino, the fifteenth-century Florentine philosopher, "abandons the subordination of philosophy to religion as it was upheld in the Middle Ages."¹ Since philosophy had been generally defined as the love and study of truth and wisdom, and since truth and wisdom are God alone, true religion and true philosophy are equals. Ficino sees man's states of ecstasy to be caused not by the passion for a lady, but by an heroic passion for divine knowledge.² Spenser in the Four Hymns shows that

¹Paul Oskar Kristeller, The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, 2nd ed. (Gloucester, Mass., 1964), pp. 322-323.

²Nelson, p. 216.

earthly love must encompass a love of the eternal beauties present in the lover and in the beloved. He also shows that the desires quickened in the growing love relationship can only be sated in the eternal. Spenser does not, however, substitute a passion for divine knowledge for the passion which can exist between man and woman. Rather, the two are combined, each necessary to the love relationship. Although Ficino posits the essential equality between philosophy and religion, he is most reluctant to include the entire relationship between man and woman in an approach to God. Spenser carries Ficino's thinking to its logical conclusion in his Four Hymns by showing all love to be part of man's expansion toward the infinite, and all of man's glimpses of the eternal to be intimately linked with man's mortal nature.

The first two hymns describe what could be called a religious experience culminating in man's initial consciousness of the eternal present in himself, in his beloved, and at work in the universe in ways he attributes to Cupid and Venus. The final two hymns are extensions of the first two. In the last hymns man becomes conscious of a personal, specifically Christian God in the universe. Not merely ultimate Creator and Destiny of man, God is extended in the universe as man learns to love the man-Christ and then the God-Christ. Urged by the poet in the third hymn each man recreates the relationship the man-Christ once

established with him in history. His awareness of Christ is in immediate terms, initiated by the emphasis the poet gives to the pain and suffering which Christ underwent for man's salvation. These terms, familiar through the writings of the mystics,³ extend man's already refined sensuous perception, recreating Christ's sacrifice as each man feels himself in Christ's place. Stanzas 36 and 37 of the third hymn evidence this language of the mystics which enables man to identify with Christ's suffering, then to grasp the meaning of Christ's incarnation.

Then let thy flinty heart, that feels no pain,
 Empierced be with pitiful remorse,
 And let thy bowels bleed in every vein,
 At sight of his most sacred heavenly corse,
 So torn and mangled with malicious force;
 And let thy soul, whose sins his sorrows wrought,
 Melt into tears, and groan in grieved thought.

With sense whereof, whilst so thy softened spirit
 Is inly toucht, and humbled with meek zeal
 Through meditation of his endless merit,
 Lift up thy mind to th' Author of thy weal,
 And to his sovereign mercy, do appeal;
 Learn him to love that loved thee so dear,
 And in thy brest his blessed image bear.

Man must expand to the love of Christ in terms of the suffering he so concretely imagines. The vision of Christ must be reached in terms of the concrete, the finite.

The identification with Christ's suffering and the ensuing love of Him described in stanzas 3 through 41, have their counterpart in the first hymn in the conventional

³For example, Richard Rolle, "Meditations on the Passion" in Medieval English Verse and Prose, ed. Roger S. Loomis and Rudolph Willard (New York, 1948), pp. 115-118.

torments of the lover and his emergence from those torments, his love refined. Not merely a parallel drawn for the sake of the structure of the Four Hymns, the analogy between the first and third hymns suggests that the suffering and love in one is a preparation for the expansion of man's sympathies to the suffering and love in the other. The utter concentration of thought on the desired object to the exclusion of all other considerations is, in each instance, a sincere and overwhelming attitude of man. His whole being can be caught up outside himself, whether in love of woman or Christ, and his spirit is refined in the process. Man's ecstasy in each case is caused by his love of the particular object and by his new glimpse of the divine. Spenser describes the thoughts of the man who loves Christ in much the way he described the thoughts of the man who loved woman. When man first perceives the real beauty of his beloved in the first hymn, and holds an image of that beauty in his mind, he is inspired to win the love of the woman herself.

Thereon his mind affixed wholly is,
 Ne thinks on aught but how it to attain;
 That seems in it all blisses to contain,
 In sight whereof all other bliss seems vain:
 Thrice happy man! might he the same possess,
 He feigns himself, and doth his fortune bless.

H.L. st. 30

When man first holds Christ's image in his heart and loves
 Him he again feels that "all other bliss seems vain."

Thenceforth all world's desire will in thee die,
 And all earth's glory, on which men do gaze,

Seem dirt and dross in thy pure-sighted eye,
Compared to that celestial beauty's blaze,
 Whose glorious beams all fleshly sense doth daze,
 With admiration of their passing light
 Blinding the eyes, and lumining the sprite.
 H.H.L. st. 40

To understand just what kind of expansion is taking place in man's awareness in the hymns, a glance at Augustine's idea of love as a reflection of the Trinity is helpful.⁴ Augustine sees man's spirit as refined through love. There is a hierarchy of objects of man's love, beginning with his love of a woman. The hierarchy culminates in man's love of God. Augustine often repeats Paul's statement that man sees now through a glass as in an enigma, and then face to face.⁵ Augustine regards each love relationship, with woman, with one's own mind, with another's soul, with Christ, and ultimately with God, as part of a progression of reflections or images of God the Trinity. This progression moves from the most to the least obscure image. The clearest image man will have of God while a mortal being is still seen "through a glass" (H.H.B. st. 17) and man must partake wholly of immortality to be granted a face-to-face confrontation with God. In Augustine's On the Trinity man's ascent from most to least obscure image is also a process by which man leaves behind bodily considerations. In Spenser's hymns man gets a good deal of spiritual

⁴Augustine, p. 803.

⁵I Cor. 3:18 and I Cor. 13:12.

exercise, but not for the purpose of trying to become a completely spiritual creature. He is to become more perfect in thought and in act.

If, in the hymns, man's consciousness is rising to a love of the eternal, and if the consummation of his love must occur in eternity as a face-to-face confrontation with God, then the question persists of whether the development of man's consciousness is a process involving his withdrawal from the sensual world. The Phaedrus tradition clearly evidenced in the Four Hymns shows man to be transported in ecstasy when he perceives beauty because his soul is reminded of the perfect beauty it once beheld. The notion that man becomes like what he loves,⁶ combined with the use of the Phaedrus tradition in Spenser's hymns, would suggest that man in these hymns is to remove himself from the fleshly. It would be well to examine the following stanzas in regard to this matter, the first from the end of the third hymn when man has just gained the image of Christ in his heart, the second and third from the beginning of the fourth hymn in which the poet explains why he wants the strength to write of heavenly sights.

With all thy heart, with all thy soul and mind,
 Thou must him love, and his behests embrace;
All other loves, with which the world doth blind
Weak fancies, and stir up affections base,
Thou must renounce and utterly displace,
And give thyself unto him full and free,

⁶Augustine, p. 842. "We are transformed into the same image" (II Cor. 3:17).

That full and freely gave himself to thee.

H.H.L. st. 38

That with the glory of so goodly sight
 The hearts of men, which fondly here admire
 Fair seeming shews, and feed on vain delight,
Transported with celestial desire
Of those fair forms, may lift themselves up higher,
And learn to love, with zealous humble duty,
 Th' eternal fountain of that heavenly beauty.

Beginning then below, with th' easy view
 Of this base world, subject to fleshly eye,
 From thence to mount aloft, by order due,
 To contemplation of th' immortal sky;
 Of the sore falcon so I learn to fly,
 That flags awhile her fluttering wings beneath,
 Till she herself for stronger flight can breathe.

H.H.B. sts. 3-4

Each of these three stanzas urges man to rise to a new and higher level in love. Yet when a withdrawal from what has gone before is suggested, it is always in terms relative to the preceding objects of man's desire. The love of Christ offers a clearer vision of Perfect Beauty than did the love of a woman. This clearer vision prompts man to wonder why he didn't see with such clarity earlier, and to call his concentration on earlier objects sinful since they seem to him to have taken his attention away from what he ought to have seen. Yet in the second of the stanzas quoted above, the poet implies that a gradual flight aloft is required, beginning with the world at hand. Initially, the love of Christ makes the love of woman pale by comparison and man thinks that the love of woman is unworthy. Actually, he would not have been able to love Christ had he not become ethically disciplined in his love for woman, had he not

seen the divine present in himself and in his beloved. Man needs to "mount aloft, by order due." It is for this reason that Spenser draws such a clear parallel between love in the first and third hymns. There is no real suggestion that man leave behind what he has known for contemplative heights except temporarily, in order to ascend to these heights at all. Man is to include his heavenly insights in himself, to be governed by them while in the world of men.

There are similarities in the treatments of the love of woman and of Christ, but the latter is more perfect. While the love of Christ is more perfect, man in the hymns is not merely ascending from fleshly to spiritual responses. The point is rather that man's vision expands from lesser to greater clarity. His being expands toward Perfect Beauty in love. Man continues to love all that he has loved, albeit with greater understanding. Augustine argues that the purest vision is of the least fleshly object. The "Idea" of Christ's glory which man has at the end of the third hymn is an idea, but it cannot be grasped without a sensuous appreciation of Christ's suffering, any more than the joy of the love of woman can be attained without an appreciation of her spiritual beauty. Since man's sensual faculties are necessary to his apprehension of Perfect Beauty as it is manifested on earth in woman and in the man-Christ, perhaps the vision of Sapience in the fourth hymn will provide a clue as to whether Spenser

intends that the physical nature of man be weaned away from man in his search to regain Perfect Beauty.

The vision of Sapience is granted by God the Trinity to those who are worthy. Sapience is seen sitting in the lap of God reigning over the heavens and the earth. That she is the God-Christ has been adequately supported by Ellrodt in his Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser.⁷ Sapience is Perfect Beauty, the clearest reflection of the radiance of God the Trinity which man can perceive before he is himself wholly eternal. In stanzas 40 and 41 of the fourth hymn Spenser writes of what happens to the thoughts of men once they have envisioned Sapience. The terms used here are much like those used when woman and the man-Christ were the objects of man's love. Once again, everything man has previously loved seems base when compared to the new vision.

And that fair lamp which useth to inflame
The hearts of men with self consuming fire
Thenceforth seems foul, and full of sinful blame;
And all that pomp to which proud minds aspire
By name of honor, and so much desire,
Seems to them baseness, and all riches dross,
And all mirth sadness, and all lucre loss.

So full their eyes are of that glorious sight,
And senses fraught with such satiety,
That in nought else on earth they can delight,
But in th' aspect of that felicity,
Which they have written in their inward eye;
On which they feed, and in their fastened mind
All happy joy and full contentment find.

H.H.B. sts. 40-41

⁷Ellrodt, pp. 164-167.

The state of ecstasy described in the above stanzas is temporary death to all other considerations, to all visions except that of Sapience. A man's entire being is caught up in this new vision. The image possesses his person in much the same way the image of his beloved captured him earlier. Even though man does not give up his sensuous appreciation in this vision, the vision is intended to mirror the actual union with God which will occur in eternity. Leone Ebreo often speaks of man's vision of Divine Beauty as a consummation.⁸ According to this notion, shared by Augustine, a man's state of ecstasy before the Divine is a kind of death, a moment in infinity. His vision, because his soul is temporarily beyond the call of the body, is seen as a direct confrontation with the divine. Spenser's use of man's vision of Sapience suggests a less complete confrontation. It is not man's love of God which is consummated here, for that must wait for man to become wholly eternal. Rather, it is man's union with himself and with the universe. He becomes, like Sapience, a reflection of God in much the way the universe is a reflection of God. The most complete expansion of man's consciousness is represented by his vision of Perfect Beauty. With this vision of Sapience in his mind's eye his senses are filled and his spirit entirely joyful (H.H.B. st. 42). The joy of having perceived the divine infused throughout himself and the

⁸Dialoghi d'amore in Nelson, p. 95.

universe leaves man whole and united with that universe. It is in this sense that man has seen God. Although he has glimpsed the eternal, he has done so as the eternal relates to and permeates the created universe.

IV

THE ROLE OF THE DRAMATIC SPEAKER IN THE HYMNS

Even in those instances where the critics have seen the hymns as a continuous and unified whole, they seldom base the continuity of the hymns on the role of the poet-speaker. Two possible exceptions are the interpretations of the hymns given by Joseph Collins and Enid Welsford. Joseph Collins in his Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age says that three mystical stages, the purgative, the contemplative or illuminative, and the unitive, "run through the pairs of Hymns, uniting them in an organic whole."¹ He finds in the hymns "an intrinsic growth from pure idealized love to its heavenly counterpart in God."² The poet-speaker, psychologically moving through the mystical stages, provides a continuity in the hymns. Whether or not Spenser intended these mystical stages to be of any more significance than the other facets of the speaker's cumulative understanding of love, Collins' work does shed light on the psychological development which the speaker undergoes.

Enid Welsford in Spenser: Fowre Hymnes, Epithalamion sees the hymns as constituting the drama of the poet-speaker's discovery of Agape-love--a discovery which

¹Baltimore, 1940, pp. 205-206. ²Collins, p. 206.

follows the Eros-love first embraced by the poet. Collins, by the very nature of the mystical ascent, and Miss Welsford in assigning Eros-love to the first two hymns and Agape-love to the final two hymns, insist on a contrast between the two sets of hymns. Collins sees the first two hymns as the purgative stage of the ascent, and the third and fourth hymns as illuminative and unitive. To Miss Welsford, "Spenser emphasizes the contrast between the two loves and only hints at a possible reconciliation."³ But the hymns do not so much emphasize the contrast between two kinds of love as they show how the individual consciousness can grow to encompass the variety and the essential unity of all love and beauty. While there may be temporary narrowness of vision on the part of the poet-speaker, his perspective steadily expands from the first to the fourth hymn and finally includes all of what he has learned in the process.

Philosophical, mystical, and poetic conventions depend for their meaning on the individual, developing human being. In the Four Hymns the dramatic speaker uses conventions as he understands them at the time of writing each hymn. The hymns are the speaker's creation, and they do not emerge as a unified work unless seen in this light.

The poet writes the first two hymns to praise Cupid

³Welsford, p. 62. In her opinion the ascending Eros-love and the descending Agape-love are united in the Hymeneal celebration of the "Epithalamion."

and Venus in order to enlist their support in his winning of the lady. The goal in the speaker's mind at the time of writing the first hymn is the consummation of his love. In writing the hymn to Cupid he is also offering his beloved all he understands of love at that time, hoping to convince her that he is worthy of her love. He gathers his material from all the poems and philosophical treatises then current to show the effects of Love on the lover. Chief among these effects is spiritual refinement. Although the poet sees Cupid as ultimately responsible for his torment, Cupid is actually a projection of the lover's own state of mind. The poet himself is responsible.

Instead of rewarding the poet with what he asks, Cupid drives him to greater heights to sing Venus' praises. Once again the poet hopes to win his suit, this time with the aid of Venus. Cupid and Venus are each projections of different aspects of the poet's own understanding of love.⁴ It is the poet's state of mind in the first hymn which leads him to write the second.

In the "Hymn in Honor of Beauty" the poet gathers together current notions of beauty as the cause of love. Perfect Beauty was the model used by the Great Workmaster in his work of creation. Every earthly thing partakes of this first beauty, and, therefore, has the power to inspire love. After the poet has explained the nature of beauty,

⁴See Chapters II and III of this study.

he exhorts all fair young women to beware of lust, the one blot to their beauty, and to welcome true love which increases their beauty (H.B. sts. 24-26). He has, on this issue, become like the Cupid he described in the first hymn. It is often the lady's fear that her lover's desires are merely lustful which preserves her disdainful attitude. In warning women against lust, the poet is supporting the very attitude he unconsciously wanted Cupid to break down in the first hymn. The implication is that the poet-lover was not quite rid of his own lust when writing the first hymn, even though he knew enough about the nature of love at that time to describe Love in the following manner:

For Love is lord of truth and loyalty,
 Lifting himself out of the lowly dust
 On golden plumes up to the purest sky
 Above the reach of loathly sinful Lust,

. H.L. st. 26, ll. 1-4

The speaker inadvertently points out by assuming one of Cupid's functions only after describing it in the previous hymn, the distance between what he knew intellectually to be true and what he now knows emotionally to be true. Instead of giving an account primarily of what others have said of Cupid, as he does in the first hymn after addressing Cupid, the poet addresses his readers directly and instructs them. Such an unconscious indication of the time it takes to digest what others have led him to believe is true, fits in well with "the greener times" of his youth, a phrase which appears in the dedication to the hymns. It

is also consistent with his present failure to win his suit, since what he says may be true, but neither the lady nor the reader is necessarily convinced that he understands what he says when he says it.

It was Love who caused him to write a hymn to beauty. It is Love again who enables him to write a hymn "Unto the God of love, high heaven's king" (H.H.L., st. 1, l. 7). From his opening stanza, one would think the poet has become more aware of the spiritual elements in what he has written in the first two hymns. It would also seem, in the first stanzas of the third hymn, that he is rather too impressed by the spiritual. His first conscious reaction to the impact of his new intuition of the heavenly is to reject all of what he has written to this point. The poet says in the second stanza that he has written "many lewd lays . . . in praise of that mad fit which fools call love," and is turning the tenor of his string, "The heavenly praises of true love to sing." The word lewd here means ignorant as well as lascivious, and with the rest of the second stanza could imply that in the light of his new understanding the poet has chosen to make more exclusive use of the spiritual parts of what he has learned in writing the first hymns. Certainly the Petrarchan, Neoplatonic and mythological accounts of the effects and causes of love which he has used in the first hymns offer much that is spiritually edifying. There is also the use of the Phaedrus

tradition in the hymns, a tradition which insists on the single-mindedness with which a new vision of the ideal is approached. The poet-speaker's initial reaction to the impact of his discovery of spiritual value is almost bound to be a rejection of physical passion. There is a similarity, however, between the enthusiasm in the second hymn with which the poet gives account of the many graces which lovers are supposed to see surrounding their ladies, and the enthusiasm with which the poet rejects his lewd lays at the outset of the third hymn. Each is the reaction of a novice, and neither reaction quite grasps the issue at hand. A lover thinking of his lady in the terms used in stanzas 36 and 37 makes the lady a victim of poetic conventions; she can hardly emerge from such embellishments a real human being.

In which how many wonders do they rede
 To their conceit, that others never see!
 Now of her smiles, with which their souls they feed,
 Like gods with nectar in their banquets free:
 Now of her looks, which like to cordials be:
 But when her words' embassy forth she sends,
 Lord, how sweet music that unto them lends!

Sometimes upon her forehead they behold
 A thousand graces masking in delight;
 Sometimes within her eyelids they unfold
 Ten thousand sweet belgards, which to their sight
 Do seem like twinkling stars in frosty night;
 But on her lips, like rosy buds in May
 So many millions of chaste pleasures play.

H.B. sts. 36-37

Just as these stanzas fail to deal realistically with a real human being (perhaps because the poet has not won his lady) the early stanzas of the third hymn do not show a

real understanding of the lessons offered in the first two hymns. The reader must conclude that in the first flush of his intuition of heavenly things, the poet has forgotten the value of human passion.

Further on in the third hymn, the poet adopts the painfully concrete language of the mystics in describing Christ's passion. As if caught up by his own recounting of Christ's gift to all men, he launches into a new account of it, this time to persuade his fellow men to love Christ.

Then let thy flinty heart, that feels no pain,
Empierced be with pitiful remorse,
And let thy bowels bleed in every vein,
At sight of his most sacred heavenly corse,
So torn and mangled with malicious force:
And let thy soul, whose sins his sorrows wrought,
Melt into tears, and groan in grieved thought.

H.H.L. st. 36

At this point he has a concrete appreciation of the man-Christ which he had not had of the lady by the end of the second hymn or of heavenly things at the beginning of the third. He knows that he and all men are beloved of Christ. He has also become like the Venus he described in the second hymn. He has recreated and made vital the man-Christ, for himself and for others, in much the way the Venus of the second hymn caused the lifeful spirits which make objects which are in fact beautiful seem beautiful to untutored eyes. At the end of the third hymn, when he urges men to meditate on Christ's endless merit that they might learn to love Him (st. 37), he is speaking from his own experience, and seems entirely involved in this

contemplation. He sees "Th' Idea" of Christ's glory in the final stanza of the hymn and at the same time urges others to follow his example. It is only when the poet actively unfolds in this way toward others, that the reader of the hymns can be sure the poet understands what he says at that time. He tells them what he knows they will see, not merely what others have seen.

Then shall thy ravisht soul inspiréd be
 With heavenly thoughts far above human skill,
 And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see
 Th' Idea of his pure glory present still
 Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
 With sweet enragement of celestial love,
 Kindled through sight of these fair things above.
 H.H.L. st. 41

He could not have achieved this vision without his immediate and total involvement in the bodily sacrifice of the man-Christ.

The first stanza of the fourth hymn is part of a progression from the first stanzas of the second and third hymns. The poet is seeing at last the heavenly things which he asked Love to help him see in the opening stanza of the third hymn.

Rapt with the rage of mine own ravisht thought,
 Through contemplation of those goodly sights,
 And glorious images in heaven wrought,
 Whose wondrous beauty, breathing sweet delights

 H.H.B. st. 1, 11. 1-4

The poet is neither driven by Love as he thought he was at the outset of the second hymn, nor in need of Love's aid as he felt at the first stanza of the third hymn. He is rapt

with the rage of his own thought and is conscious of it. He invokes aid, this time from the Holy Spirit who may be viewed as an extension of the Cupid now internalized by the poet-speaker. Whereas he once needed Cupid's aid to see beyond what he understood, he now asks aid of the Holy Spirit to show what he sees to his fellow men.

Vouchsafe then, O thou most Almighty Sprite!
 From whom all gifts of wit and knowledge flow,
 To shed into my breast some sparkling light
 Of thine eternal Truth, that I may show
 Some little beams to mortal eyes below
 Of that immortal beauty there with thee,
 Which in my weak distraughted mind I see:

H.H.B. st. 2

He begins by gradually leading his readers from a view of this world to a glimpse of the heavenly realms which are beyond the heavens they usually see.

The wide scope of his perspective in the early stanzas of the fourth hymn provides interesting comparisons with similar attempts in the other three hymns. In the first hymn, the poet speaker called up images of Chaos and the dark, primitive urgings of desire.

For ere this world's still moving mighty mass
 Out of great Chaos' ugly prison crept,
 In which his goodly face long hidden was
 From heaven's view, and in deep darkness kept,
 Love, that had now long time securely slept
 In Venus' lap, unarmed then and naked,,
 Gan rear his head, by Clotho being waked:

H.L. st. 9

In the second hymn the poet uses lighter images, drawing on traditional notions of the influence of the planets on the soul.

For when the soul, the which derived was,
 At first, out of that great immortal Sprite,
 By whom all live to love, whilom did pass
 Down from the top of purest heaven's height
 To be embodied here, it then took light
 And lively spirits from that fairest star,
 Which lights the world forth from his fiery car.

H.B. st. 16

In the third hymn the poet deals with the Creation, and begins with the eternal.

Before this world's great frame, in which all things
 Are now contained, found any being-place,
 Ere flitting Time could wag his eyas wings
 About that mighty bound which doth embrace
 The rolling spheres, and parts their hours by space,
 That High Eternal Power, which now doth move
 In all these things, moved in itself by love.

H.H.L. st. 4

After giving ample proof of the goodness and love with which man was created, he tells the dreadful story of how men persecuted the Christ who had come out of love to save them. Not only is the poet-speaker acting in a way similar to Venus' function in an earlier hymn. He is like both Cupid and Venus in leading men almost unawares, as he was led, to see what they might not otherwise have seen. Furthermore, he is like Christ insofar as he urges men to love the man-Christ and to love each other. But there is another function of the man-Christ which the poet-speaker does not assume until the fourth hymn. That is, to lead men toward a glimpse of God the Trinity. It is only after the final stanza of the third hymn, in which the poet shows that it is possible to gain a vision of the Idea of Christ's glory through the love of the man-Christ, that he is able

to begin to show others and himself how close God is to their daily lives.

In stanzas 6 through 15 of the last hymn, the poet offers a nearly cosmic perspective as he sweeps from earth to the highest heavens, to "endless perfectness" (H.H.B. st. 15, l. 7). He then adopts the idea of the created universe as a many-faceted mirror of God--a notion found in I Corinthians 3:18 and one which is used extensively by Augustine and the Neoplatonic philosophers he influenced so strongly.

Cease then, my tongue! and lend unto my mind
 Leave to bethink how great that beauty is,
 Whose utmost parts so beautiful I find:
 How much more those essential parts of his,
 His truth, his love, his wisdom, and his bliss,
 His grace, his doom, his mercy, and his might,
 By which he lends us of himself a sight!

Those unto all he daily doth display,
 And shew himself in th' image of his grace,
 As in a looking-glass, through which he may
 Be seen of all his creatures vile and base,
 That are unable else to see his face,
 His glorious face! which glistereth else so bright,
 That th' Angels selves cannot endure his sight.

H.H.B. sts. 16-17

He indicates the presence of God in the universe again in stanzas 19 and 20, this time emphasizing that it is possible for men to make a spiritual ascent to the sight of God's Light, His Beauty, though not to a face-to-face confrontation with God.

The means, therefore, which unto us is lent
 Him to behold, is on his works to look,
 Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
 And in the same, as in a brazen book,
 To read enregist'ed in every nook

His goodness, which his beauty doth declare;
For all that's good is beautiful and fair.

Thence gathering plumes of perfect speculation,
To imp the wings of thy high flying mind,
Mount up aloft through heavenly contemplation,
From this dark world, whose damps the soul do blind,
And, like the native brood of eagles' kind,
On that bright Sun of Glory fix thine eyes,
Cleared from gross mists of frail infirmities.

H.H.B. sts. 19-20

It is impossible to read these stanzas without calling up the first two hymns. There is a striking parallel between the second hymn and the equation of goodness and beauty in stanza 19, for example. The description of the mind mounting aloft from this dark world is almost identical to the description of Cupid's ascent from Chaos in the first hymn. But the poet does not seem to fully realize the import of what he is saying, the import of knowing that God makes Himself known to man through His works. For the poet, at this point, God's presence in the universe is significant primarily as the way available to man to achieve the contemplative heights. Again, as in the third hymn, the Phaedrus tradition comes into play. John E. Hankins in his "Spenser and the Revelation of Saint John" speaks of the mount of vision in the first book of the Fairy Queen, and quotes St. Bruno on the exclusive nature of vision: "That ecstasy and excess of mind into which we can ascend on no other than spiritual feet."⁵ It is difficult if not impossible to gain real insight into heavenly things without

⁵PMLA, 60 (1945), 379.

excluding all other considerations. For the poet-speaker, the exclusion of all that has gone before cannot and ought not to be extended permanently. The poet does extend it in reiterating what he has heard about the effect of a vision of Sapience.

So full their eyes are of that glorious sight,
And senses fraught with such satiety,
That in nought else on earth they can delight,
But in th' aspect of that felicity,
Which they have written in their inward eye;
On which they feed, and in their fastened mind
All happy joy and full contentment find.

H.H.B. st. 41

The poet actually shows progress from this exclusiveness when he cannot, at the end of the fourth hymn, accept the leaving behind of this world which he thinks is required by a love of Sapience.

And look at last up to that Sovereign Light,
From whose pure beams all perfect beauty springs,
That kindleth love in every godly sprite,
Even the love of God; which loathing brings
Of this vile world and these gay-seeming things;
With whose sweet pleasures being so possest,
Thy straying thoughts henceforth for ever rest.

H.H.B. st. 43

Not until the writing of the second hymn did the poet begin to become conscious of the Cupid in himself. Not until the third hymn did the poet emotionally grasp the real beauty which his hymn to Venus pointed to in himself and in all men. He glimpses the Idea of Christ's glory at the very end of the third hymn, but it is not until the fourth hymn that the poet shows himself to be most like the man-Christ. While he does include in the fourth hymn the

idea that God makes Himself known to men through His works, he places much more emphasis on spiritual ascent than on the wonders of the world at hand. Even at the very end of the fourth hymn when the poet cannot bring himself to look up toward Sapience and also to leave this world behind, he seems to think he ought to. The last part of the spiritual ascent in which the poet himself participates and urges others to follow his example occurs in stanza 21.

Humbled with fear and awful reverence,
 Before the footstool of his majesty
 Throw thyself down, with trembling innocence,
 Ne dare look up with corruptible eye
 On the dread face of that great Deity,
 For fear, lest if he chance to look on thee,
 Thou turn to nought, and quite confounded be.

H.H.B. st. 21

The poet sees at this point only the austere majesty and power of the Almighty. His inability to attain the vision of Sapience who is both the Wisdom and the Beauty of God, indicates that he has not fully discovered God in the world around him--"His truth, his love, his wisdom, and his bliss" (H.H.B. st. 16). Since the poet went on in the second hymn to learn what he had not mastered in the first, and since similar development occurs from the second to the third hymn and from the third to the fourth, the reader is led to believe that the final stanzas of the fourth hymn are not the poet's final comment. Rather, the poet is well on his way to achieving a full and rich understanding of the love and beauty which permeate and order the cosmos.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTINUITY IN THE HYMNS

Evidence given in this paper to support the idea of psychological continuity in Spenser's hymns has been taken primarily from the hymns themselves. It was demonstrated that while either the first two or the final two hymns may stand alone, they are more significant when considered together. The earthly hymns cannot be properly understood without their divine elements--elements more fully portrayed in the heavenly hymns. The hymns to heavenly beauty cannot be properly understood unless man understands the limits and the glory which his special mortality offers him--an understanding developed from the outset of the first hymn. Spenser subtly insists in his Four Hymns that man's vision ought to encompass earthly and heavenly realms and the interaction of these realms. This total and ideal vision is a glimpse of God the Trinity.

There are several episodes in the Fairy Queen which tend to support the idea of psychological continuity in the Four Hymns. Two sections of the Fairy Queen will be referred to in this chapter. The first is the legend of the Red Cross Knight or of holiness, Book I of the Fairy Queen. The second is the section called the "Mutabilitie Cantos." The first three books of the Fairy Queen were finished by 1589. The Mutabilitie Cantos were not published until the

1609 edition of the Fairy Queen, ten years after Spenser's death. The Four Hymns were published in 1596, but may have been written earlier. In order to experience psychological growth, man must change within himself. The development of the Red Cross Knight in Book I is similar to the development of the lover in the Four Hymns. The modes of Book I and the hymns are not comparable, the lover's psychological growth being more contemplative than active. In each case, however, the kind of changes which occur in man are consistent with the definition of change given in Dame Nature's speech at the end of the Mutabilitie Cantos.

The First Book of the Fairy Queen is the legend of the Red Cross Knight, or of holiness. At the outset of the book, the knight is potentially virtuous but untried, unaware of the sinfulness of his own nature. By the end of the book his native strengths have been tried on a number of occasions. He has also been schooled in spiritual virtues, shown the New Jerusalem by Contemplation, told of his birthright and has slain the dragon Death. In the Four Hymns each new vision of beauty, and beauty is synonymous with truth in the hymns, prompts man to loathe all he previously thought beautiful. Similarly, the Red Cross Knight, after Fidelia's lessons in heavenly discipline, loathes mortal life. Yet it is his recognition of his sinfulness, not Fidelia's teachings, which causes his anguish.

The faithfull knight now grew in little space,
By hearing her, and by her sisters lore,

To such perfection of all heavenly grace,
That wretched world he gan for to abhore,
And mortall life gan loath as thing forlore,
 Grievd with remembrance of his wicked ways,
 And prickt with anguish of his sinnes so sore,
 That he desirde to end his wretched dayes:
 So much the dart of sinfull guilt the soule dismayes.

But wise Speranza gave him comfort sweet,
 And taught him how to take assured hold
 Upon her silver anchor, as was meet;
Els had his sinnes, so great and manifold,
Made him forget all that Fidelia told.

. Bk. I, Canto X, sts. 21-22

Even after lessons from Fidelia and Speranza, the knight must rid himself of inner corruption with the aid of Pen-
 ance, Remorse and Repentance. Only then does he meet
 Charissa.

Charissa, surrounded by her babes, is beautiful ev-
 idence of the effects of divine love. She is healthy,
 fruitful, and radiant in the light of the divine. She in-
 structs the knight in love and righteousness. She gives
 him over to Mercy's charge, and Mercy climbs with the
 knight to the hilltop retreat of Contemplation who occupies
 himself with meditation. Contemplation resents their in-
 trusion but, having great respect for Mercy, follows Fi-
 delia's behest and shows the knight heavenly sights, the
 last of which is the New Jerusalem, city of God's chosen.
 Although Contemplation assures the knight that he will
 eventually be among the saints in that city, the young
 knight believes that such an unworthy wretch as himself
 could never aspire to such glory. Contemplation assures

him that all the saints were once men like himself. The knight asks if he must give up deeds of arms and the love of ladies. Contemplation answers that arms are unnecessary where peace reigns, and "As for loose loves, they're vaine, and vanish into nought" (st. 62, l. 9). When the knight desires to stay with Contemplation and forsake the world, Contemplation tells him to fulfill his commitments in the world first.

"O! let me not," (quoth he) "then turne againe
 Backe to the world whose joyes so fruitlesse are;
 But let me heare for ay in peace remaine,
 Or streightway on that last long voiage fare,
 That nothing may my present hope empare."
 "That may not be," (said he) "ne maist thou yitt
 Forgoe that royal maides bequeathed care,
 Who did her cause into thy hand committ,
 Till from her cursed foe thou have her freely quitt."
 st. 63

The knight descends from the Mount of Contemplation, and goes with Una to Eden where he conquers the Dragon Death and liberates Una's parents. He is betrothed to Una, and after the celebration returns to the court of the Fairy Queen to fight in the queen's service for six years.

The tests which the Red Cross Knight undergoes are not unlike the tests which the lover undergoes in the four hymns. During or after his early tests the knight is overwhelmed by his own sinfulness, as for example in the Cave of Despair, as well as in the House of Coelia and on the Mount of Contemplation. In each place love and beauty (truth) overcome the urge to destroy the self in this world. The lover in the hymns is also overwhelmed by his

own unworthiness, as witness his doubts and jealousy before winning the beloved at the end of the first hymn, his loathing of all he has loved each time he confronts a new and clearer vision of the divine.

The knight's vision of the New Jerusalem is similar to the lover's visions of the idea of Christ's glory at the end of the third hymn and to the lover's vision of Sapience at the end of the fourth hymn. Knight and lover glimpse the harmony and beauty of the eternal after having been tested and strengthened against error and lust. Both knight and lover become able to identify with those beloved of God. Both knight and lover must be governed by what they have been shown of the eternal while in the world of men. In each case, the commitments man must fulfill in this world are taken up again. The Red Cross Knight is not allowed to stay with the hermit Contemplation or to enter immediately the city of saints. Similarly, man in the Four Hymns does not remain in the states of ecstasy he achieves, but must return to the world a more perfect man. The knight and the lover initially despise earlier preoccupations in the light of clearer vision, yet in each case those very preoccupations prepared them for their clearest visions of eternity. The knight gradually becomes aware of spiritual values as they relate to his active life. The lover gradually expands his sympathies toward the eternal in himself and in the universe.

The Mutabilitie Cantos comprise the last section we have of Spenser's Fairy Queen. Mutabilitie is a Titan goddess who wishes to be given command over the heavens and the earth, since every living creature, the gods, and time itself are obviously subject to her influence. Dame Nature is called on to give judgement in the matter since she is greater than all the gods. Nature rules against Mutabilitie on the grounds that, while all things are subject to change, change does not erase the identity of whatever changes. Instead, the essential being of the object is expanded and perfected through change.

"I well consider all that ye have said,
And find that all things stedfastnesse do hate
And changed be; yet, being rightly wayd,
They are not changed from their first estate;
But by their change their being do dilate,
And turning to themselves at length againe,
Do worke their own perfection so by fate:
Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne,
But they raigne over Change, and do their states
maintaine.

"Cease therefore daughter, further to aspire,
And thee content thus to be ruled by mee,
For thy decay thou seekst by thy desire;
But time shall come that all shall changed bee,
And from thenceforth none no more change shal see."

Mutabilitie - Canto VII, sts. 58-59

The unity of being of which Nature speaks in Canto VII is evidenced in the Four Hymns and in Book I less explicitly. Man grows psychologically, expanding his consciousness to what is within and beyond himself in order to become himself. Cupid, Venus, Christ, and Sapience are reflections of the One Divinity, in degrees of clarity

ranging from lesser to greater respectively, and lead man to an ever more perfect love of God. Man's soul descends from heaven at its incarnation, only to spend a lifetime struggling to regain the clear sight of Perfect Beauty it had before its incarnation. This cyclical movement of the soul from origin to origin is consistent with Dame Nature's explanation of perfection through change. Although the particular objects of man's desire change, the qualities which capture his desire vary only in intensity since they are ever clearer images of Perfect Beauty and, ultimately, of God the Trinity. Man's love is consistently pure, but the objects of his love are ever more perfectly divine and he becomes more perfect in the love of them.

The Red Cross Knight develops psychologically in much the same way the lover in the Four Hymns does, and is also perfected by the changes which occur within himself. Initially untried, he learns to know himself through his encounters with error, lust, false beauty or deceit, pride and the six sins over which pride reigns. His weaknesses are revealed to him at each new confrontation with evil. He must then come to terms with his own sinfulness during the disciplines of Faith, Hope, Charity and in his vision of the New Jerusalem. Only after becoming spiritually strong can he conquer Death itself.

Lover and knight are perfected in change. The knight becomes spiritually stronger through his

confrontation with evil and through the lessons offered him in the House of Coelia. The lover in the hymns recognizes the correspondences between himself and God, indeed the presence of God in himself and in the universe. For Lover and Knight, the perfection of faith will be that face to face confrontation with God which occurs wholly and permanently in the eternal. It is that time of which Dame Nature speaks when she tells Mutabilitie that eventually change itself will no longer exist. Eternity is changeless. Eternity must be described as different from the changing world with which men are most familiar. In eternity there are no battles, no struggles to understand, no loves which are less than perfect. It is eternity toward which all men move, and the knight, the lover in the hymns, and the readers of the hymns and Mutabilitie Cantos are reminded that perfection is death to all that is mortal as well as the fulfillment of it.

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