THE FAERIE QUEENE, I AND V

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To speak of the "world" of a particular poet is to use a figure no one will find unfamiliar. It is a question of the natural uniformity, cohesion and interrelation of a body of work, however various, however divided into continents and elements. It is to assert that in Wordsworth, for example, there is a force universally at work, like gravity. And indeed the study of such worlds has sometimes been held to be analogous to physics. It would seem, on the face of it, that to make such a world (and poets have not scrupled to claim that they imitated God in doing so) is the labour of a major poet. For one thing, there is a requirement of size; a world has bulk before it has this kind of complexity. There is also a requirement of order and continuity, qualities one senses in a Shakespeare as well as in a Dante or a Milton, in the artist who seems to have no explicit philosophical or theological programme as well as in the poet whom we think of as in some way "committed".

Literate persons bring to such worlds certain expectations. These are the product of civilized conversation, of allusions encountered in literary comment. But the first thing that happens when they reach the new world is that these expectations are falsified and have to be dismantled. It is something like the experience Keats describes in his sonnet on Homer. The unaffected reader of Milton has a similar experience; he approaches Eden with certain expectations of severity and is disarmed by pleasure and human beauty, two features often omitted from maps of Milton. This dismantling process tends to be more violent with Spenser than with almost anybody else, partly because his poem is less well known than Paradise Lost or Hamlet, even to people who admire it. It is long, unfinished, and darkly related to the learning and images of an age fundamentally strange to us. It is true that

1 A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures.
there is an abundance of scholarly guidance to be had; but in the end that also creates, as guides to public monuments usually do, expectations not always to be exactly realized. Furthermore, the guide one employs will always omit to mention what to the unconditioned eye may seem very striking features, so that there are not only unattained but unexpected experiences.

What I have now to say takes issue with some learned and acute modern guides to Spenser; but I say it not in a spirit of contention, but with proper gratitude for the help I have accepted from them. Spenser is very diverse, and lends support to many generalizations which seem flatly counter to one another. Thus, as everybody knows, The Faerie Queene fluctuates from a philosophical extreme—as in The Garden of Adonis, and the Mutability Cantos—to relatively naïve allegory such as the House of Alma. It contains passages—such as Guyon’s stay in the Cave of Mammon, or Britomart’s in the Church of Isis—which seem to deal with high matters, but deliberately conceal their full meaning; yet it also contains transparent historical allusions to the trial of Mary Queen of Scots and the campaigns in the Netherlands. Its mood varies from the apocalyptic in Book I to the pastoral in Book VI. Sometimes, as with Florimel, one senses the need to complete Spenser’s allegory for him, and sometimes one feels that he has for the time being almost forgotten about it; yet there are other times when one wonders at the density of meanings the fiction is made to bear. Readers of Spenser’s own epoch seem to have enjoyed the allusions to great men of the age as well as the moral allegories; but later there was some danger of his sinking under the explanations of scholars, and in recent years there has been a noticeable trend towards simplicity of interpretation.

Obviously, we should not cumber his world with our own planetary ingenuities; but I think this process has gone too far. I shall now briefly characterize some of these simplifications, and then examine some aspects of the poem which seem to me to remain stubbornly what the simplifiers do not wish them to be.

At the beginning of this century it was assumed by all who considered Spenser’s more philosophical passages that he knew

Plato's dialogues, and that he may have interested himself in Renaissance Neo-Platonism. Later there came a different understanding; philosophical sources were found in Lucretius, in Empedocles, in "old religious cults". And it became a commonplace of scholarship that Spenser could be illuminated by reference to the learning of Ficino, Benivieni, or Bruno.¹

The picture of Spenser as a very learned man is not in itself absurd, since he understood that the heroic poet should be a "curious and universal scholar". But perhaps only an unfamiliarity with the conditions of Renaissance scholarship could have permitted anyone to imagine him to be systematically acquisitive of learning. Also there was prevalent an oversimple view of the Renaissance as a clean new start, which implied a failure to understand the extent to which medieval syntheses—including much Aristotle and Plato which scholars have misguidedly traced back to the original—persisted in the learning of Spenser's time. Thus the Garden of Adonis, which has attracted much speculation, possibly contains little philosophy that would have surprised an educated reader in any age between that of Spenser and that of Boethius. Not surprisingly there has been a reaction, and such influential books as those of W. L. Renwick (1925) and C. S. Lewis (1936) presented a more credible philosopher-poet, Lewis even labelling him, in a famous passage, "homely" and "churchwardenly".² Whether or no we accept this provocative formula, it remains true that Spenser used compendia, handbooks of iconography and so on; that he learnt from popular festivals; and that it would have been harder than used to be supposed to catch him working with an ancient classic open before him.


² *The Allegory of Love* (1936; references to edition of 1958). "Popular, homely, patriotic" (p. 311) is Lewis's description of the allegory of Book I. "We have long looked", he says, "for the origins of *The Faerie Queene* in Renaissance palaces and Platonic Academies, and forgotten that it has humbler origins in the Lord Mayor's Show, the chap-book, the bedtime story, the family Bible, and the village church" (p. 312). "Churchwardenly", "honest", "domestic", belong to a provocative list of epithets on p. 321.
Yet we should not make the mistake of thinking that what seems exotic or far-fetched to us necessarily seemed so to Spenser. It is enough, perhaps, to remind ourselves of the great differences between his map of knowledge and ours—to remember, for instance, the continuing importance of astrology; the over-riding authority of theology; and a view of classical antiquity which seems to us simply fantastic. Spenser’s mind was trained in forms of knowledge alien to us, and habituated to large symbolic systems of a kind which, when we read of them in Huizinga’s *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, are likely to strike us as almost absurdly frivolous. Yet he was very serious in his wish to “make it new”—“it” being the sum of knowledge as it appeared to an Englishman at what seemed to be a great crisis of world history. It is hard for us to remember that Spenser served a queen whom he regarded as technically an empress, and whose accession was regularly thought of as the sounding of the seventh trumpet in the Book of Revelation.1 Spenser saw this world as a vast infolded, mutually relevant structure, as inclusive as the Freudian dream; but he also saw it as disconnected, decaying, mutable, disorderly. We should expect to find his mind, especially when he deals with systematic ideas of order, very strange to us; and we should not easily allow this strangeness to be lost in learned simplifications.

I turn now to a second device for reducing the proportion of relatively inaccessible meaning in *The Faerie Queene*. This is to minimize the importance of a characteristic which had certainly appealed to Spenser’s contemporaries, namely the element of historical allegory. Dryden thought that each of Spenser’s knights represented an Elizabethan courtier; even Upton, who in his way knew so much more about *The Faerie Queene* than we do, stressed the historical allegory and elaborately explained allusions to Elizabethan history. This way of reading Spenser persisted and, perhaps, reached its climax in the work of Lilian Winstanley half a century ago. But it was dealt a blow from which it has not recovered at the hands of the great American Spenserian, Edwin Greenlaw, in his book *Studies in Spenser’s Historical Allegory* (1932).

1 This apocalyptic strain persisted into the next reign in the posthumous portraits of Elizabeth; see Roy C. Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (1963). And see T. Brightman, *The Revelation of S. John Illustrated* (1616), pp. 490 f.
Greenlaw's object is, broadly, to subordinate historical to ethical allegory. Historical allegory, he says, has reference principally to general topics; it refers to specific persons only momentarily and with no high degree of organization. This is now, I think, the received opinion, and it certainly makes sense to relieve Spenser of barrenly ingenious commentary relating his poem to obscure, forgotten, political intrigues. But if we apply Greenlaw's criteria indiscriminately we are likely to be left with a Spenser drained of that historical urgency which seems to be one of his most remarkable characteristics; it is the adhesive which binds the dream image to immediate reality. And certainly one consequence of the modern simplification of Spenser has been to loosen the bond between his great First Book and an actual world by denying the complexity of his historical allegory.

Finally, there is a third and very sophisticated mode of simplification, and this we can represent by reference to two critics, Mr. A. C. Hamilton in his *The Structure of Allegory in the Faerie Queene* (1951) and Mr. Graham Hough in his *Preface to the Faerie Queene* (1962). Mr. Hamilton is an enemy of "hidden allegorical significance", at any rate in Spenser, though of course he knows how much Renaissance critical theory has to say about "dark conceits". He suggests that we have now established "a fatal dichotomy" between poet and thinker, and that the despised old romantic habit of reading the poem for the beauties of its surface was no more harmful than the modern way of looking straight through to the emblematical puzzles beneath. We have, he argues, made the poem a kind of Duessa "whose borrowed beauty disguises her reality". Or, ignoring the fiction, we seek historical allusion, treating Book I, for example, as a concealed history of the English Reformation; or we devise some "moral reading yielding platitudes which the poet need never have laboured to conceal". Offering some instances of this, he asks, "Is this the morality which More found divine? . . . The conceit as passing all conceit?" And he proposes his "radical re-orientation": by concentrating upon the fiction—the image—he will show that the poem is not like Duessa but like Una, who "did seem such, as she was". He finds support for his policy of subordinating all allegorical meanings to the literal in some remarks of
Sidney, and asks us to see the moral senses not as kernels of which the fiction is the shell, but as the expanding petals of a multifoliate rose—the meaning "expanding from a clear centre".1

Mr. Hamilton shows much skill and sensibility in developing a reading along these lines. But the method, attractive as it sounds, will not serve. We lose too much. Not that I deny the pre-eminence of the literal meaning, which Aquinas himself would have accepted; only it does not mean quite what Mr. Hamilton thinks. The praise of Henry More, for example, which was not in the least extravagant, depended upon a well established view that images could combine old truths to make a new one; the whole was greater than its parts, and if you broke down the "icon" into its original constituents the parts together would have less meaning than the whole icon. The pleasure and instruction, you may say, is double: it is the intellectual delight of breaking down the icon and the intuitive benefit of perceiving its global meaning. In short, although we may welcome the figure of the multifoliate rose, we still need the idea of the kernel and the shell, or of the fiction as a means of concealment: it will not, in Spenser, be as perversely opaque as it is in Chapman, but it may well be as elaborate as the sixth book of Aeneid, as read by Renaissance mythographers.

What you find under the surface depends upon your learning and penetration. Behind the Garden of Adonis are philosophic constituents, behind the First Book, constituents of world history; behind the Fifth Book and especially the elaborate dream of Britomart, high matters of imperial and national legal theory. I want, so far as it is possible to have the best of both worlds, to enjoy the fiction much as Mr. Hamilton does, but also to deny his contention that the "universal reference prevents our translating events into historical terms". Thus I am sure that Book V is impoverished if the Church of Isis passage is treated simply as a figurative rendering of the love-relationship of Artegall and Britomart; and this is how Mr. Hamilton, following a note in A. S. P. Woodhouse’s famous essay, would have us read it.2

Mr. Hough tries, in his very agreeable book, to satisfy the contestants in this kind of quarrel by arguing that there are intermediate stages in literature between complete "realism" and naïve allegory; Shakespeare is equidistant between these extremes, his magic fully absorbing his theme so that one might speak of an "incarnation". Nobody, I suppose, using Mr. Hough's chart, would care to put Spenser—so far as the epic poem is concerned—anywhere save where he puts him, between Shakespeare and "naïve" allegory, as a maker of "poetic structures with various degrees of allegorical explicitness". And Mr. Hough's insistence that the allegory is "relaxed and intermittent" ought to remind us of the constantly varying "thickness" of Spenser's thematic meanings. But I do not think he serves us so well in asking us to depend in our reading upon our "general sense" of how "mythical poetry" works.¹ The Faerie Queene is an epic and so historical; we simply do not have an instinct which enables us to participate in historical myths relating to the religious, political and dynastic situations of Spenser's day. And our feeling for "mythical poetry" tells us nothing relevant to the juristic imperialism of his Church of Isis.

I have respect for both of these books; each in its way says that Spenser is a great poet who can mean much to modern readers; and I have given only a very partial account of them. But I quarrel with them, as with the others, because they habitually ignore what I think may be the peculiar strength of Spenser. Probably no other English poet has ever achieved so remarkable a summa as his. And it seems to me that we must not modernize him at the cost of forgetting this. "Poetry is the scholar's art". We should be glad to find in The Faerie Queene not only the significances of dream, but that fantastic cobweb of conscious correspondences, running over all the interlinked systems of knowledge, which a scholar-poet and a courtier might be expected to produce. Leaving out of account the philosophical simplification I began with, I intend now to speak of two parts of the poem: the historical allegory of Book I, and the allegory of justice in two parts of Book V. In each case, I myself find that the hidden meanings contribute to the delight of the fiction, because some of this delight

arises from recognition of the writer’s complex intent. And I do not think it does the dreamlike narrative any harm to include in it elements recognizable by conscious analysis.

The First Book of *The Faerie Queene* is well known to be apocalyptic, in the sense that it presents a version of world history founded rather closely upon the English Protestant interpretation of the Book of Revelation. I have elsewhere tried to explain how the force of the book—as I see it—stems from a peculiarly subtle and active interplay of actual history with apocalyptic-sibylline prophecy. In its more political aspect, Book I is a celebration of the part of Elizabeth Tudor, the Protestant Empress, in the workings of providence. This a writer sufficiently sympathetic to Spenser—Milton, for example—would take in at a glance; and nothing in Milton is more Spenserian than the apocalyptic exhortations to England in the pamphlets *On Reformation* and *Areopagitica*, with their emphasis on God’s manner of dealing with the nations, and the special role chosen for his Englishmen in the overthrow of antichrist. The Puritan commentators on Revelation, especially Bullinger and Bale, had long insisted upon the degree to which the text foretold the history of the Church, now reaching a climax; and for the better part of a century English opinion accepted Foxe’s reading of ecclesiastical history as prefigured in the flight of the woman clothed with the sun—the true catholic church into a wilderness from which, after forty-two months, she returns to her own as the Church of England. Discussing elsewhere the profusion of references to Revelation in Spenser’s text, I expressed some surprise that the very scholars who, by the citation of patristic and Reformist commentaries, have made these identification so sure, should, under the inhibition of Greenlaw, have forborne to study them in their obvious historical dimension. The text of *The Faerie Queene*, Book I is admittedly studded with the prophetic emblems of Revelation; it admittedly suggests that the Elizabethan settlement—the *renovatio mundi* brought by the Phoenix, the Astraean Elizabeth—fulfils the plan of history laid down in the Bible. Would it not seem likely that the narrative should allude to the history of the Church in the wilderness—that the story of Una and Duessa should, like Foxe’s history of the

Church, demonstrate the culmination of the divine plan in Elizabeth's accession?

It is clear that the limited series of allusions admitted by most editors to the course of English Reform under Henry VIII and Edward VI would not be enough for the apocalyptic-historical purpose Spenser announces with his imagery from Revelation. If you once identify the English with the primitive Catholic Church, you begin its history, as Jewel said, "after the first creation of the world".¹ After that, Joseph of Arimathaea brought Eastern Christianity to England; later there was a Christian king, Lucius; hence the early splendours and purity of the English Church, and the historic English independence of Rome and the "ten-horned beast" or Latin Empire, impaired only by the treachery of Hildebrand and his successors.² The imperial claims of Elizabeth, however, defied the papal power and were traced back to Constantine.

Now the celebration in image and allegory of the Foxian version of history is not a remote and learned fancy; just as *The Faerie Queene* had her "yearly solemne feaste", so had Elizabeth. Her Accession day (17 November) was celebrated with increasing fervour, especially after the Armada, so that the Papists called it blasphemous and a parody of the adoration of the Virgin. Mr. Roy C. Strong has well surveyed the main themes of sermon, tract, ballad and entertainment relating to this feast.³ Elizabeth is *rarissima Phoenix, ultima Astraea*, the renewer of the Church and faithful true opponent of antichrist. She has undone the work of the wicked popes who usurped the emperor's power and rights; she inherits both Lucius' recognized position as God's vicar, and the imperial power of Constantine and Justinian. Antichrist, the murderous sorcerers of the see of Rome, stands finally exposed. The queen is the defender of the true Church in an evil world. In a sense she is that Church. When Mr. Strong's preacher speaks of her as the sun shedding beams of religion, he is remembering "the woman clothed with the sun", who turns into

¹ John Jewel, *Works* (Parker Society, 1848), iii. 79.
the Una of whose sunshiny face Spenser speaks, "glistening every way about with the light of the everlasting Gospel". As Mr. Strong observes, "the complexities of eschatological and imperial theory are never far away from the Accession Day themes". Foxe's book, available with the Bible in every church, had become part of the body of patriotic thought, a textbook of English imperialism.

Now "homely Spenser" made, in the First Book of his poem, an epic of these very Accession Day themes, and he too chains up Foxe beside the Bible. An appeal to history was a prerequisite not only of the claims of the Catholic Church of England to antiquity and purity, but also of the queen's claim to possess imperial power over the bishops. *The Faerie Queene* may be mythical poetry; but its myths are the myths of English polity in the fifteen-eighties and nineties. Greenlaw himself observed that the use of Arthurian legend was for the Elizabethans not a Tennysonian archaism, but an argument from antiquity. The Elizabethans in fact saw Arthur's not as Malory's world, but as a unified Britain, and Arthur himself as king of the whole island, which, under the diadem of Constantine, was an empire according to *Leges Anglorum*. Greenlaw observed also that it was commonplace in popular pageants to present the queen as True Religion; and that Spenser's poem reflects the view that her greatest service was the establishment of true religion in England. We are speaking of an age that venerated Foxe—the age of Archbishop Parker, of Sandys, of a queen who herself insisted upon her role as head of a church founded by Joseph of Arimathaea and a State that inherited the powers of the Constantinian Empire. Indeed she had, the claim ran, reunited the two. Spenser could not avoid allusion to the whole of church history according to Foxe in describing the struggle between Una and antichrist.

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5 Thus the queen is shown in portraits not only as wearing the imperial diadem and trampling on the Pope (so revenging the indignity of Frederick Barbarossa) but also as the woman clothed with the sun, or True Church. See Roy C. Strong (p. 26, n. 1 supra).
Earlier interpretations of this kind—such as those of Scott and Keightley—have been ignored or coldly dismissed by Spenser's modern editors.\(^1\) I think Scott and Keightley were wrong in detail, since they did not look at the history of the church through the medium of Elizabethan propaganda; but they had the right instinct. Any apologist of the Elizabethan settlement was obliged to produce historical arguments, and Spenser, as an allegorical poet, did so by means of hidden meanings in his fiction.

No one is in much doubt about the relationship of Una and Duessa. Una is pure religion, which came to England direct from the East: she is descended from "ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore /Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore" (I. i. 5). Duessa, on the other hand, claims descent only from an Emperor "that the wide West under his rule has/And high hath set his throne, where Tiberis doth pas" (I. ii. 22). Her false description of her father as emperor alludes to papal usurpations on the imperial power, a constant source of Protestant complaint. As Miss Frances Yates rightly says, Duessa and Una "symbolize the story of impure papal religion and pure imperial religion".\(^2\) The success of the Tudors against the papacy is a restoration of Una, of imperial rights over the sacerdotium. The emperor, or empress, is, as Jewel says,\(^3\) the Pope's lord and master; Rome is not directly descended, he adds, from the primitive Eastern church, whereas the reformed Church of England can make exactly this claim. Duessa is in fact a representative of a religion not only antichristian but also anti-imperialist, anti-universalist. Duessa's very name accuses her of schism.

The Red Cross Knight has dealings with both ladies, appearing first with Una in his capacity of defender of the true faith. It is part of the dreamshift technique of the poem that he begins thus, and as *miles Christi*, to end as the knight *fidelis et verax* or Christ himself (whose bride Una is the Church)—after a career of

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\(^{2}\) "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, x (1948), 68.

error typical of the human pilgrimage and also of the history of England. In confronting him with Error in the opening Canto, Spenser fulfils a multiple purpose, having in mind not only Christ's victory over sin in the wilderness, but Una's great enemy, heresy, against which the early English Church protected her. Scott thought Error stood for Arianism; it probably corresponds more generally to that series of heresies which Bale associates with the opening of the second and third apocalyptic seals: Sabellianism, Nestorianism, Manichaeism, as well as Arianism. Modern heresy, for which Jewel firmly places the responsibility on Rome, is the brood of these earlier errors. The locusts of stanza xiv derive, as Upton pointed out, from Revelation ix. 7, and were traditionally associated with heretical teaching—a point made by that herald of reform, Matthew of Paris, whom Foxe quotes approvingly. The association is also remembered by Bale. The enemies of Una had existed as long as there had been a Roman antichrist; Red Cross is her champion, since God had entrusted her, as Milton thought it natural, to "his Englishmen". The victory of Constantine, which made possible the Christian Empire, was achieved, according to Foxe, with the aid of British troops; he thought it represented the end of 294 years since the Passion, and the binding of Satan for a thousand years. Constantine was himself of course British, born of St. Helena at York.

Archimago, as is generally agreed, corresponds to the false prophet and the beast from the land, and so to antichrist. But it is worth observing that Spenser gives him a name which suggests that he is a magician; and this is a charge incessantly made against popes by Foxe and many others. Marlorat's compendious commentary on Revelation, published in 1574, says, on Rev. xiii. 15 (where the dragon seeks by supernatural means to destroy the woman clothed with the sun), that popes were often "nigromancers". He cites Cardinal Buno, who, in a life of Gregory VII, "writeth that many obtained the Popedom by divelish arts", especially Sylvester II, John XVIII, John XX, Benedict VIII,
and Benedict IX. Gregory VII himself, "erst called Hildebrand", was a "notable nigromancer, who with the shaking of his sleeues woulde make as it were sparks of fire to flye abroad as often as he liked".1 Boniface VII and VIII, and most of the sixteenth-century popes, are also on the list. Napier the mathematician, in his commentary of 1593, finds allusion to popish necromancy in the Sibylline books, and says on the evidence of "Platina, the Popes own secretarie", that there have been twenty-two "Necromantick Popes and . . . eight Atheists".2

Sylvester II, who is frequently said to have sold his soul to the devil, was in fact a man of learning, a mathematician, and one who had a good try at reconciling papacy with empire; but doubtless the special odium reserved to him may be accounted for by his having been Pope in a.d.1000, when according to some accounts (not Foxe's) Satan was loosed after a thousand years of bondage. The other Pope most persistently charged with necromancy is Gregory VII, who was specially detested because, having gained authority in England through the Conqueror, he began that interference with English government which disfigured so many subsequent reigns, notably those of Henry II (who claimed judicial authority over the clergy) and John. Foxe singles him out as the Pope who started the encroachment on the rights of the temporal governor "whereby the Pope was brought to his full pride and perfection of power in the fourteenth century".3 I have little doubt that Spenser was thinking chiefly of Hildebrand when he made Archimago a master of magic arts and described his plots against Red Cross.

We hear of Archimago's arts in xxxvi, and in xlviii he produces a succubus, a false church "most like that virgin true" until her real nature is revealed. She deceives Red Cross with her claim to be *una sancta ecclesia*, and makes outrageous demands on his body. Spenser may not have been thinking only of the troubles of the eleventh to the fourteenth century; the Synod of Whitby, where, according to Foxe,4 Wilfrid first led England into the power of Rome, may also have been in his mind. But Gregory VII, who

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1 Marlorat, op. cit., p. 199 recto.
3 *Acts and Monuments*, p. 112.
4 Ibid. p. 663.
first claimed control of both the swords, ecclesiastical and tem­
poral,\(^1\) and so usurped the power of the emperor (Foxe has a
woodcut illustrating the incident of Henry IV waiting Hilde­
brand’s pleasure in the snow), was the greatest papal villain. The
powers resigned by Henry IV and later by Barbarossa, upon whose
neck Alexander III set his foot, were recovered and refurbished by
Spenser’s empress, a point upon which Jewel is explicit.\(^2\) So
Spenser allows Archimago to conjure up the demonic church
which tried to rule the world, and which the British Tudors were
to exorcise. But the disgrace of Red Cross, which begins here,
represents the long misery of the English Church from the time
of Gregory VII until the first stirrings of reformation with Wyclif.

Other crucial events in the Anglican version of church
history are reflected in Spenser’s narrative. The presumptions of
Boniface III coincided with the rise of Islam, and a monk called
Sergius gave aid and comfort to these new enemies. The Turks
were part of antichrist, said Foxe,\(^3\) taking the contemporary threat
from this quarter to be the loosing of the angels of the river
Euphrates (Rev. xvi. 12); it reached its present form and strength
at the end of the thirteenth century, just when papal power was
greatest. Now Spenser has this, or something very like it, in
mind when he makes Sansfoy an ally of Archimago. Red Cross
first meets Duessa in the company of the infidel Sansfoy (ii. 13).
She is adorned with a Persian mitre which, together with the bells
and flounces of her “wanton palfry”, signify the union of popish
flummery and oriental presumption.\(^4\) Sansfoy is the pagan anti­
christ, defeated by Red Cross as Arthur defeated the pagan
Saxons and the crusades the Saracens. I do not say he does not, with
his brothers, make a triad opposed to that of the Theological
Virtues; the readings are perfectly consistent with one another.
Sansloy and Sansjoy are also aspects of antichrist and paganism.
It all goes back to Boniface and the Turks—even, perhaps, Duessa’s lie about her past when she claims\(^5\) to have been

\(^{1}\) Acts and Monuments, p. 112.  \(^{2}\) Works, iii. 75, 76, 99, 116.
\(^{3}\) Acts and Monuments, p. 391. Foxe does not name Sergius, but see Wyclif,
De pontificium Romanorum Schismate, Select Works, ed. Arnold (1869-71), iii. 245,
\(^{4}\) Works, iii. 104.  \(^{5}\) F. Q., II. ii. 23.
betrothed to a great prince who was murdered, which might be an allusion to the establishment by Boniface III of the puppet emperor Phocas.

There is surely reason to suppose that Spenser would think along these lines. Let me, to avoid tedium, spare analysis of the Fraelissa and Fradubio episode, clearly another allegory of the wrong choice of faith, and pass on to the story of Kirkrapine, Abessa and Corceca. Corceca is obviously blind devotion. Abessa, as Sr. Mary R. Falls established,¹ is not an abbess but absenteeism, from abesse. The main difficulty is with Kirkrapine. I agree with Sr. Mary Falls that he cannot refer to the evils of monasticism; she argues, with some force, that the reference to church-robbing is more likely to apply to the behaviour of English bishops and courtiers after the Reformation. She cites much evidence, and more could be adduced. Sandys, for example (though himself not innocent of the charges he brings against others), asked the queen to end the abuses of the "surveyors"² that trot from one diocese to another, prying into churches. The pretence is reformation; but the practice is deformation. They reform not offences, but for money grant licences to offend." And he asks the queen—"our most mild Moses"—to stay the hand of these "church-robbers". But he also calls this a perpetuation of a characteristic antichristian practice; and this is really our clue. Spenser is not thinking exclusively of a topical issue; what he has in mind is the duty of the newly restored church to abolish a practice typical of popery, that of using the goods of the church for personal and temporal purposes. Luther gloomily foresaw that church-robbers would not be checked till Armageddon.³ Long afterwards Milton echoed him in Of Reformation,⁴ speaking fiercely of prelates: "How can these men not be corrupt, whose very cause is the bribe of their own pleading, whose mouths cannot open without the strong breath and loud stench of avarice, simony and sacrilege, embezzling the

³ Preface to the Revelation of Saint John, 1545; in Works (1932), vi. 479-88.
treasury of the church on painted and gilded walls of temples, wherein God hath testified to have no delight, warming their palace kitchens, and from thence their unctuous and epicurean paunches, with the alms of the blind, the lame, the impotent, the aged, the orphan, the widow?" Milton accuses the prelates of theft in several kinds; Jewel specifically calls the Roman hierarchy sacrilegos, which is in the contemporary translation "church-robbers", for refusing the laity the wine at communion. Clearly any act which impoverished the church could be called church-robbing; there were contemporary instances, but Spenser has in mind the long record of antichrist and his misdeeds. In The Shepheardes Calender "September"¹ he is more specifically attacking contemporary misappropriations; but when he speaks of the foxes replacing the wolves in England he is thinking of the clergy as having taken over the role of thieves from the pagans. To compare the antichristian clergy to foxes is an old device stemming from Christ's description of Herod as a fox, and from a gloss on Cant. ii.14; Sandys uses it ² and so does Spenser when he gives Duessa, revealed in all her ugliness, a fox's tail (I. vii. 48). What is scandalous is that this ancient wrong should have survived in the reformed church. Kirkrapine, incidentally, lives in concubinage with Abessa. This certainly suggests the unholy relation between simony and absenteeism in Spenser's time, but also suggests that it is a leftover from an earlier period; for Abessa reproaches Una with unchastity, which hints at the Romanist distaste for the married priesthood of the reformed church,³ and again associates Kirkrapine with the bad religion before reform.

Archimago, disguised as Red Cross and having Una in his charge, represents a bogus English church betraying true religion. That Sansloy should bring Archimago near to death suggests the self-destructive follies of Urban VI (1318-89, Pope from 1378), who seems in fact to have been more or less insane; Wyclif said that he destroyed the authority of the papacy; after him "there is none to be received for the pope, but every man is to live after the

² Sermons, p. 64.
³ It must be admitted that Spenser himself, like the queen, felt some distaste for married priests, at any rate in the Shepheardes Calender.
manner of the Greeks, under his own law".¹ This lawless folly, and the contemporary inroads of the Turks, probably account for the episode. The rescue of Una from Sansloy by satyrs, as Upton noticed,² means the succour of Christianity by primitivist movements such as the Waldensian and Albigensian; some primitives fall into idolatry (hence the follies of some puritan heretics) but the true Reformation line is represented by the well-born primitive Satyrane, who instantly knows the truth and opposes Sansloy.

The subjection of Red Cross to Orgoglio is the popish captivity of England from Gregory VII to Wyclif (about 300 years, the three months of viii. 38). The miles Christi, disarmed, drinks of the enervating fountain of corrupt gospel and submits to Rome. He is rescued by Arthur, doing duty for Elizabeth as Emperor of the Last Days, saviour of the English Church. The viciously acquired wealth of Duessa is confiscated. In ix.17 Red Cross places Una under the charge of Gloriana, head of the Church. In this warp of allegory the capitulation to Despair must mean the Marian lapse; after that Red Cross is assured of his Englishness, and shown the New Jerusalem, of which Cleopolis or London, capital of the Earthly Paradise,³ seat of the empress, is the earthly counterpart. Only then does he assume the role of the warrior fidelis et verax and, with the aid of the two sacraments of the true church, enact the slaying of the beast, the harrowing of hell, the restoration of Eden and the binding of Archimago. The English settlement—to which, as Revelation proved, all history tended, is a type of that final pacification at the end of time. Spenser makes it clear that it is only typical; but the boldness with which he conflates history and the archetype in Revelation proves how fully he accepted Foxe's bold formula, "the whole church of Christ, namely. . . the church of England".⁴

I have tried, in making this sketch of the allegory of ecclesiastical history in Book I, not to forget that Spenser’s historical view was that of Anglican church historians. This, after all, is rather to be expected than not, in view of the apocalyptic and protestant-

imperialist nature of Spenser’s poem. What I suggest, in short, is that given the apocalyptic character of Book I—which cannot be denied—allegories of the kind I propose must be present in the poem; consequently the historical allegory is not the flickering, limited affair it is sometimes said to be; nor can we pick it up in all its depth by a learnedly ignorant contemplation of the surface of the fiction.

I now turn to a different aspect of Spenser’s allegory, the episodes of Mercilla and the Church of Isis in Book V. I take it that the allegory is both juristic and imperialist. Obviously Justitia is here presented as superior to the private virtue treated by Aristotle, and of course also to ius, which is one of its servants. Thus it is in the great fourteenth-century fresco at Siena, and thus it is in the commonplaces of Roman law.

There is no longer any need to prove the existence of Spenser’s imperial theme; Miss Yates has clearly established it. Elizabeth claimed imperial status, adapting with the Emperor Charles V and others a view of empire that goes back to the Ghibellines. She was the world-leader who maintained the imperial peace, and renewed the time, preparing her people for the coming of Christ. This was the official role of Spenser’s Virgin, the Empress-Astraea.¹ And this Protestant and nationalist imperialism denies what even Frederick II admitted, that the Pope has a complementary task. In the empress the potestates distinctae—imperium and sacerdotium—of medieval law are united.

The opening lines of Book V describe how very far we have got from the age of gold. Spenser’s poem throughout maintains a tension between the ideal and the actual, and he knows that the return of the Imperial Virgin, first prophesied for Constantine, has occurred only in a figurative and restricted sense. Yet he is prepared to maintain this tension, and to present his Elizabeth as Justitia or Astraea.²


² For Astraea as Justice (in a temple) see the lines addressed by Sir Robert Whittington to Sir Thomas More: they allude to Astraeae criticæ mystica chrismata /et Aeris fixa tholo verba miniantia. See R. S. Sylvester’s transcription of the lines in Huntington Library Quarterly, xxvi (1963), 147 ff.
He speaks thus of Justice:

Most sacred virtue she of all the rest
Resembling God in his *imperial* might:

And thus of Elizabeth:

Dread Souerayne Goddesse, that doeth highest sit
in seate of judgement, in th’Almighties stead . . .

First we hear of the agents of justice, of Arthegall as pupil of Astraea and disciple of Bacchus and Hercules, dispensing justice with the aid of Talus. The allegory proceeds simply enough until Arthegall falls victim, Hercules-like, to Radigund; and although there is much of political interest in these cantos, and we see instances of Injustice, we have not yet encountered the formal *Iustitia*. This we do when Britomart, at the beginning of Canto vii, enters the Church of Isis to prepare for the liberation of Arthegall.

We shall understand neither the Church of Isis nor the Court of Mercilla unless we have some notion of the contemporary connotations of the word "Equity", and its relation to Justice. Spenser, though in translating Plutarch's "Iseion" he probably borrowed the expression "Isis Church" from Adlington's Apuleius, obviously intended in this part of the Fifth Book to make a formal *Templum Justitiae*. In doing so he is remembering a tradition at least as old as Augustus, whom Ovid congratulated on raising a temple to Justitia. Ulpian called judges the priests of Justice; Justinian speaks of the "most holy temple of Justice" and of "the temple of the Roman Justice". Statues were made showing governors, as Justice embodied, with Dike, Eunomia and Themis beside them. The twelfth-century glossator Placentinus elaborately describes an allegorical Temple of Justice: Justitia is a dignified figure with Ratio over her head, many Virtues about her, and Equity in her embrace.

1 *Variorum*, v. 216.
2 As in Bartolomeo Delbene, *Civitas Veri* 1609 (written in the fifteen-eighties). There are Temples of Justice and of Injustice in this book, which was dedicated to Henry III and reflects the mode of the philosophical discussions held in the Palace Academy (see F. A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (1947), pp. 111 ff.)
This figuration developed along with the Roman law. The Neapolitan lawyer Lucas de Penna held that Iustitia, properly conceived, is identical with equity.¹ Equity is indeed the source of law, that which makes Justice just; for summa ius, summa iniuria is an old saying. Penna’s jurisprudence was influential in sixteenth-century France,² and the allegorical representations of Justice and Equity were modified accordingly. Thus Delbene shows Equity controlling Justice with a rod (obtemperatio quasi virgula).³ Equity is the mother of law, the mediator between natural and human law; and this point was given cosmological significance by the equation between mater and materia in the dicta of late medieval jurisprudence.⁴ In this way the justification of cosmic inequalities and of human law—perhaps even of human salvation, since the Billigkeit of Luther is related to these conceptions of equity⁵—are all related, and Spenser’s choice of the Plutarchan myth of Isis begins to have the look of a very rich allegorical invention.

Imagery of this kind formed a part of that juristic myth which, as Kantorowicz showed, replaced earlier liturgical conceptions of the emperor after the death of Frederick II.⁶ It is therefore intimately associated with the imperial mythology cultivated at the court of Elizabeth I. The emperor, as a fount of equity, directly mediates divine law, without the intervention of the Pope. But even if it is allowed (as it must be) that the Elizabethan propaganda borrowed freely from European imperialist mythology, it is also evident that the imagery so far spoken of is related to Roman law, and not to English. This calls for a word on the contacts between the two systems.

The prospect of a Reception of Roman law in England seems to have existed but briefly during the reign of Henry VIII. More, Elyot and Starkey admired Roman law, largely because of its

² Ullmann, Medieval Idea of Law, pp. 183 ff.
³ Civitas Veri, pp. 168 and 174 (illustration).
⁴ Ullmann, p. 50.
⁵ This large suggestion I make in the hope that someone may pursue it. It was put to me by Professor Gordon Rupp after my lecture. It does not seem improbable that Luther should apply to theology doctrine associated with the emperor.
⁶ E. Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies, cap. IV.
superior equity; the king's cousin Cardinal Pole was its advocate. The king himself, when he abolished the study of canon law in England, set up Chairs of Civil Law at Oxford and Cambridge, and Gentile at Oxford, an Italian refugee, was a learned Roman civilian. Maitland, who at one time held the view (now disputed) that a Reception came very near to occurring, notes that Roman law "made pleasant reading for a King who wished to be a monarch in church as well as state: pleasanter reading than could be found in our ancient English law-books". But the common lawyers prevailed. How then could the king's daughter develop her imperial mythology in terms of the Roman law? Admittedly, the close relationship between English and French courts in the fifteen-eighties, when there were high hopes of a politique agreement, might alone have ensured that the French mystique of imperium should affect English practice. Of course it was possible to maintain that even "by the common law of England, a Prince can do no wrong", as Bacon put it to the Council during the examination of Essex in 1600. And the Tudors had always founded their rights in the common law. But they were certainly not unwilling to improve their security by reference to another system (appropriate, after all, to the re-embodiment of Augustus and Constantine) in which the Prince was not merely legibus solutus but also lex animata and a god on earth.

That Elizabethan England was conscious of a double standard in law is suggested by the contemporary debate on English equity. Formerly it had been considered an aspect of the common law, and since 1873 it has returned to the common law; but in the time of Elizabeth it was the province of the queen. The prerogative courts, especially those of Chancery and Star Chamber, represented the queen's justice independent of the common law courts. The Chancellor in Chancery was not bound by common law precedent but by equity and conscience; Hatton called himself the queen's conscience, and when Hamlet speaks of "the conscience of the King" he is presumably remembering a familiar expression, "the conscience of the Queen", which was the motive of Chancery.

1 F. W. Maitland, "English Law and the Renaissance", in Historical Essays (1957), p. 140.
The positive function of the Court was to remedy injustices that had no remedy in common law. This might be for many reasons, and not only because the common lawyers were bound by rule and precedent, and the common law incompetent in certain causes, such as those relating to uses and trusts. The plaintiff might be a poor man, or the defendant a magnate with power to bribe, threaten or persuade a jury. (One remembers that the earl of Leicester was surprised to be told that it was an offence to influence a juryman.)

The increased use of this court brought many protests from Elizabethan lawyers, who saw in the growing activity of the courts of equity a usurpation of their authority. Already, in fact, Chancery was building up the colossal backlog of business and the concern for precedent that made it, for Dickens, not so much a court of equity as a death-trap for innocent litigants. But in Spenser’s time it was still the court of the queen’s conscience; and inevitably the judgements of the chancellor, which were unrelated to the common law, touched the older tradition of the Roman law at many points.

So did the Court of Star Chamber. This court grew out of the Council, and dealt equity in criminal cases, notably those touching the security of the queen. Thus it punished scandals, seditions, riots, and, in this reign, recusancy; for which reason, and because of its brutal examinations and punishments, it was hated by Puritans and abolished when the Long Parliament came to power in 1641. Chancery had its enemies also. Star Chamber was a court in which the monarch was present, either symbolically (as in Elizabeth’s reign) or in person, as at least twice in the reign of James I. The association of this court with absolutism was strong in the minds of its enemies, and absolutist doctrine was in turn associated with the Roman law. In 1610 Cowell, a Cambridge law professor, argued that Roman law and absolute monarchy went hand in hand; and Bacon on the other side assured James I that the Court of Chancery was the court of his absolute

2 Evidence for this in Holdsworth, i. 508-9, and in George Spence, *The Equitable Jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery* (1846), i, Part 2, Book i. For a useful recent summary see John W. Dickinson, "Renaissance Equity and Measure for Measure", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, xiii (1962), 287-97.
3 Holdsworth, i. 500.
4 Maitland, p. 147.
power, as well as the conscience of the realm.\textsuperscript{1} It is hardly surprising, then, that when Parliament triumphed so did the common law; when Star Chamber was put down Chancery narrowly escaped. In the reign of Elizabeth a Roman absolutism would affect not only the imagery of a poet but the speculations of jurists. Raleigh argued that the capacity of Parliament was merely advisory \textsuperscript{2}; and later Lord Ellesmere, known as the great enemy of the common law, could declare that the judges had no rights of equity since these belonged to the chancellor in his capacity as the king's conscience.\textsuperscript{3}

In the native English conception, law is logically prior to equity, hence the maxim "Equity follows law". In Roman law, as we have seen, equity can be called the source or foundation of law: \textit{lex est super aequitate fundata; ius simpliciter sumptum est aequitas}.\textsuperscript{4} Without equity law has nothing to do with justice: \textit{summa ius, summa iniuria}. In the England of Elizabeth there was a conflict between the common and the imperial interpretation, and Spenser favours the latter. The fount of imperial equity is the emperor; and the relation of \textit{lex scripta} to his will is analogous to the relation of Scripture to the will of God.\textsuperscript{5} On this view the object of a court of equity is to enable the emperor to justify the law (even when it proceeds like Star Chamber, to do so, by ear-lopping and other mutilation). The theological parallel is intimate. Like her father, Elizabeth, as head of Church and State, must have found comfort in the Roman law; she wielded the two swords, and was charged with all the powers of \textit{imperium} and \textit{sacerdotium}.

With all this in mind, let us look at the Church of Isis, Spenser's \textit{Templum Iustitiae}. He begins with a conventional assertion of the pre-eminence of Justice over the other virtues, and approves the ancient custom of establishing temples to Justice (\textit{Iustitiam namque colimus quasi Deam sanctissimam} says an old jurist, who cannot think of Justice as merely a virtue).\textsuperscript{6} But

\textsuperscript{1} Maitland, p. 134. \textit{Works of Francis Bacon}, ed. Spedding, Ellis and Heath (1861), xiv. 292.
\textsuperscript{2} Quoted by C. H. McIlwain, \textit{The High Court of Parliament} (1910), p. 330.
\textsuperscript{3} McIlwain, p. 294. \textsuperscript{4} Ullmann, p. 43. \textsuperscript{5} Ullmann, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{6} Kantorowicz, \textit{King's Two Bodies}, p. 111, n. 70.
what he then celebrates is not Justice but Equity—"that part of Justice, which is Equity"; and in the end he will show it to be the better part. The choice of Plutarch's myth has all Spenser's subtlety of invention. Plutarch notices that at Hermopolis Isis was identified with Justice.\(^1\) She is also associated with Astraea; with the moon, emblem of the *imperium*; and with matter.\(^2\) He wants us to remember that Justice and Equity reflect a vast cosmic process; that Equity is like matter, and that Justice gives it mutable forms. But he also means that Osiris is the common law considered in isolation from the equity courts. The priests of Isis are Ulpian's learned civilians, servants of the imperial equity (their long hair distinguishing them from the tonsured canonists) and they practise in such prerogative courts as Chancery and Star Chamber. (Spenser apparently borrowed the detail of their long hair from an account of the priesthood of Rhea.)\(^3\) Their slightly feminine appearance may also be appropriate to the service of an empress, and their asceticism to the intense virginity cult which attached to this inheritor of the titles *vicarius Iustitiae* (from the Empire) and *vicarius Christi* (from the British King Lucius). But chiefly their abstinence from wine, the blood of the rebellious Titans, alludes to their implacable opposition to innovation and recusancy (we recall the earlier association of the giant with Anabaptism). The foot set on the crocodile and the foot fast on the ground (vii) reflect the criminal equity of Star Chamber; the wand, like the one in Delbene which signified the control of Justice by Equity, stands for the power of Chancery in civil cases. Why does the crocodile enwreath her waist with his tail? (For I assume we must emend vi. 9: "That with *his* wreathed tail...") In Plutarch the crocodile is Typhon, an evil force, destroyer of Osiris. Here the Plutarchan sense is present also; Plutarch speaks of Typhon as discord and heat. Crocodiles were engendered by the sun on the mud of the Nile, and were in consequence a product, like wine, of the earth, and so in Spenser's

\(^1\) *De Iside et Osiride*, in *Moralia*, ed. Babbitt (1936), v. 11.

\(^2\) See F. A. Yates, "The Religious Policy of Giordano Bruno", *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, iii (1939-40), 183-4. The Egyptian goddess could conceivably also suggest the ancient Church of England, which Bruno called "Egyptian".

\(^3\) *Variorum*, v. 214-15.
allegory associated with rebellion and injustice. Here the crocodile is purely human law: *summa ius, summa iniuria.* Its tail suggests an impotent enmity towards imperial Equity; but the foot of Isis controls it as firmly as, in the woodcuts, that of Elizabeth controls the papacy.

In her dream, Britomart becomes a priest, but is at once (xiv) transformed into an empress, robed in imperial purple and crowned with the sun symbol. In view of what we already know about her as progenitress of the Tudors, we see that Britomart is now, in a vision, the imperial power of the dynasty. The Typhonic tempest and fire that follow are rebellion against this power, as established by the settlement—rebellion both political and religious, and suppressed by the common laws of England, here represented by the crocodile. The presumption of the crocodile after this can represent the impatience of the common lawyers with absolutist claims, and with the increased use of prerogative courts; and the strange union of Britomart and the crocodile is the full union of justice and equity in the imperial dispositions of the queen. Human law, according to medieval jurisprudence, can attain to natural law only in union with equity; and the source of equity is the empress. According to the priestly interpreter of the dream, the crocodile is Arthegall, who throughout the Book has stood for Justice considered independently of Equity; and from the union springs a lion, symbol of the natural law. Thus the empress, maintaining a proper relation between the common law and equity, is making proper use of her prerogative courts for the purpose of controlling the habitual and inevitable injustice of the law, and the forces tending to rebellion. Spenser, in short, has refashioned the traditional figures of Justice allegories in order to intervene in the current controversy between the courts of law and the courts of equity; and this in its turn implies a defence of the imperial claims of Elizabeth, which necessarily involve the Roman law.

We turn now to the Court of Mercilla. It is often said that Spenser's methods are not truly pictorial; but sometimes *The Faerie Queene* has the air of a great fresco, where one part should be seen in a simultaneous spatial relation with another, as in

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1 *Moralia,* v. 133.
Lorenzetti's great allegories for the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. So it is here. We remember that Britomart, fortified by her night in Isis Church, goes off to overthrow Radigund, the type of female tyranny. This is exactly echoed in Canto ix; for Mercilla is an aspect of Isis. They are related to one another much as are Iustitia and Buon Governo in Lorenzetti.¹ And in Mercilla's presence we are once more in the prerogative courts of England. Overseen by Awe, regulated by Order, the people seek the true justice denied them in the common law, a justice not perverted by "brybes, or threatves" (xxiv). A poet punished by the nailing of his tongue to a post has committed slander (he accused the queen of "forged guile"), which is a quotation from the Isis Church canto [VII. vii. 3] and there associated with the rebellious Typhon-crocodile). His offence and its punishment remind us of the jurisdiction and also of the penalties of the Court of Star Chamber. The queen's throne, with the lions and fleurs-de-lys of England and France, recall the obligatory presence of her State in that court. Above her is a cloud-like canopy borne up by angels, perhaps a deliberate reminiscence of the *maestà*.² She has two swords—the sceptre of peace and clemency and the rusted sword of justice; the *imperium* demands clemency,³ but equity is not merely a matter of mercy, and the rusted sword is sometimes used. The presence of two swords can, in addition, hardly fail to suggest the *potestates distinctae* of medieval political theory; she embodies both the *imperium* and the *sacerdotium*.⁴

She is surrounded by the daughters of Jove, the Litae, properly the *horai* of Hesiod, whose function is equity. They are Dike (Justice, and sometimes called Astraea), Eunomia, Ius, and Irene (Pax). With them are Temperance and Reverence.

² H. Kantorowicz compares Placentinus' Iustitia with a Renaissance *maestà* (*Glossators*, p. 186); but E. Kantorowicz contests this (*King's Two Bodies*, p. 112, n. 76). For elements of Mariolatry in the Elizabeth cult see Yates, "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea", pp. 76 ff.  
³ Yates, "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea", p. 62.  
⁴ Ullmann, p. 170.
These are imperial virtues. Long before Elizabeth, the emperor has been enthroned with Dike and Eunomia; the other virtues echo those represented in Lorenzetti's Sienese frescoes. The lion at the feet of Mercilla—and reminding us of the statue at Nonsuch of Henry VIII trampling a lion—again fulfils Britomart's dream, but is the common law in bondage to equity.

The tone of this passage is that of a courtly version of the popular Queen's Day celebrations, wherein Elizabeth was thanked for delivering the realm from the evil power of the Pope, and for maintaining the peace and security of the realm. Her accession day God had ordained as a Holy Day "next to that of his sonne Christ", and Spenser, though he thinks of her as Astraea and as Isis, also thinks of her as the Blessed Virgin. Being herself Justice incarnate as Equity, she proceeds, as Britomart proceeded to the suppression of Radigund, to the trial of Duessa. Duessa is frankly Mary Queen of Scots, the most distinguished victim of Elizabeth's prerogative courts; and the book moves on to an easy historical allegory of the Netherlands campaign against the Spanish supporters of antichrist. We are reminded of III. iii. 49, and the prophecy of a universal peace under a royal virgin who "shall Stretch her white rod over the Belgicke shore"—the rod, we see, was the rod of Isis-Equity in the seventh canto of the Book of Justice.

It would seem, then, that the Fifth Book has, at its critical points, a most elaborate juristic-imperialist allegory. I have not explained it in full; for my immediate purposes I shall be satisfied if it appears that scholars are wrong to reduce the Isis Church episode to a "marriage debate", and explain the vision of the crocodile threatening Britomart as a recapitulation of the rape of Amoret. Even Woodhouse's elaborate and rather fine interpretation makes it only a dream allegory of the future union of Britomart and Arthegall. I have tried to put the episode into a context of juristic allegory, and restore its links with Spenser's dominant heroic theme, the vision of Empire.

I have said enough, perhaps, in arguing for Protestant-imperialist ecclesiastical history in Book I, and for Protestant-imperialist equity in Book V, to show that I believe in a Spenser

more rather than less historical in his allegory, a Spenser more susceptible than it has lately been fashionable to believe, to historical analysis. In fact I do not think one can enter fully into his long dream without the kind of knowledge such analysis has provided, and should provide. Spenser followed the antique poets heroical in this: he excluded no learning that would subserve his national theme, and enable him to show knowledge and history as they are related to a vision of his country as the heir of Empire and of Eden.