



“Till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke”: Doctrines of Justification in Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article avance qu'il y a une dimension sotériologique sous-jacente dans l'Amoretti de Spenser (1595), en se basant sur le rôle des « oeuvres » et de la « grâce » dans la récompense du bien-aimé, rôle trouvant des correspondances théologiques dans la justification et les moyens par lesquels on est déclaré juste devant Dieu. On montre comment l'amoureux de Spenser lutte avec la notion de vertu par les oeuvres, et comment Spenser lui-même fait paraître des idées protestantes au sujet de l'insuffisance des oeuvres, même lorsque son personnage insiste sur leur utilité. Ainsi, le personnage de l'amoureux échoue systématiquement dans ses oeuvres, jusqu'à ce que la grâce lui soit octroyée, sans qu'il l'ait cherchée, et dans un moment de concession. Ce n'est qu'après cela que ses oeuvres trouvent une signification, mais seulement selon l'idée réformée que les bonnes oeuvres sont une conséquence de la foi. Toutefois, on ne peut déduire une ligne doctrinale parfaitement claire de l'oeuvre de Spenser, puisque la récompense y passe par le travail poétique. On propose d'expliquer cette ambivalence par l'attention que Spenser prête aux épîtres de Paul, lesquelles affirment occasionnellement l'utilité de la Loi malgré leur insistance répétée sur l'importance de la grâce. On peut également l'expliquer par l'absence de consensus doctrinal chez les Réformés quant au rôle des oeuvres après le salut par la foi.

“Till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke”: Doctrines of Justification in Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti*

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This article claims there is an underlying soteriological conceit in Spenser’s Amoretti (1595) concerning the roles that “works” and “grace” play in the beloved’s requital: roles with theological analogues in justification, the means by which people were declared righteous before God. I show how Spenser’s lover struggles with works-righteousness, and how Spenser betrays “Protestant” thought about the inadequacy of works even as his lover insists upon them. Spenser’s lover fails repeatedly in his labours until grace comes to him, unwilling, in a moment of concession. His “works” afterward become meaningful—but only according to the reformed understanding by which good works come after faith. Still, a doctrinal line cannot be perfectly drawn, since requital is effected through poetic labour. I propose this irresolution is a consequence of Spenser’s attention to Paul’s Epistles, and their occasional affirmations of the usefulness of law despite their overwhelming insistence on grace. It also stems from the lack of a reformed doctrinal consensus about the role of works after justification.

Cet article avance qu’il y a une dimension sotériologique sous-jacente dans l’Amoretti de Spenser (1595), en se basant sur le rôle des « œuvres » et de la « grâce » dans la récompense du bien-aimé, rôle trouvant des correspondances théologiques dans la justification et les moyens par lesquels on est déclaré juste devant Dieu. On montre comment l’amoureux de Spenser lutte avec la notion de vertu par les œuvres, et comment Spenser lui-même fait paraître des idées protestantes au sujet de l’insuffisance des œuvres, même lorsque son personnage insiste sur leur utilité. Ainsi, le personnage de l’amoureux échoue systématiquement dans ses œuvres, jusqu’à ce que la grâce lui soit octroyée, sans qu’il l’ait cherchée, et dans un moment de concession. Ce n’est qu’après cela que ses œuvres trouvent une signification, mais seulement selon l’idée réformée que les bonnes œuvres sont une conséquence de la foi. Toutefois, on ne peut déduire une ligne doctrinale parfaitement claire de l’œuvre de Spenser, puisque la récompense y passe par le travail poétique. On propose d’expliquer cette ambivalence par l’attention que Spenser prête aux épîtres de Paul, lesquelles affirment occasionnellement l’utilité de la Loi malgré leur insistance répétée sur l’importance de la grâce. On peut également l’expliquer par l’absence de consensus doctrinal chez les Réformés quant au rôle des œuvres après le salut par la foi.

MY loue is lyke to yse, and I to fyre;
how comes it then that this her cold so great
is not dissolu’d through my so hot desyre,

but harder growes the more I her intreat?
 Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
 is not delayd by her hart frozen cold:
 but that I burne much more in boyling sweat,
 and feele my flames augmented manifold?
 What more miraculous thing may be told
 that fire which all things melts, should harden yse:
 and yse which is congeald with sencelesse cold,
 should kindle fyre by wonderfull deuysse.
 Such is the powre of loue in gentle mind,
 that it can alter all the course of kynd.¹

There are few sonnets in Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* more Petrarchan than Sonnet 30. Playing on Petrarch's familiar "icy fire" paradox, Spenser's lover isolates two antithetical qualities—qualities that conventionally coexist *within* the lover—in the distinct bodies of lover and beloved.² Though the antitheses are separated, a paradox survives: both lover and beloved resist being tempered by the other; and by "wonderfull deuysse" their opposition only heightens, so that the couple is further estranged even as they come together. Indeed, scholarship has often remarked upon this sonnet's recapitulation of a Petrarchan convention, and upon Spenser's "imitative and adaptive abilities."³

1. All citations of Spenser's sequence and its accompanying *Epithalamion* refer to *Edmund Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion: A Critical Edition*, ed. Kenneth J. Larsen (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997). In the main text, a page number will follow a short title reference, e.g., "Am." for *Amoretti*.

2. See, for example, Petrarch's canzone 134, "I fear and hope, and burn and am of ice," in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 272.

3. William C. Johnson, *Spenser's Amoretti: Analogies of Love* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 127. Earl B. Fowler, who observes Spenser's tropological deviation in separating "yse" and "fyre," concludes his commentary of Sonnet 30: "[t]his adaptation of the convention is Petrarchan," in *Spenser and the System of Courtly Love* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), 32. W. L. Renwick remarks, "[t]his [...] ice and fire is everywhere among the Petrarchans," in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1947), 7:429 (cited, below, as *Variorum*). Peter M. Cummings writes: "the poet returns to his hopeless courting with one of the most traditional similes of the sonnet tradition," in "Spenser's *Amoretti* as an Allegory of Love," in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12.2 (Summer 1970): 170. Donna Gibbs suggests

But little has been said about the complexities of the final couplet, which includes a gesture towards Scripture that advances what I suspect is one of the sequence's fundamental negotiations: the roles that "works" and "grace" play in the lover's obtaining, and maintaining, the beloved.

While the first three quatrains of Sonnet 30 *do* simply—though cleverly—relocate Petrarch's "fire and ice" in two bodies rather than in one, the final couplet ("Such is the powre of loue in gentle mind, / that it can alter all the course of kynd") confounds the sonnet's logic. In the first place, because the beloved has been neither "gentle" (either as a personal quality or as the demeanour expected of a person of a particular social status) *nor* "lou[ing]" up to this point in the sequence—and these are understatements—the "gentle mind" can only be the lover's.⁴ Yet given the lover's outright failure to effect requital, the "powre[ful]" love that resides in this "gentle mind" *can't* be his, either. In the second place, "alter[ing] all the course of kynd" would suggest reversals—not intensifications—in both the lover's and the beloved's constitutions. Spenser's use of the word is infrequent; but when a Spenserian body "alters," it invariably becomes its inverse.⁵ So how is the "course of kynd" "altered" here? And *whose* "powre[ful] loue" and "gentle mind"—if neither the beloved's (since her mind is not gentle) nor the lover's (since his love is not powerful)—is doing this

that by the time of the *Amoretti*, the "icy fire" convention had become something of a "generic law," in *Spenser's Amoretti: A Critical Study* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 69. See also Larsen, ed., 160; and Johnson, *Analogies of Love*, 127.

4. She has been a "Tyranesse" who makes "massacres" and takes "captiuēs" with her eyes, making the lover's "pain her sport" (Sonnet 10); she has been a "cruell warriour" who "renew[s]" battle and "make[s] vnpiteid spoile" of the lover's life—even as he "sew[s] for peace" (Sonnet 11); she has "ambush[ed]" him as he presented himself "disarmed" before her in hopes of "mak[ing] a truce" (Sonnet 12); she has accused him of insincerity and has "turne[d] hir selfe to laughter" in the face of his weeping (Sonnet 18); she has acted more "saluage[ly] wyld" than a lion, putting her foot in his neck and "tread[ing] his] life downe in the lowly floure" (Sonnet 20); she has daily undone the "weau[ing]" of his work of wooing (Sonnet 23); she has deliberately misinterpreted his gift of the laurel leaf "with disdaynfull scorne" (Sonnet 29).

5. In *Muiopotmos*, "morning faire may bring fowle evening late, / And least mishap the most blisse alter may" (219–20), and "white streight legs [are] altered / To crooked crawling shankes" (349–50). In *The Mutabilitie Cantos*, "all the worlds faire frame [... Mutability] alter[s] quite; and made them all accurst / That God had blest" (7.6.5.5–8), and "Mercury, who though he less appear / To change his Hue, and always seem as one; / Yet, he his Course doth alter every Year, / And is of late far out of order gone" (7.7.51.1–4). In these Spenserian "alterings," "faire" becomes "fowle," "streight" becomes "crooked," "blest" becomes "accurst," "[on] course" becomes "out of order."

“altering”? We can’t rely on Petrarchan conventions to answer the questions this couplet poses. So how do we construe what appears as either a dissolution of the lyric’s logic or a Spenserian infusion of a word (“alter”) with new meanings?

Ever since Alexander Dunlop’s 1969 “Calendar Symbolism in the *Amoretti*,” which first posited a correspondence between Spenser’s sequence and the Church of England’s liturgical calendar, studies of the *Amoretti* have confirmed that Spenser was closely attending to the church liturgy while working on his amatory sequence.⁶ Dunlop recognized the placement of four sonnets in Spenser’s sequence that could be identified with distinct days on the church calendar: in particular, Sonnet 22 (“This holy season fit to fast and pray”) refers to Lent, and Sonnet 68 (“Most glorious Lord of lyfe that on this day, / Didst make thy triumph ouer death and sin”) to Easter. From this, Dunlop concluded that “each of the forty-seven sonnets [from 22 to 68] has a date corresponding to a day in the Lenten season of 1594, from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday.”⁷ More recently, Kenneth Larsen broadened the extent of this correspondence: *all* eighty-nine sonnets of the *Amoretti*, he claims, “correspond with consecutive dates” from 23 January to 17 May 1594, as well as with the “readings [...] prescribed for those dates by the liturgical calendar of the Church of England.”⁸ Larsen’s critical edition of Spenser’s sequence includes a table of the scriptural readings prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) for the three-month period in 1594 with which the sonnets correspond; and the resemblances in “conceits, themes, ideas, imagery, words, and [...] rhetorical structure” between each sonnet and the scriptural readings specified for the day it corresponds to are, indeed, striking.⁹

Dunlop’s discovery opened a door for more theological interpretations of the *Amoretti*, but the field remains an open one. Larsen’s edition is probably the most comprehensive offering of the sequence’s scriptural echoes; however, as is evident from its reference to “conceits, themes, ideas, [and] imagery,” the edition’s interest lies more in identifying where Spenser transferred scriptural

6. Alexander Dunlop, “Calendar Symbolism in the *Amoretti*,” *Notes and Queries* 214 (January 1969): 24–26. See William C. Johnson, “Spenser’s *Amoretti* and the Art of the Liturgy,” in *SEL* 14 (1974); Carol V. Kaske, “Another Liturgical Dimension of ‘Amoretti’ 68,” in *Notes and Queries* 24.6 (December 1977); and Larsen, ed.

7. Dunlop, 25.

8. Larsen, ed., 3–4.

9. Larsen, ed., 3.

language to the amatory poem than in the possibility that Spenser was actually working out theological inquiries in his love poems. Spenser *was*, of course, doing a lot of things at once in these lyrics: courting Elizabeth Boyle; thinking about Queen Elizabeth and his experiences in Ireland; referencing classical texts and mythologies as well as his own epic and the Petrarchan tradition out of which these poems, in part, arose. My intervention here is to take scholarship on the relationship between the *Amoretti* and the Church of England's liturgical calendar one step further, and argue that the sequence is doing more than simply appropriating the language and motifs of the days' readings. It is also, by analogy, working through real theological questions about justification—the means whereby a person was made or accounted righteous by God.

Spenser must have suspected something about what the amatory sequence could hold when he decided it was a genre fit to pair with the liturgy, and with a liturgical calendar whose scriptural readings frequently returned to the matter of justification. The Petrarchan sequence was, after all, about the real futility of poetic labour; and the futility of “works”—or, at least, the error of “works-righteousness”—was among the Protestant Reformation's greatest contentions. Indeed, Spenser had already written a pastoral engaged with ecclesiastical questions (the *Calender's* shepherds “repre[n]t two formes of pastoures or Ministers, or the protestant and the Catholique”); and he was at work on an epic that accommodated reflections upon religious doctrine even as he wrote the *Amoretti*.¹⁰ But while the women of *The Faerie Queene* are interpreted as “agent[s] of higher authority” who illustrate how “human beings [could operate as] agents of grace”—and while that grace is understood to lead “to a kind of temporal redemption” within the confines of the epic—scholarship on Spenser's

10. “Maye,” in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 87; henceforth cited as *The Yale Edition*. The literature on theology in *The Faerie Queene* is immense. For book-length studies, see John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Linda Gregerson's *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Joseph Campana, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). On Spenser's own references to the contemporaneity of these two projects, see *Amoretti* 33 and 80, and *Faerie Queene* 4.Proem.1.

love poems (and on the Petrarchan sequence generally) overwhelmingly reduces “grace” to a euphemism for sex.¹¹

I suggest we miss out on a lot by reducing the *Amoretti* to a less nuanced work just because such terms resurface in an “amatory” genre. Giving the BCP’s liturgical readings an even more centralized place in Spenser’s archive of sources—not just pointing out the way the *Amoretti* echoes them, but asking how their claims about justification inform the poems’ *thinking*—reintroduces nuance into Sonnet 30’s couplet: a nuance grounded as much in reformed discourse as the lyric’s three quatrains are in Petrarchan convention. The sonnet’s strange *volta* is, I believe, one of many “turns” the *Amoretti* attempts to make from Old Covenant to New, and from a soteriology (a theory of salvation—and, by analogy, a successful amatory suit) determined by works to one at the mercy of grace. This is a turn that the sequence as a whole cannot fundamentally sustain. The nature of the *Amoretti*’s “soteriology,” that is, is finally unresolved, reflecting the Scriptures’ apparent ambiguity on this very subject.

Sonnet 30 was written for 21 February 1594. The readings prescribed by the BCP for the day’s Evening Prayer included Galatians 4, a text that comments on the transition from Old Covenant to New—from Jew to Gentile—through the metaphor of “adoptive” or spiritual filiation.¹² Christ was sent forth, Paul claims, to “redeme them which were vnder the Law, that we might receiue the adoption of the sonnes” through grace.¹³ This “adoption” makes each Galatian a spiritual successor of Christ, no longer “a seruant,” Paul announces, “but a sonne [... and] the heire of God through Christ” (verses 5–7). Maintaining the

11. Gless, 64–65; Mallette, 133. On “grace” as a euphemism, see Richard A. Lanham, “*Astrophil and Stella*: Pure and Impure Persuasion,” in *ELR* 2.1 (Dec. 1972): 102; Margreta De Grazia, “Lost Potential in Grammar and Nature: Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*,” in *SEL* 21.1 (Winter 1981): 27; Anne Ferry, *The “Inward” Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 232; Marion Campbell, “Unending Desire: Sidney’s Reinvention of Petrarchan Form in *Astrophil and Stella*,” in *Sir Philip Sidney and the Interpretation of Renaissance Culture*, ed. Gary F. Waller and Michael D. Moore (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), 86; Chris Stamatakis, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Rhetoric of Rewriting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 181.

12. The BCP prescribed daily readings for both Morning and Evening Prayer. The readings on Sundays also included an Epistle and a Gospel; feast days and holy days had their own special readings as well. For more on this, see Larsen, ed., 5–7.

13. All scriptural citations, unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from the 1560 Geneva Bible: *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

opposition between servanthship and sonship, Paul then makes a metaphor of his allegory:

For it is written, that Abraham had two sonnes, one by a seruant [Ishmael, born of Hagar], & one by a fre woman [Isaac, born of Sara]. But he which was of the seruant, was borne after the flesh: and he which was of the fre woman, was borne by promes. By the which things another thing is ment: for these mothers are the two Testaments, the one which is Agar of mounte Sina, which gendreth unto bondage [... the other] Jerusalem, which is aboue, is fre. [...] For it is written, Rejoyce thou barren that bearest no children [...] for the desolate hath many [...] children [...] brethren, we are after the maner of Isaac, children of the promes (verses 22–28).

One can see why reformers would have been drawn to this passage. The “two Testaments” of Galatians 4—and its pronounced preferment of the New—could be interpreted as privileging Protestantism (“after the maner of Isaac, children of the promes”) to Catholicism (associated with the ceremonial and judicial laws received on “mounte Sina”); indeed, reformed commentaries on the Scriptures often made them relevant to contemporary debates by aligning Protestants with Gentiles and the works-centred Catholic Church with the ceremony-centred Jews of Paul’s age.¹⁴ The passage reprioritizes narratives of

14. William Perkins comments on this very passage: “the Galatians [...] supposed that the very observation of the lawe [...] did give life and justifie. This ignorance was to the Jewes as a vaile before their eies. [...] And this ignorance hath blinded the Papist at this day: for he supposeth that the Gospell is nothing els but the lawe of Moses.” And later, “[t]he Papist ascribes his conversion not wholly to grace, but partely to grace, and partly to nature, or the strength of mans will helped by grace. And thus are they borne after the flesh as Ismael was.” William Perkins, *A commentarie or exposition, vpon the five first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Printed by John Legat, 1604), 341, 349. These analogies were not limited to Pauline interpretations. In his commentary on Matthew, Calvin observes that “[t]he Jewes flattered themselues almost with the same pretense [that the “couenant of God” could be “satisfied”], which the Papists at this day do insolently chaleng to themselves,” in Calvin, *A harmonie vpon the three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. Eusebius Paget (London: George Bishop, 1584), 116. Luther “can make no better comparison than to say that it was the same in the old Jewish priesthood as now in the Papal priesthood” (*The Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 7 [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000], 165). Thomas Cooper (1517–94) writes, “Suche in tymes paste, were the Phariseyes among the Jewes, and suche in these dayes are Monkes, Freers, and others in the Church of Roome, which pretende misliking of the Gospell, because it teacheth that al men naturally are sinners

succession, from “flesh” to spirit (“promes”), distinguishing, as Lisa Freinkel puts it, “between two principles of inheritance: one based on birthright and generation; the other understood in revisionary and figurative terms”; between the Old Covenant’s “fleshly” law, and the New Covenant’s “promise” of grace.¹⁵

But the reformers’ dilemma was that the revised succession narrative of Galatians 4 is not a clean genealogical transfer. There is, of course, the glaring fact that Isaac *was* a direct descendant of Abraham, and his biological Jewishness precluded an absolute analogy between Gentile and Protestant causes. The solution to this apparent inclusiveness was to focus *not* on God’s promise that Abraham would father many nations (Jews *and* Gentiles), but on Abraham’s faith in God’s promise *over and above* his works, and on that promise as *miraculous* in light of Sarah’s barrenness. Paul himself makes Abraham an exemplary figure of faith-above-works in matters of justification: “For if Abraham were justified by workes, he hath wherein to rejoyce, but not with God [... rather,] Abraham beleved God and [that belief] was counted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:2–3).¹⁶ Commentators used Paul’s Abraham to bolster the doctrinal argument for *sola fide, sola gratia*—even going so far as to separate Abraham into two Abrahams—a “working Abraham” and a “believing Abraham,” the latter being the only one to whom God makes his promise.¹⁷ These commentaries also consistently took up a rhetoric of the natural and unnatural—not in order to oppose “natural” biological genealogy to “gracious,” “supernatural,” or spiritual adoption (since Ishmael and Isaac were both biological sons), but to oppose the possible to the miraculous. As

and the children of wrath,” in *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1864), 10.

15. Lisa Freinkel, “The Name of the Rose: Christian Figuralty and Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” in *The Sonnets: Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 243.

16. Each time Paul mentions Abraham, he imputes the patriarch’s righteousness to faith alone. See Rom. 4:9, 4:13, and Gal. 3:6–7.

17. Luther argues that Paul “putteth a plain difference between Abraham and Abraham. [...] As if he said: There is a working, and there is a believing Abraham [...] the world was promised” to the Abraham who “believed,” and not to the one “which is a worker, is circumcised, and keepeth the law.” *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. Rev. Erasmus Middleton (London: Printed by James Cundee, 1807), 161–62. William Perkins argues that “[i]t is true that [Abraham] was concerned with ‘the multiplication of his posteritie;’ but this should not be contrasted [...] with his true faith, a ‘working’ with a ‘believing’ Abraham.” Cited in *Galatians Through the Centuries*, ed. John Riches (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 163.

William Perkins writes, "In the birth of Isaac we see the vertue of the promise of God, when it is mixed with our faith: for then it makes things possible, that are otherwise impossible."¹⁸

Calvin clarifies that the miracle was not "that Abraham *begat* [...] Isaac: but that he did it by power from heaven, bycause his body was already withered and as good as half dead"; further, Sarah "had bin barrein all the foretime of hir life, & was full fourscore & ten yeres old." Thus, God's promise wrought a "*miracle [...] not after the common order of nature.*"¹⁹ In another sermon on Galatians, Calvin writes, "we bee Abrahams children, and the true Israell of God, as if we were discended of Jacobs race [...] becoming] by free adoption, which we be *not by nature.*"²⁰ Perkins observes, "thus was Isaac the child of promise, in that he was borne to Abraham, *not by the strength of nature*, but by Gods promise. And Paul opposeth the children of the promise to the children of the flesh, which were borne *by naturall strength.*"²¹

This rhetoric, it appears, was significant enough to influence the marginal notes in later editions of the Geneva Bible. While absent from the 1560 edition, the phrase "the common course of nature" appears three times in the 1590 side notes to Galatians 4.²² While the church used the Bishops' Bible for liturgical purposes, Larsen has made a compelling argument for Spenser's use of the Geneva Bible alongside both the Bishops' and Great Bibles as he "observed the widely recommended devotional practice of privately reading the *Book of Common Prayer's* daily offices"—and, of course, as he wrote his love poems.²³

18. Perkins, *A commentarie or exposition*, 344.

19. John Calvin, *Sermons of M. John Calvine upon the Epistle of Saincte Paule to the Galathians*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: Imprinted by Lucas Harison and George Bishop, 1574), 215 (italics mine).

20. Calvin, *Sermons of M. John Calvine*, 224 (italics mine).

21. Perkins, *A commentarie or exposition*, 360 (italics mine).

22. See Gal. 4:21, 4:23, and 4:29. *The Bible: That is, The Holy Scriptures Contained in the Olde and Newe Testament: Translated According to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages* (London: Imprinted by Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, 1590).

23. Larsen, ed., 13. Larsen enumerates: "For his reading Spenser has in the first instance used a Geneva version of the Bible and in the second the psalms from the *Book of Common Prayer*. [...] Whenever Spenser has established in his sonnet a correspondence with a day's second lesson, he has used the Geneva Bible in preference to the Great Bible or Bishops' Bible. [...] As well, Spenser has frequently had recourse to the particulars of the Geneva version's marginalia—a feature absent from other bibles"

I am wholly in agreement with Larsen; and the echo between the Geneva's marginal notes to Galatians 4 and the couplet of Sonnet 30 is one of many demonstrations of such concord.

Spenser would have observed the Geneva's repetition of the marginal phrase "the common course of nature" as he wrote Sonnet 30. Each time it is employed, "natural" birth and inheritance through "the common course" (the fruitful body of Hagar) are unfavourably compared to "unnatural" and miraculous birth through "promise and grace" (the barren body of Sara). "All men," as verse 23 and its side notes assert, are born "after the flesh" and "by the common course of nature." But the "true seed" is born "by vertue of the promes," disrupting biological filiation and engrafting a new—spiritual—kinship.²⁴ "Course," then, is a word applicable only to fleshly succession; there is no "course of grace" in the Geneva's commentary on Galatians because grace is an unnatural, miraculous interruption of the "natural course" of mankind. "Course of nature" and "course of kind" were interchangeable phrases for Spenser: where it is found in the literature of this period, both refer to biological genealogy and its concomitant inheritance.²⁵

When the lover begins writing his *Amoretti*, he does so with full confidence in the efficacy of "works" (an ironic confidence indeed, given that failure is fundamental to the genre), assuming an absolute correlative between labour and reward: "the harder [the beloved's love is] wonne," he conjectures, "the firmer

(14–15). For examples of linguistic resemblances between the Geneva text and its marginal notes and the *Amoretti's* sonnets, see pp. 15–17.

24. *The Bible* (1590).

25. A. C. Hamilton, in his edition of *The Faerie Queene*, footnotes "course of kind[e]" as "course of nature" each of the three times it occurs in the poem. See *Edmund Spenser: The Faerie Queene* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2001). 3.6.38.7; 4.6.30.5; and 6.8.36.5. The *Oxford English Dictionary* substantiates the history of the phrases' synonymy and linguistic drift, observing that "course of nature" was "formerly course of kind" ("course, n. 20" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com>). Vice is an inheritable character trait in Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarvm*: "if the Syre be ill inclin'd / His faults befall his sons by course of kinde." Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarvm. The three last Bookes. Of byting Satyres* (London: Imprinted by Richard Bradocke, 1598), 27. Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* opens with Videna grieving that her husband should cause "So great a wrong [...] against all course of kinde" (1.1.10–11) by dividing the kingdom's inheritance between his sons. See *The tragedie of Gorboduc* (London: William Griffith, 1565). Spenser himself uses "kind" as referring to biological inheritance later in the *Amoretti*, when he notes that his mother "[his] being to [him] gaue by kind, / from mothers womb deriu'd by dew descent" (Sonnet 74).

[it] will abide" (*Am.* 6). Thus he aspires to ever "more and greater" "woes and wrecks," so that "greater meede at last may turne" to him (*Am.* 25). This works-centred logic is grounded in the "natural laws" of the material world: in Sonnet 18, for example, he reasons that his tears will eventually soften the beloved's heart because "[t]he hardest steele" and "the firmest flint" are eventually worn down by "[t]he rolling wheele" and "drizling drops." Similarly, the "playnts and prayers" with which he "beat[s]" on her "wit" ought to have the same effect as an "andvyl," which eventually "mollif[ies]" even "the hardest yron" (*Am.* 32). But he is confronted, in Sonnet 30, with a situation that runs contrary to the laws of the natural world: ice (a "kynd" of element) that "harder growes" in the presence of fire; fire that "burne[s] much more" in its contact with ice. It is a set of circumstances as miraculous as a barren woman giving birth, and as paradoxical as a fruitful woman giving birth to a line of spiritually barren children. Indeed, the lover's question—"What more miraculous thing" is there "that fire [...] harden[s] yse: / and yse [...] kindle[s] fyre," thus "alter[ing] all the course of kynd"—rather neatly echoes Calvin on the spiritual succession of Galatians: the grace through which Sarah bears Isaac is a "miracle [...] not after the common order of nature."²⁶ Man under grace is not subject to the "natural" laws of the material world; for grace—like the "powre of loue" in Sonnet 30—"alters all the course of kynd." The 1590 marginal notes to Galatians 4:27 interpret Paul's privileging of Sara to Hagar as "foreshewing the casting off[f] of the Jewes, and calling of the Gentiles": "alter[ing] the course of kynd," indeed.

The New Covenant reduced the laws and ceremonies of "mounte Sina" to a single commandment: "loue one another: for he that loueth another, hath fulfilled the Law" (Rom. 13:8). Spenser's lover refers to this abridgment himself in the sonnet written for Easter Sunday: "let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought, / [since] love is the lesson which the Lord us taught" (*Am.* 68). Paul's genealogical revision from children-of-the-law to children-of-faith would appear, now, to resound in Spenser's "course of kynd," "alter[ed]" because of the "powre of love" that marks the New Covenant. And while Spenser's "gentle" conjures a multiplicity of meanings, we might add a theological resonance to the final couplet in recalling that "gentle" and "Gentile" were interchangeable modifiers.²⁷ A theologically attentive interpretation of Sonnet 30's couplet,

26. Calvin, *Sermons of M. John Calvine*, 215.

27. In the sixteenth-century text, with perhaps the most *gentle-Gentile* play, Shakespeare's Gratiano punningly calls Shylock "a gentle and no Jew," in *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

then, might read something like: “Such is the powre of loue (the New Covenant of grace) in *Gentile* (as opposed to the Old Covenant, works-righteous) mind, / that it can alter all the (salvational) course of [*man*]kynd.” While our lover complains that all his loving labour makes requital less likely—and the beloved more cold—the final couplet intimates a second “covenant”—one that does not compel labour at all.

I do not imply an interpretative hierarchy here; rather, I offer this theological rendering to be admitted simultaneously with the poem’s more pronounced Petrarchan signalings, that they all might ripple across the couplet’s surface together. In its *scriptural* ripple, the sonnet’s *volta* marks the turn from an Old Covenant failure to make the law work in favour of the labouring lover, to the New, and the possibility of “altering the course” of his works-centred courting. It is not a turn Spenser’s lover can yet wholly envision; and when it *does* occur it will not be complete. But the couplet registers the prospect of “gentle/Gentile” “loue”—a love that doesn’t “flatter” itself, as Calvin would say of the papists, with the “pretense” that the “couenant of God” could ever be “satisfied,” or with the pretense that a labour of writing could ever be enough to win a beloved who is also a figure of the divine.²⁸

Soteriological contexts for the *Amoretti*

The liturgical readings for the period corresponding to the *Amoretti*’s poems included all thirteen Pauline Epistles.²⁹ The BCP prescribed a Pauline text for every Evening Prayer, and Sundays included an additional excerpt from the

and J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 2.6.51. Thomas Morley’s 1595 songbook—one of many early English texts dedicated to “gentile” gentlewomen—opens with a dedication “To the Most Vertuous and Gentile Ladie, the Ladie Periam.” *Of Thomas Morley the first booke of canzonets to two voices* (London: Thomas Este, 1595). And Spenser’s E. K. glosses the “lythe” “Bullocke” of “February” as “soft and gentile” (*The Yale Edition*, 49).

28. Calvin, *Harmonie*, 116. The beloved’s beauty is “heavenly” (*Am.* 8); there is “nought on earth” that resembles the light of her eyes, and she is thus most like “the Maker selfe [...] whose light doth lighten all” (*Am.* 9); she is the lover’s “lower heaven” (46), though “lykened [...] best” to the *higher* one (*Am.* 55); she is “divinely wrought” (*Am.* 61), “borne of heavenly seed” (*Am.* 79), “matchable to none” (*Am.* 66), his “hevens blisse” (*Am.* 72). And she is *graced*, is *entreated* for grace, and *grants* grace on any number of occasions (*Am.* 2, 13, 20, 21, 25, 31, 40, 57, 64, 74, and 82).

29. *Fourteen* if one counts the Epistle to the Hebrews, which many reformers believed was written by Paul. See *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed. Ward Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 94, 250, 256, 273.

Epistles. That the days' liturgical readings were among the *Amoretti's* source texts means that Spenser was reading at least one Pauline text for every sonnet he wrote. Indeed, Paul's conversion narrative (Acts 9, 22, and 26), through which he revised his soteriological position, is a source text for *Amoretti* Sonnet 3, which was written for 25 January 1594: the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.³⁰ When Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus, he was irreproachably "just," outperforming his brethren in observance of Mosaic Law: "touching the righteousness which is in the Law," he claims, "I was unrebukeable" (Phil. 3:6). But his Epistles are written as the "new Paul," who now understands justification to be a matter of faith and love, rather than of the law's perfect observance.³¹ Still—as we will see—the "new Paul" cannot dispense with the law entirely; and we will watch the lover, who relentlessly sues for "justice" early on (*Am.* 12, 43, 48), undergo a doctrinal conversion that mirrors Paul's, revising his ideas about the source of justification while still holding "works" meaningful, in an ongoing way, to sanctification, in which man is "renewed [...] after the image" of God (Col. 3:10).

The framed device that opens the 1595 *Amoretti* may offer evidence about what Spenser's publisher, William Ponsonby—or his master printer, Peter Short—imagined Spenser's sequence to be doing in salvational terms.³² At the least it causes us to ask why Ponsonby thought *this* the most appropriate frontispiece. The device contains the motto "ET VSQVE AD NVBES VERITAS TVA," taken from Psalm 57:10, "For thy mercie is great unto the heauens, and thy trueth unto the cloudes"—a verse the Geneva glosses: "Thy mercies

30. The BCP prescribed Acts 9:1–23 for its Epistle, Acts 22:1–21 for Morning Prayer, and Acts 26 for Evening Prayer (Larsen, ed., 127). "[S]uddenly there shined rounde about him a light from heaven. [...] He [was] bothe trembling and astonied. [...] The men also which jorneyed with him, stode amased [...] and] he was thre days without sight" (Acts 9:3–9). Compare Sonnet 3: "the light [of her] hath kindled [such] heavenly fyre [...] That being now with her huge brightnesse dazed, / base thing I can no more endure to view: / but looking still on her I stand amazed [...] and] when my tounge would speak her praises dew, / it stopped is with thoughts astonishment."

31. See Eph. 4:22–24, Col. 3:9–11.

32. Printers, not authors, normally designed frontispieces, as was the case for *Amoretti and Epithalamion*. Indeed, Peter Short had used the design once before, in 1592, for Thomas Tymme's *A plaine discoverie of ten English lepers*. Larsen writes of Short: "that he has chosen a device whose principal significance was scriptural inspiration and truth for Spenser's volume may indicate that he was aware of *Amoretti's* own scriptural inspiration" (Larsen, ed., 121). I attribute, here, a specifically soteriological awareness to Short has well.

do not onely apperteine to the Jewes, but also to the Gentiles.” Larsen notes this emblem has “an exact precedent in [Geoffrey] Whitney’s *A Choice of Emblemes*, 166,” which—like Spenser’s—depicts a hand reaching through the clouds, holding a pair of dove’s wings, which in turn hold a book on which is inscribed its motto. Whitney’s accompanying verse reads “the Lorde doth giue such lighte, / That [...] those, that are so happie for to looke, / *Saluation finde*, within that blessed booke.”³³ Whitney’s poem interprets the image as a symbol of inclusive soteriology, like the Geneva’s gloss of Psalm 57 (“not onely [...] to the Jewes, but also to the Gentiles”); anyone who chooses to read can access salvation. Ponsonby’s choice of motto may have given an early modern reader pause: why would an amatory sequence (*Amoretti* means “little loves”) open with a scripture about the all-inclusive breadth (“unto the cloudes”) of God’s mercy? To situate the collection within such a soteriological framework would certainly have been to broaden the possibilities of readerly reception.

What may have been doubly striking to the reader is the placement of the device just below the collection’s title: *Amoretti and Epithalamion*. The success of the *Amoretti*’s suit, that is, is given away before the suit is even begun; and there are soteriological analogues to the courtship’s concluding with a wedding: in reformed writing and scriptural exegesis, marriage was frequently employed as a metaphor for election.³⁴ The sequence is thus “introduced”—

33. Larsen, ed., 121.

34. Perkins employs marriage as a figure for “effectual calling, wherby a sinner being seuered from the world, is intertained into Gods familie.” “The like we see in wedlock,” when “the husband saith, this woman is my wife, whom her parents have giuen vnto me, so that [...] I may both haue her and gouerne her.” William Perkins, *A golden chaine, or The description of theologie* (London: Adam Islip, 1595), 186–87. Heinrich Bullinger’s *The Christian State of Matrimony* names David, who “commendeth the state of mariage as a singuler blessing of God, which hee sendeth to them [...] whome he loveth” (italics mine); Bullinger’s translator, Myles Coverdale, repeatedly uses the word “election” where Bullinger instructs his readers on how to choose a spouse. See *The Christian state of Matrimony*, trans. Myles Coverdale (London: Imprinted by John Awdeley, 1575), fols. E2, G2–G8. Anne Lok’s speaker—in the first English sonnet sequence and a paraphrase of Psalm 51—requests that Christ “hold my faith from ruine and decay / With fast *affiance* and assured stay,” a pun that registers the synchronicity of faith and betrothal. See Anne Lok, “A Meditation of a penitent sinner, vpon the 51. Psalme,” in *Sermons of Iohn Caluin, vpon the songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke* (London: John Day, 1560). fol. H7. See, conversely, the Catholic Church’s Council of Trent, Twenty-Fourth Session, Canon 10: “If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema.” *The*

by way of its frontispiece—with a fragment of a psalm that conceives of an inclusive soteriology (“Thy mercies do not onely apperteine to the Jewes”), and is succeeded by a nuptial ode. Framed as such, the sequence appears to operate as a kind of middle space for readers to imagine a correlation between soteriological doctrine and earthly marriage, and the sequence as a salvational analogue.

In what follows, I will show how Spenser’s lover struggles with works-righteousness, the Catholic “belief”—as it was apprehended by reformed theologians—that presumes works “justly” merit salvation (and in the lover’s case, requital). In contrast to the majority of scholarship on the *Amoretti*, which readily conflates Spenser’s lover with Spenser himself and his beloved with Elizabeth Boyle, I propose that the poet frequently distinguishes himself from his “Catholic” lover, who appeals repeatedly, in the early part of the sequence, to expressions of pardon, purchase, and remission, and who is subtly likened to the “Pharisaical” Jews of the Scriptures. The early poems in the sequence thus quietly admit Protestant thought about the inadequacy of works even as Spenser’s lover insists upon them. Spenser has his lover fail again and again in his labours until grace comes to him, unlooked for and unwilling, in a moment of concession and exhaustion. The lover’s “works” become meaningful thereafter—but only according to the reformed understanding by which good works come *after* faith. The analogy is imperfect—these are, after all, love poems by which Spenser *was* courting Elizabeth Boyle; and the role of works in justification *was* doctrinally complex. But the over-arching narrative I offer here indicates that Spenser was doing more than simply echoing liturgical language; the courting process is also a real poetic negotiation with soteriological doctrine.

Spenser’s lover and the failure of works-righteousness

The early sonnets of the *Amoretti* are poetic labours as fruitless for the lover as works-righteous doctrine was for the reformers. In the opening sonnet of the sequence, the lover announces that the objective of his writing is the “heauen[ly] blis” he expects he will experience when his “rymes,” received and read by the beloved, “please” her. So far, so conventional—we need only recall *Astrophel and Stella*’s inaugural sonnet to observe that this correlation between

Canons and Decrees of the sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent, ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 195.

the lover's poetic labour, the beloved's pleasure in the *fruits* of his labour, and the expectation (or, at least, the hope) of "grace" is nothing new.³⁵ But we are quickly offered the prospect that the lover, at the same time, perceives the real inadequacy of his poetic works. Sonnet 2 first alerts us to this insufficiency. It is addressed to the lover's "vnquiet thought"—one he "bred" himself, of "th'inward bale of [his] love pined hart." This thought has, in time, grown too big for him, and so the lover urges it to

Breake forth at length out of the inner part,
 in which thou lurkest lyke to vipers brood:
 and seeke some succour both to ease my smart
 and also to sustayne thy selfe with food.
 But if in presence of that fayrest proud
 thou chance to come, fall lowly at her feet:
 and with meeke humblesse and afflicted mood,
 pardon for thee, and grace for me intreat.

The exact nature of this "vnquiet thought" is not given to us—though a reader might hear echoes in it of what is perhaps the most famous line of Augustine's *Confessions*: "our heart is unquiet until it rests in you" (1.1.1).³⁶ What we *do* know is that the "vnquiet thought" resembles "vipers brood" and has been "bred of bale," and so originates either in the "fire" the beloved "kindles" in the lover's heart (*Am.* 3), or in something more evil.³⁷ There are two other "unquiet thoughts" in the Spenser canon. "An Hymne in Honour of Love"—one of "Fowre Hymnes" published a year after *Amoretti and Epithalamion*—might shed some light on the nature of Sonnet 2's "unquiet." The hymn offers a catalogue of love's effects on lovers, which includes—not unexpectedly—a preoccupation with securing the beloved's grace. Spenser presents this scenario of the hypothetical every-lover whose "hart" has been "pierst" by Cupid's "empoisoned dart":

35. In Sonnet 1, Astrophel claims that he writes in order that Stella "might take some pleasure of my paine: / Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know, / Knowledge might pittie winne, and pittie grace obtaine." *The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat. Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 243.

36. "inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te." Thanks to Carla Freccero for this reminder.

37. "bale, n.2., n.1." *OED Online*.

Forth he casts in his unquiet thought,
 What he may do, her favour to obtaine;
 What brave exploit, what perill hardly wrought,
 What puissant conquest, what adventurous paine,
 May please her best, and grace unto him gaine.³⁸

What makes the “Hymne’s” thought “unquiet” isn’t simply that it is an active and ongoing contemplation: it is, more pointedly, that it is a meditation on works (“what he may *do*”). But there may be something more explicitly scriptural about this “unquiet” works-righteous thinking.

“Unquiet” is a *hapax legomenon*—insofar as it appears only once in this form—in the main text of the 1560 Geneva Bible. In Psalm 42:5, David speaks to his soul as the lover of Sonnet 2 speaks to his thought: “Why art thou cast downe, my soule, and unquiet within me? waite on God: for I wil yet give him thanks for the helpe of his presence.” Twice more in the psalms that follow, David reproduces both question (“why art thou disquieted?”) and answer.³⁹ Indeed, the Office of Morning Prayer in the liturgical calendar for the day corresponding with Sonnet 2 included Psalm 116. Spenser would have observed that the editors glossed the “soule” of verse 7 (“returne vnto thy rest, o my soule”) as “[that] which was vnquieted before.” The Geneva’s marginal notes stress David’s solution to his unquiet (“waite on God”), emphasizing both his faith and its constancy.⁴⁰ But reformed commentaries tended to focus more on David’s initial question than on his resolution. David laments his “unquiet,” they observe, in the moments *before* he recalls his faith. And this temporary faithlessness is inextricable from works-righteousness.

Luther argues that David’s “unquiet” issues from Satan, who “maketh us to thinke of our owne worthynes or unworthynes, of our good or evill desertes” and forget our faith in “the body and blood of Christ, the grace, the

38. *The Yale Edition*, 696–97, 701 (lines 121–23, 218–21).

39. Psalms 42:11 and 43:5.

40. “Thogh he susteined grievous assaltes of the flesh to cast him into despaire, yet his faith grounded on Gods accustomed mercies, getteth the victorie” (42:5); “Dauid did not overcome at once: to teache vs to be constant for asmuche as God wil certainly deliuer his” (42:11); “Whereby he admonisheth the faithful not to relent, but constantly to waite on the Lord, thogh their troubles be long & great” (43:5).

favour, and the mercie of God.”⁴¹ For Richard Sibbes (1577–1635), David’s unquietness is of the kind that occurs when “men by a natural kind of Popery seek for their comfort too much in sanctification [...] relying too much upon their own performances.” Sibbes claims the only way the “soul is quieted” is to hold “faith [...] as a shield” against works-righteous thinking.⁴² “Unquiet” as it was found elsewhere in the Scriptures was interpreted similarly; in William Baldwin’s translation of the Song of Songs, the speaker argues that the New Covenant of faith “bryngeth unto rest / Unquiet myndes” that are “at stryfe, / Through want of wurkes, wherein they put theyr trust.”⁴³

No doubt, then, Spenser understood “unquiet” within a context of works-righteous thinking; he suggests as much in his own hymn, and the relation was readily available to him in both Scripture and its commentaries. It seems the lover of Sonnet 2 is caught in the first phrase of the Davidic mantra; his “unquiet thought” about what works will win him (“seeke her to please alone”) has yet to cede to the faith David emphasizes in the second half of the above verses (“waite on God”)—a “fayth” (*Am.* 65) the lover will discover as the *Amoretti* proceed.

We might, now, be better able to understand the lover’s charge to his “vnquiet thought” to “intreat” for two explicitly distinct petitions: “pardon” for itself and “grace” for the lover. A pardon, or indulgence, was a relaxation of temporal penalty through the communal “treasury of merit” accumulated through the good works of all Christians.⁴⁴ Reformers accused Catholics of using pardons to make satisfaction for sins; the reformed position was that only Christ satisfies and only God justifies. Luther’s 1517 *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*, commonly known as his 95 Theses, was written foremost—as its Latin title suggests—against the practice of granting indulgences. The theses repeatedly refer to *veniae*, rendered in most English translations as “pardons.” While not in opposition to them absolutely, Luther warns of the consequences of trusting these purchasable “letters of pardon”

41. Martin Luther, *A commentarie upon the fiftene Psalmes, called Psalmi Graduum*, trans. Henry Bull (London: Imprinted by Thomas Vautroullier, 1577), 266–67.

42. Richard Sibbes, *The soul’s conflict with itself: and victory over itself by faith. Being a treatise of the inward disquietments of distressed spirits... The firth edition* (Glasgow: Printed by R. Urie, 1768), 44–45.

43. William Baldwin, *The canticles or balades of Salomon, phraselyke declared in Englysh metres* (London: William Baldwin, 1549), fol. L2.

44. See Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany, 1480–1720* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 208; “pardon, n. 1a” and “indulgence, n. 3a,” *OED Online*.

to secure salvation: pardons, he insists, are no substitute for God's mercy.⁴⁵ Protestant writings on pardons ranged from comic to caustic, but were always critical of man's entrusting his salvation to them.⁴⁶

In spite of this collective denigration, the lover of the *Amoretti's* early poems appeals repeatedly to what reformers interpreted as Catholic convictions about pardon, purchase, and remission. He asks, "[i]s there no meanes for me to purchase peace, / or make agreement with her thrilling eyes [...]?" (*Am.* 36).⁴⁷ He claims he would yield his life to the beloved in order to "assoyle" his "sorrows" (*Am.* 11), as though he could absolve himself of an ecclesiastical sentence; he alleges the "paine" of his "verse" can "purchas" her immortality (*Am.* 27), as though the lyric could be a work of supererogation.⁴⁸ He determines to make

45. See theses 32–55. "32. They will be condemned eternally [...] who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon"; "49. Christians are to be taught that the pope's pardons are useful, if they do not put their trust in them; but altogether harmful, if through them they lose their fear of God"; "52. The assurance of salvation by letters of pardon is vain." *Works of Martin Luther*, ed. Adolph Spaeth et al., Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915), 32–35.

46. Johannes Sleidanus laments "that the ignorant people should be so far abused as to put the whole trust of their salvation in pardons," in *A famous cronicle of oure time* (London: Jhon Daye, 1560), fol. 4. Without the saving grace of Christ's blood, William Tyndale warns his readers, they will "perish," though they have "a thousand holy candles about [them], a hundred tons of holy water, a ship-ful of pardons [...] and all the ceremonies in the world and all the good works." Cited in David Daniel, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 168. In the next century, "Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, [and] bulls" will become "[t]he sport of winds" in *Paradise Lost*, "upwhirled [...] i] nto a limbo [...] called / The Paradise of Fools" (3.492–96). See John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (New York: Routledge, 2013), 197.

47. The use of the term "making agreement" across reformed scriptural translations indicates there is only one figure who *can* "make agreement": in Tyndale's 1526 translation, God "sent his sonne to make agreement for oure sinnes" (1 John 4:10); in the 1535 Coverdale Bible, Christ, taking on the flesh, becomes "a faithfull hye prest [...] to make agreement for the synnes of the people" (Heb. 2:17). "No man," the Coverdale claims, "may delyver his brother, ner make agreement for him unto God" (Psalms 48:7).

48. "Assoil" was a theological term synonymous with "absolve" (v.1.a. "To absolve from sin, grant absolution to, pardon"). See John Hamilton, *The catechisme* (1552): "The wordis of absolutioun [...] I assoile the fra thi synnis"; *Penitential Confession* (1638), "God remitting whomsoever the Priest assoileth" ("assoil, v." *OED Online*). Gregory Mellema explains: "[t]he principle underlying the idea that the purchase of an indulgence can lessen the penalties for sin was that Jesus Christ and the saints had, through their exemplary lives on earth, built up a treasury of *good works*. Since this treasury can be of no direct benefit to these individuals, the scheme of indulgences was devised to enable others to benefit [...] through the purchase of indulgences it was believed possible for a measure of the accrued merit of Christ and the saints to be applied to their account." Gregory Mellema, *Beyond the Call of Duty*:

her “absens” his “penaunce” and her “presens” his “meed” (*Am.* 52), undergoing a theologically-inflected ritual of discipline for the prospective “merit” of her company, and evoking what the Thirty-Nine Articles considered one of “those five commonly called Sacraments” of the Catholic Church (meed-awarding penance) that Protestants deemed superfluous.⁴⁹ In reformed terms, Spenser’s lover is clearly in need of doctrinal clarification. And yet, that he would tell his “vnquiet thought” (the “work” of the poem) to beg “pardon” for *itself* and “grace” for *him* indicates an attention to reformed claims about doctrinal difference. If “pardon” cannot save the meritorious “work” of his poems, that’s one thing; but the stakes are much higher when the salvation of the lover himself is on the line. And so—as the reformers cautioned against—he is unwilling to trust his own salvation to a “pardon,” but looks, instead, for grace. But even this is a convoluted distinction: for the lover doesn’t “seeke and sew” (*Am.* 20) directly for grace; he seeks it through the work of the poem. While he would appear to privilege grace, he in fact privileges works as a *means* to grace.

The Pharisees—the New Testament’s “vipers”—committed precisely this sin.⁵⁰ “When god had promised the people a savioure to come and [...] saue them from their synnes,” William Tyndale reminds his readers, “the pharases [instead] taught to beleue in holy workes to be saued by.”⁵¹ Théodore de Bèze proposes that Paul called the Pharisees “enemies of the Crosse of [...] Christ” because nothing is “more contarie unto the grace of God, then the opinion of being able to doe any thing which [...] meriteth and deserveth any thing at Gods handes.”⁵² Three of the four times that the Gospels’ Pharisees are referred

Supererogation, Obligation, and Offense (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 44–45. In Sonnet 27, Spenser’s lover, too, has built up a treasury of “good works”—works whose “merit” he wants to transfer to the beloved—“purchasing” her eternal life *for* her, through his “paine” (“but what this verse, that neuer shall expire, / shall to you purchas with her thankless paine”).

49. See Article 25: “Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel.” *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 680. Henceforth shortened in citations as *Book of Common Prayer*.

50. Matt 3:7, Matt. 12:34, Matt. 23:33, Luke 3:7.

51. William Tyndale, *An answere unto Sir Thomas Mores dialoge made by Willyam Tindale* (Antwerp: S. Cock, 1531), fol. D3.

52. Théodore de Bèze, *Master Bezaes sermons upon the three chapters of the canticle of canticles* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1587), 188.

to as a “generacion of vipers,” the Geneva Bible offers these qualifying glosses: “Or, broodes” (Matt. 3:7 and 12:34), “Or, vipers broodes” (Luke 3:7). These marginal notes supply further proof that Spenser was attending to the Geneva Bible as he wrote the *Amoretti*; for to a “vipers brood” is precisely what the lover likens his “unquiet thought.”⁵³

Commentaries on these “vipers” emphasized not only their misguided confidence in works but also the distinction between their internal impiety and their outward shows of righteousness. Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) describes the Pharisees as those who “appeared outwardly and boasted themselves to be the Church of God,” though they were, indeed, nothing but “painted tombs.”⁵⁴ Calvin describes them as “deceiv[ing] themselues and others” in “outward shew[s] of holiness,” noting that John the Baptist attacks them in the Book of Matthew for “vaine shewe[s]” and “dissimulat[ing...] repentaunces.”⁵⁵ Thus the first two sonnets of the *Amoretti* introduce a doctrinal tension: Sonnet 1 offers an amatory analogue to works-righteousness, while the subsequent poem appears to caution against such an attitude, going so far as to intimate a relationship between the lover and the snakes of the Gospels. Sonnet 3 then employs the language of Paul’s conversion, perhaps proposing—early on in the sequence—the middle ground on which the collection appears to conclude.

It would initially seem that the lover deserves a few more sincerity-points than the Gospels’ vipers do; but Spenser subtly links him with the “outward shewes” of pharisaical ceremony in two later sonnets—possibly a complex issue for the poet, given that the liturgy *itself* was a kind of ceremony. In Sonnet 18, the lover mourns that the beloved’s heart cannot be softened no matter how extravagant his shows of anguish. Rather, “when I pleade, she bids me play my part, / and when I weep, she sayes teares are but water: / and when I sigh, she sayes I know the art.” Sonnet 54 takes the theatrical conceit—the beloved as cruel audience to the lover’s “playing his part”—further: in “this worlds Theatre. [...] My loue lyke the Spectator ydly sits, / beholding me that all the pageants play, / disguising diuersely my troubled wits.” Her reception is ruthless as ever: “when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry / she laughes, and

53. Psalms 116–18 and Matthew 22–23 were the liturgical readings for Morning Prayer on 24 January 1594, the date that corresponds with Sonnet 2. The “vipers” are referred to in Matthew 23:33.

54. Thomas Cranmer, *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, D.D. Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. Rev. Henry Jenkyns. Vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1833), 156–57.

55. Calvin, *Harmonie*, 114.

hardens euermore her hart.” Both responses to the lover’s performances seem, at first glance, rather callous. But Sonnet 54 is a virtual confession of pretense, even as it bemoans the beloved’s distrust: in these “pageants” (performances intended to deceive), “Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits, / and mask in myrth lyke to a Comedy: / soone after when my joy to sorrow flits, / I waile and make my woes a Tragedy.”⁵⁶

The lover rejoices when the occasion is “fit” for joy rather than when he *feels* it; he “disguises” his wits; he “masks” himself in mirth (again indicating disguise—though possibly also a play on the court masque); he “makes” his woes into a tragedy, crafting them to fit a performative genre. The whole thing smells of ceremony in its prescribed, external, and empty form. And indeed, the days’ liturgical readings for *both* Sonnet 18 and Sonnet 54 make reference to the tabernacle, a figure that played a considerable role in reformed typologies (from the “material tabernacle” to the “spiritual tabernacle”) linking Old and New Covenants.⁵⁷ The Epistle for the day corresponding to Sonnet 54 was Hebrews 9:11–16, which examines the typological fulfillment and supplanting of the first tabernacle, the place of priestly worship, by the second: Christ, the “greater and [...] more perfite Tabernacle” (9:11). What linked old and new tabernacles was the topos of blood sacrifice: in the first, the “blood of goates and calues” (9:12) was an acceptable sacrifice for atonement; the second compelled only faith in “the blood of Christ, which [...] purge[s] your conscience from dead workes” (9:14). If Paul did not write Hebrews, its message certainly echoed his.⁵⁸ While the supercession of one tabernacle by another is not as explicit in the day’s readings for Sonnet 18, it similarly distinguishes the second

56. “pageant, n.1c.” *OED Online*.

57. Luther writes of Hebrews 9, “the epistle treats of a twofold priesthood. The former priesthood was a material one, with material adornment, tabernacle, sacrifices and with pardon couched in ritual [...] while t]he new order is a spiritual priesthood, with spiritual adornments, spiritual tabernacle and sacrifices.” The difference between Christ and the priesthood, he continues, is that “Christ sacrificed not goats nor calves nor birds; not bread; not blood nor flesh, as did Aaron and his posterity: [instead] he offered his own body and blood, and the manner of the sacrifice was spiritual.” Martin Luther, “Christ our Great High Priest,” in *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 163–64.

58. See footnote 29.

tabernacle—Christ—from the first by the fact that it is “not made with hands” (2 Cor. 5.1, Heb. 9.11), but “*given*” (2 Cor. 5.1).⁵⁹

As Larsen observes, by the “theatre” image we might infer that Spenser was attending to the *koiné* σκηνή (*skēnē*) in both days’ readings. σκηνή was rendered as “tabernacle,” but was also a wooden stage on which actors performed.⁶⁰ Similarly, a “pageant” was both a spectacle and the stage on which that spectacle was represented; so the Greek σκηνή, Vulgate *tabernacula*, and English “pageant” all would have pointed to the convergence of religious ritual and theatrical performance.⁶¹ The sense of the lover’s wooing as a works-righteous “performance” in both sonnets, then, is palpable: he resembles the pharisaical “vipers” as he performs works on the stage/in the tabernacle, which was initially a place of priestly works of remission. And he insists on using his “hands”—taking his harp “in hand” (*Am.* 44); writing her name with two “hand[s]” (*Am.* 75); the handwriting of the poems themselves—although the New Testament claims that the second tabernacle is “not made with hands” but built of faith in the saving blood of Christ. Perhaps, then, Spenser’s beloved—described as “gentle” (“Gentile?”) eleven times over the course of the sequence, as opposed to Stella’s once—is not so much a cruel spectator as she is an unyielding mentor in New Covenant soteriology.

But if the lover is still oblivious to the reasons for his ongoing failure to effect requital, *Spenser* certainly isn’t. Each time the poet has made use of the day’s liturgical readings, he has aligned his lover with the Scriptures’ figures of disbelief, works-righteousness, and insincerity. He has made his lover ask for “pardons,” “purchases,” “assoilments,” and “agreements”—all echoing alleged Roman Catholic belief. And the lover’s resemblance to the papists is implied repeatedly. We must look to Spenser’s earlier work to fully appreciate the theological resonances of Sonnets 6 and 56.

In Sonnet 6, the lover reasons with himself in the face of the already-apparent failure of his courtship, insisting he ought not to be “dismayd” that the beloved’s mind remains “vnmoued.” In fact, he reflects, it’s *better* that the

59. For sonnet 18, see 2 Cor. 5:1, “For we knowe that if our earthlie house of this tabernacle [σκηνου] be destroyed, we have a buildyng given of God, that is, an house not made with hands, but eternal in the heauens.”

60. Larsen, ed., 183.

61. “A stage or platform on which scenes were acted or tableaux represented”; “a play on a religious theme” (“pageant, n. 1a, n. 2a.” *OED Online*).

courtship be labour-intensive, since “The harder [love is] wonne, the firmer [it will] abide.” His instruction to himself in the couplet is a natural extension of this reflection: “Then thinke not long in taking litle paine / to knit the knot that ever shall remaine.” It’s a logic we’ve seen before, a presumed ratio between work and merit. But the lover uses a significant metaphor for “harder wonne” love in the second quatrain:

The durefull Oake, whose sap is not yet dride,
is long ere it conceiue the kindling fyre:
but when it once doth burne, it doth diuide
great heat, and makes his flames to heauen aspire.

The oaks of Spenser’s early poems served as symbols of the Catholic Church. In Sonnet 28 of his *Ruines of Rome*—a translation of Joachim du Bellay’s 1558 *Antiquitez de Rome*—Spenser describes a “great Oke drie and dead,” still “clad with reliques of some Trophees olde”; she is “halfe disboweled,” and her “trunke [is] all rotten and unsound.” Despite the oak’s foulness, “of the devout people [she] is ador’d, / And manie yong plants spring out of her rinde.”⁶² Margaret Ferguson observes the antipapal resonance of Spenser’s poem, distinguishing it from the sentiment in Du Bellay: his “tree has [a] moral unsoundness [...] absent in the [original]; and he suggests [...] the devotion symbolized [by the “yong plants”] is an error that springs directly from the “rinde” of the old tree of Rome.”⁶³ Ferguson elucidates no further; but “rinde” is certainly the decisive word, as it was frequently used as a metaphor to distinguish Protestant inwardness from the outward shows and ceremonies of Catholicism. The Geneva Bible distinguishes “the number of the faithful” who “atteine to the pith and substance” from those who “onely staye in the outwarde rinde and barke” (Mark 4:11 and marginal note). The rhetorician Thomas Wilson (1524–81) argues that “the Gospell resteth [...] not in the outward rynde, but in the very hart”; for the preacher Edward Elton (ca. 1569–24), men like “[t]he Pharises” “rest in the outward rinde and barke of the law of God, [and] see not the pith and marrow of it.”⁶⁴ That the “yong plants”

62. Joachim du Bellay: *Antiquitez de Rome*. Translated by Edmund Spenser as *Ruines of Rome*, ed. Malcolm C. Smith (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), 75.

63. *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 186.

64. Thomas Wilson, *The rule of reason, conteinyng the arte of logique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1551), fol. D5; Edward Elton, *The complaint of a sanctified sinner answered* (London: G. Eld, 1622), 292.

of Spenser's oak spring from its "rotten" "rinde" suggests their "devout" acts are but *acts*, lacking the "pith and substance" of the faithful.⁶⁵ It is perhaps of note, then, that even the *inward* "sap" of the oak in Sonnet 6 must be "dride" before its "flames [can] to heauen aspire."

Spenser is more explicit about the oak-papacy analogy in "Februarie" of his *Shepherd's Calender*, published a decade after *Ruines of Rome*. Like the oak in *Ruines*, "Februarie's" oak is but a shadow of the dignified, opulent, and hallowed tree it once was. Though "often crost with the priestes crewe, / And often halowed with holy water dewe," it is now a "faded Oake, / Whose bodie is sere, whos braunches broke," whose "toppe [is] bald, and wasted with wormes," and whose "honor [is] decayed."⁶⁶ E. K., the *Calender's* annotator, instructs the reader to associate "the finall decay of this auncient Oake" with "the popishe priest [who] used to sprinckle and hallowe the trees from mischaunce." E. K.'s gloss is principally about the futility of the priestly blessing of trees; but the preservation of the oak-papacy analogy in the ten years that separated *Ruines of Rome* and *The Shepherd's Calender* suggests it was a powerful one for Spenser. Of course, the oak of "Februarie" is more complex than a straightforward stand-in for the failure of "works righteousness": it remains crucial to the briar's protection, after all, and its destruction is also the ruin of the briar. But that it serves as the dominant metaphor in a sonnet insistent on "har[d] wonne" love—and on the lover's belief that his "litle paine[s]" will win him entrance to "heauen"—suggests those nuances are still there in the *Amoretti*.

Fifty sonnets later, Spenser is still having a little fun at the expense of his doctrinally-flawed lover. Each quatrain of Sonnet 56 presents a miniature episode of destruction: a "Tygre" "oppre[s]" a "feeble beast" it encounters while "hunt[ing] after blood"; a "storme" finds "a tree alone all comfortlesse" and "beats on it strongly" to bring it to ruin; a "desolate" ship "suffer[s] wreck" when it crashes into "a rocke amidst the raging floods." The sonnet closes by compressing these episodes into a single analogy: "That ship, that tree, and that same beast am I, / whom ye do wreck, do ruine, and destroy." These blighted figures—prey, ship, and tree—are all derived from Petrarch's *canzone* 323; and it would be easy to dismiss Spenser's sonnet as another instance of "purely Petrarchan"

65. Malcolm C. Smith also notes a shift in grammatical tense in Spenser's translation: while du Bellay's Rome "est le plus honoré," Spenser's rewriting "place[s] esteem for Rome in the past" (*Joachim du Bellay: Antiquitez*, 75).

66. *The Yale Edition*, 47, 45.

translation. But this was not the first time Spenser translated *canzone* 323. Jan van der Noot's 1569 *Theatre for Worldlings* contains his earliest adaptation. The *Theatre* is a Calvinist diatribe, and Van der Noot arranged Spenser's translations so they could only be interpreted as longing for the destruction of present-day Rome and the papacy. Spenser's translation of *canzone* 323 was followed by his translation of Du Bellay's "Songe," a series of dream-visions about Rome's fall; then followed four sonnets interpreting the events in the Book of Revelation as the eradication of the Catholic Church. These "Visions from Revelation" were likely written by Van der Noot himself; however, nothing separates the last of Spenser's translations from the first "vision." The decline of classical Rome and the apocalyptic destruction of the Roman Catholic Church thus become, in the *Theatre*, two significant moments of a single history.

Whether or not Spenser had anything to do with the placement of his translations in the *Theatre*, he surely recognized Van der Noot's intentions once the poems were published. In having the *Amoretti*'s lover in Sonnet 56 assume the very roles Van der Noot made into metaphors of the papacy's demise, Spenser evokes their earliest theological sentiments. The sonnet reiterates the "prophecy" of Roman Catholic demise by repeatedly "wreck[ing]," "ruine[ing]," and destroy[ing]" the works-righteous lover.

The provocative irony in the analogy the early poems of the sequence sustain is one in which every effort at "good works" achieves the very "woes and wrecks" (*Am.* 25) the lover experiences. From the Petrarchan perspective, these "works" are the pains the lover suffers for the beloved; the undesirable effects are a matter of some combination of the beloved's cruelty and chastity. From the reformed perspective, too, the consequences of works are "woes and wrecks." This is particularly the case for works performed prior to justification, insofar as such labours are not simply failed attempts at righteousness: they are sins. Article 13 of the Thirty-Nine Articles ("Of Works before Justification") asserts as much: "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God [...] for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."⁶⁷ Foolish assurance in the merit of one's good works, that is, invites the "woes and wrecks" of spiritual ruin. Thus, from both Petrarchan and reformed points of view, "works" and "wrecks" are frequently indistinguishable.

67. *Book of Common Prayer*, 677.

The difference is that, according to the reformed perspective, divine grace has the power to convert those “wrecks” into lasting “works.” The *Amoretti* presents this grace-conversion in Sonnet 67.

Reformed justification: grace and regeneration

Prior to his conversion, Paul stands fearless in the face of God’s justice because he believes himself just according to the Old Covenant of works-righteousness: “touching the righteousnes which is in the Law, I was unrebukeable” (Phil. 3:6). Similarly, the doctrinal position that the penitent could be “justly” recompensed for his work remains an irresistible draw for our lover: he even sues for “justice” on three occasions (12, 43, 48), apparently oblivious to the reformed opinion that man’s justification “*exclude[s]* the justice of [... his] works.”⁶⁸

In the first of these, the lover determines to “make a truce” and come to “termes” with the beloved’s “hart-thrilling eyes,” and so “disarm[s]” himself and stands “fearlesse” before her so that “iustice I may gaine” (*Am.* 12). Given the Council of Trent’s affirmation of God’s “justice” in the face of “every good work,” we can understand why the lover would approach the beloved with such confidence.⁶⁹ But a reformed reader would have taken pause at this fearlessness. The Pauline admonition, after all, was to “make an end of your owne saluation with feare and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), a “feare and trembling” that reformed expositors—however paradoxically—associated with faith.⁷⁰

68. The Council of Trent reminds adherents of the Catholic Church to “abound in every good work, knowing that your labour is not in vain [...] *for God is not unjust*, that he should forget your work.” “Sixth Session, Chapter XVI,” in *Canons and Decrees*, 42 (italics mine). Thomas Cranmer, on the other hand, writes: “the grace of God doth not exclude [His] justice [...] but] excludeth the justice of [...] our works,” in “The Second Part of the Sermon of Salvation,” in *Certain Sermons or Homilies*, 22.

69. *Book of Common Prayer*, 677.

70. Calvin writes of a “fear and trembling, which, so far from impairing the security of faith, tends rather to establish it; namely, when believers [...] in] view of their own inherent wretchedness, learn their entire dependence on God.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 369, 3.2.22. For Thomas Wilcox, “feare and trembling” is “always adjoynd with faith, and is opposed not to doubting [...] but to carnall securitie and carelesnes.” While men “suppose that faith and feare cannot stand together,” Wilcox asserts, “they are deceived: for the faithfull [...] feare and believe also.” Thomas Wilcox *A discourse touching the doctrine of doubting* (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legat, 1598), 50–51.

The “trembling” of Sonnet 67—the turning point of the *Amoretti*, in which the beloved (in the figure of a deer) comes to the lover (in the figure of a hunter) of “her owne [good]will”—thus seems to me the most crucial word of the sonnet. Here is the sonnet in full:

LYKE as a huntsman after weary chace,
 Seeing the game from him escapt away:
 sits downe to rest him in some shady place,
 with panting hounds beguiled of their pray.
 So after long pursuit and vaine assay,
 when I all weary had the chace forsooke,
 the gentle deare returnd the selfe-same way,
 thinking to quench her thirst at the next brooke.
 There she beholding me with mylder looke,
 sought not to fly, but fearelesse still did bide:
 till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke,
 and with her owne goodwill hir fyrmely tyde.
 Strange thing me seemd to see a beast so wyld,
 so goodly wonne with her owne will beguyld.

William Johnson observes that Spenser draws together Christ’s final words here (“My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?”; “I *thirst*”; “Father into thy *hands* I commend my spirit”); Christ’s ultimate act of justifying grace for man thus resonates in the hunter’s experience of “grace” from the “deare” beloved.⁷¹ Anne Lake Prescott has proposed another source in the sixth lyric of Marguerite de Navarre’s 1547 *Chansons spirituelles*. Prescott’s rendering is worth quoting at length:

A young hunter asked a happy and wise woman if the chase he was looking for could be found in that forest, and he said he had plenty of heart to win this venison by [...] merit and reason. She said to him, “My lord, it is indeed the season to take it, but you are a bad hunter. It is not to be taken by the chase. [...] What you seek is in the woods, where no faithless person goes” [...] the hunter [...] said, “You speak with great ignorance: I must turn and rouse the deer [...] and must chase it; yet you

71. Johnson, *Analogies of Love*, 58 (italics mine).

expressly tell me it cannot be caught by my effort" [... she said] "If you would please to sit and place yourself on the edge of a spring, and rest your body and spirit [...] indeed without your taking other pains the deer would come straight to you, and to take it would require only the net of your humble heart [...]" "My lady, I do not believe one [...] gets anywhere without work or with only loving and believing [...]" The lady said, "you will be lord and owner of Earth and Heaven if Faith opens your eyes—but you are a bad hunter."⁷²

Spenser would surely have been taken by Marguerite's poem. Indeed, Prescott claims elsewhere that "Marguerite makes it clear that the deer in her witty evangelical allegory is the crucified Christ," and reminds readers that "the next song in [Marguerite's] volume is, like *Am.* 68, a Resurrection poem."⁷³ It would have been one thing for Spenser to simply make use of the church's liturgical calendar as a daily prompt, or constraint, or in service of a game of generic crossover in constructing his sequence; that he appears to have turned to other lyrics reflecting upon soteriological issues means that his poetic project was more centred upon real theological inquiry than it was engaged in play. The "happy and wise" woman's insistence on a "chaseless" faith in the woods where only "faithful" hunters go, against the hunter's rejection of "loving and believing" for "merit" and "effort," plays out precisely the debates about justification that the Reformation ushered in (for readers concerned about Marguerite's hunter, he *is*, in the end, converted). Further, while the hunter of Marguerite's *Chansons* believes he must "rouse" the deer, frightening it out of its hiding place, the woman's depiction of the deer implies it cannot be frightened: it "will come to [him] through love"; "it will let itself be taken" by first "taking" *him*. Marguerite's deer is so fearless, in fact, that once it is caught, it will "teach [the hunter] to eat its flesh and blood."⁷⁴

Larsen writes of Spenser's qualifier "halfe trembling" that its "antecedent remains open, implying mutuality."⁷⁵ Spenser's grammar certainly lends itself to

72. Anne Lake Prescott, "The Thirsty Deer and the Lord of Life: Some Contexts for *Amoretti* 67–70," in *Spenser Studies* 6 (1986): 69–70.

73. Anne Lake Prescott, "Allegorical Deer and *Amoretti* 67," in *Edmund Spenser's Poetry: Authoritative Texts and Criticism*, ed. Hugh MacLean and Anne Lake Prescott (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 810.

74. Prescott, "Allegorical Deer and *Amoretti* 67," 810.

75. Larsen, ed., 200.

this reading; when read as a translation of—or commentary on—Marguerite’s lyric, however, the *substance* of the sonnet does not. We know that Spenser’s deer “bide[s]” “fearelesse” by the brook; and while Larsen proposes that “the shaking” might be “a continuing after-effect” of the chase, the deer “*still*” bides—suggesting either that she is motionless (thus not trembling) or that she has been there for some time (long enough to dispel any “after-effects”). Further, she “return[s] the selfe-same way”—*knowingly*—to the site at which her life, just moments ago, appeared threatened. Why would she return, if not fearless—and thus, not trembling? On the other hand, the huntsman is “weary” enough to need rest, his hounds are “panting,” and he is in a state of wonder, perhaps shaken by the “strangeness” of the event. All of this suggests the “halfe trembling” figure is more logically (if not more grammatically) the huntsman—working out his salvation, as it were, “with trembling.” While this doesn’t disentangle the final couplet for us entirely, it does offer a reformed approach to justification, an unanticipated conversion-event not unlike Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus. That the deer is “wonne” “with her owne will”—and neither by the lover’s *will* nor by his *works*—strongly suggests a turn from Old Covenant to New.

At this point, I propose, an early modern reader preparing soon to turn the page to the *Epithalamion* would have anticipated that the remainder of the *Amoretti* would unfold according to the *ordo salutis*, the Pauline “order of salvation” the reformers adopted from Romans 8: “For those which [God] knewe before, he also predestinate to be made like to the image of his Sonne [...] Moreouer whome he predestinated, them also he called, and whome he called, them also he justified, and whome he justified, them he also glorified” (29–30). The *ordo* is, certainly, not a rigid narrative of events; but no scriptural text was more cited in Protestant soteriology than Romans 8, and the Thirty-nine Articles virtually systematized these phases of salvation.⁷⁶ A reader reading the

76. John Spenser Hill, *Infinity, Faith, and Time: Christian Humanism and Renaissance Literature* (Montreal: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 1997), 143; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35. William Perkins’s 1591 *A golden chaine, or the description of theologie: containing the order of the causes of salvation and damnation* is probably the most comprehensive text on the *ordo*. The Thirty-Nine Articles took it up straightforwardly in Article 17: “they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, [are] called according to Gods purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works: and at length by Gods mercy they attain to everlasting felicity” (*Book of Common Prayer*, 678). George

sequence with a view to soteriology (the title page, its device, the lover's failed works despite his desire for "heauen[ly] blis" [*Am.* 1], the evident "grace event" of Sonnet 67) would have expected Spenser's lover's reception of grace to be followed by something resembling sanctification ("to be made like to the image of [God's] Sonne").

And indeed, that reader's expectation would have been met. For Paul and his commentators, justification "is joynd with" regeneration, which the Geneva Bible also called "sanctification."⁷⁷ Reformed descriptions of the terms suggest there was a great deal of overlap between these two processes: both refer to the remission of sins and imputation of Christ's righteousness; both have to do with something approximating "works."⁷⁸ The mirror trope was also employed for both: in regeneration and in sanctification, we are "form[ed...] anew [in] the image of God." Calvin cites Paul in summarizing regeneration, wherein we "with open face behol[d] as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [and] are changed into the same image."⁷⁹ Shortly after Sonnet 67's apparent transition from Old Covenant (works) to New (grace), Spenser offers one outstanding echo of this mirror trope, a "likeness" that announces the lover's regeneration. In Sonnet 78, the lover laments having already lost the deer he just so "fyrmyly tyde" "with her owne goodwill" (*Am.* 67). He has since undergone a metamorphosis:

Lackyng my love I go from place to place,
 lyke a young fawne that late hath lost the hynd:
 and seeke each where, where last I sawe her face,
 whose ymage yet I carry fresh in mynd."

Herbert's "Prayer After Sermon" at the close of *The Country Parson* reads, "Thou has elected us, thou has called us, though hast justified us, sanctified and glorified us." See *Herbert's Poems and Country Parson*, ed. Isaac Walton (London: Printed for W. Baynes, 1824), 338.

77. "Christ [...] justifies no man without also sanctifying him," because "[t]hese blessings are joined by a perpetual and inseparable tie" (*Institutes* 3.16.1); Rom. 6 head note; Rom. 6:1 marginal note.

78. Perkins defines sanctification as the process "whereby such as beleeve, being deliuered from the tyrannie of sinne, are by little and little reued in holinesse and righteousness" (*A golden chaine*, 203); Calvin defines regeneration as the process by which "God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in his elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as his temples" (*Institutes* 3.3.9).

79. *Institutes* 3.3.9; 2 Cor. 3:18.

The “young fawne” searches “bowre” and “field” and cannot locate his love, though both “bowre” and “field” are “full of her aspect.” Each time he directs his eyes outward, they only return to him—until he instructs them, in the final couplet, to “[c]easse then [...] to seeke her selfe to see, / and let my thoughts behold her selfe in mee.”

Sonnet 78 is the *Amoretti*’s ultimate introspection sonnet: sight becomes insight; the “ymage” of the beloved is now within. But what is particularly significant to a soteriological reading is that the lover is no longer the deer’s hunter, but her offspring (“lyke a young fawne”): he carries a mental “ymage” of her “in mynd” and a physical “ymage”—her “aspect”—in his face. Spenser would seem to be taking up two distinct tropes for justification and regeneration here. The first carries us back to Galatians: the hunter has been spiritually (and “unnaturally”) “adopted” into a cervine genealogical line through the grace-event of the deer’s return, reflecting Paul’s claim that “we might receiue the adoption of the sonnes” through a revised succession narrative (Gal. 4:5). But he also appears to be taking up Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians as his lover/fawn looks out upon a world full of the “aspect” of the beloved/hind, looking *like* her as he looks upon objects that *reflect* her: “we all beholde as in a mirrour the glorie of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image” (2 Cor. 3:18). That the fawn’s eyes “returne to [him]” each time he sends them out “to see theyr trew object” implies that the lover’s sanctification has begun: his “aspect” and his “ymage” are “the same” as the beloved’s, such that he not only *resembles* her, but he also *sees as she sees*.

The liturgical readings for the day corresponding with Sonnet 78 (Sunday 5 May 1594) included James 1:22–24 as its Epistle. Spenser would have read:

be ye doers of the worde, and not hearers onely. [...] For if anie heare the worde, & do it not, he is like vnto a man, that beholdeth his natural face in a glasse. For when he [...] goeth his way, [he] forgetteth immediatly what maner of one he was.

One can see how reformers were suspicious of James and the text’s emphasis on “doing.” Even as Calvin endeavours to refer back to the *sola fide* and *sola gratia* of Paul’s Epistles, citing Corinthians and Galatians in his commentary on James 1, he cannot help but slip into a discourse of works: “faith is comprehended by James, *along with other works*”; “[James] means that happiness is placed

in actual *doing*, and not in colde and lifeless hearing.”⁸⁰ Sanctification and regeneration, after all, troubled the notion that works and the law were entirely inconsequential. By definition, the elect—now renewed in God’s image—manifested their regeneration outwardly: this was the tension at the site at which *sola fide* met Paul’s mirror-image metaphor. The question that remains, then, is how the *Amoretti*—which appears, in Sonnet 67, to privilege grace over works and “feare and trembling” over works-righteousness—deals with the more complex discourses about the role of works in the life of the regenerate after his justification.

Poetic work, works-righteousness, and doctrinal irresolution

Much has been written about the apparent ambivalence with which the *Amoretti* concludes.⁸¹ While Sonnet 84 appears to substantiate the lover’s saved status (“Onely behold her rare perfection, / and blesse your fortunes fayre *election*”), it simultaneously serves as an admonishment to “[l]et not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre / breake out”—an acknowledgment of the ever-present possibility of backsliding. The final four sonnets are a response to some slander that has apparently “stirre[d] up coles of yre” in the beloved (*Am.* 86); a meditation on how time has been protracted since the lover “le[ft] the presence of [his] love” (*Am.* 87); a complaint about the darkness that envelops him as a consequence of this separation (*Am.* 88); and a comparison of the lover to the “[c]ulver” who, “disconsolate” and “desolate,” “[s]its mourning for the absence of her mate”

80. John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Aberdeen: Printed by J. Chalmers and Co., 1797), 27–28 (italics mine).

81. Alexander Grosart writes: “it is simply impossible to go beyond Sonnet 85. [...] Pity that ever the Poet gathered together the [sonnets] that follow. They seem to [...] have] been inspired by a different object and under wholly different circumstances” (*Variorum*, 452). J. W. Lever tries to make sense of the end by offering an analogue in *The Faerie Queene’s* Blatant Beast of Slander, who “has escaped and at the close of the book is still at large.” J. W. Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (London: Methuen & Co., 1956), 128. Noam Flinker finds an explanation in Baldwin’s *Canticles*, when the beloved can’t find her lover because she “fail[s...] to open her door [to him] immediately.” Noam Flinker, *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature: Kisses of Their Mouths* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 83. Kenneth Larsen notes that “[t]he final three sonnets [...] are marked by their sense of absence, their comfortlessness, and their ‘expectation’” and reads them as references to Expectation Week (Larsen, ed., 11). While these analogues help gather Spenser’s sources or reveal his ongoing concerns, none fully explains why the *Amoretti* would conclude so unsettlingly—especially given the *Epithalamion* that follows it.

(*Am.* 89). Granted, these sonnets are liturgically associated with the period following Christ's Ascension and leading up to the Feast of Pentecost, so the topos of absence is, at this point, predictable. But an additional cause of this "unquiet" conclusion may point to the failure of doctrinal consensus about the role of works on the other side of justification.

If Spenser's lover, in other words, had simply stopped producing lyric "works" after Sonnet 67, we would have a clean-and-easy analogue to a salvation theory in which works are altogether irrelevant. But even Paul, our *sola fide / sola gratia* apostle, called the Law "holie, and the commandment [...] holie, and just, & good" (Rom. 7:12). Carol Kaske notes that "[i]n Spenser's time, the Protestant Bible was more contestatory of Paul's [...] emphasis on grace because it still contained the deuterocanonical books, and so did the lectionary." "Ecclesiasticus," for example, "is very works-righteous, placing the burden of salvation entirely upon man."⁸² The New Testament's James—as we just saw—made matters worse for reformers, who strained to find a way around its apparent message of justification by works: James 2:24 was even cited in the Council of Trent as proof that works contribute to justification and sanctification.⁸³ Reformers consented on two things: 1) there could be no good works without grace; and 2) faith *necessarily* leads to good works (sanctification follows justification); the Thirty-Nine Articles maintained both doctrines.⁸⁴ But readers have perhaps seen all along where the complications lie.

To begin with, if good works perforce followed justification, there remained a question about the degree to which the elect were to labour for their ongoing sanctification. Further, while Article 12 affirmed that good works

82. Kaske, *Biblical Poetics*, 146.

83. In the Sixth Session, "On the increase of Justification received," the Catholic Church claims that "through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works," men "increase in that justice which they have received through the grace of Christ"; for "as it is written... *Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only* (James ii. 24)?" (*Canons and Decrees*, 37). See also Norman P. Tanner's two-volume set, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990); Heinrich Denzinger-Peter Hunermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: A Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

84. "Works done before the grace of Christ [...] are not pleasant to God, [for...] they spring not of Faith in Jesus Christ"; "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins [...] yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God [...] and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith." Articles 13 and 12, respectively (*Book of Common Prayer*, 677).

“necessarily” follow justification as a tree “necessarily” brings forth fruit, some theologians were not so convinced of that necessity. Richard Hooker stresses that—although all good actions are God’s—man must be industrious in his own sanctification: “For lett the Spiritt be never soe prompt, if labour and exercise slacken, wee faile.”⁸⁵ Perkins takes Hooker’s “labour and exercise” a step further, arguing that the elect must “presse on to the straight gate with maine and might, [and] with all violence lay hold on the kingdome of heauen.”⁸⁶ One can imagine a reader wondering if the “violence” by which one ought to “lay hold of the kingdome” was one’s *own* or was a gift of grace: does grace, after all, bestow violence? One might also reasonably be confused by Hooker’s claims in *A Learned Discourse of Justification* that “We are justified by faith *alone*, and yet [...] without good works we are not justified.”⁸⁷

John Spencer Hill observes that as a consequence of divisions some reformers made between “first” and “second” justifications (the first awarded on the basis of faith alone, the second on the believer’s works), “it was usual for Protestant texts on dogmatics to be divided, like Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, into two sections: the first on faith, the second on ethics,” surely prompting a reader to wonder why one would need a handbook on ethics if the good works that sanctify us are imparted to us through God’s extra-textual grace.⁸⁸ One might answer this question by noting that the “Homily of Good Works” lists two other reasons (beyond their being “declarations and testimonies of our justification”) why “St. Paul teacheth, that we must do good works”: “to shew ourselves obedient children” and “that others, seeing our good works, may [...] be stirred up [...] to glorify our father which is in heaven.”⁸⁹ But did this mean that anyone uncompelled by grace—or, worse, self-identifying as a reprobate—ought to do good works anyhow, for the sake of those “others”? Wouldn’t that be cheating the work of grace? Darryl Gless observes that “[c]ursory readings or partial recollections” of reformers such as “Bucer or Zwingli could lead [...]

85. *The Folger Library Edition of The Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty. Vol. 4 (London: Belknap Press, 1982), 112.

86. William Perkins, *The workes of that famous and vvorthie minister of Christ, in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, M. W. Perkins*. Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legate, 1608), 361.

87. Richard Hooker, *A learned discourse of justification, workes, and how the foundation of faith is overthrowne* (Oxford: Printed by Joseph Barnes, 1613), 27 (italics mine).

88. Hill, 150.

89. *Certain Sermons or Homilies*, 292.

to contradictory conclusions: either that they believed in justification by faith, or that they believed sinners can in some sense be justified by works.⁹⁰ While works were only supposed to be “the most evident *tokens* of election,” we see how easy it could be for them to take soteriological precedence.⁹¹

Indeed, Prescott notes (with some amusement, I think) that even scholars of the *Amoretti* “who recognize that for Protestants there is no justification by works” inadvertently end up “insist[ing] that the lover *earns* the lady.” Alexander Dunlop, for example, “rightly says *Am.* 67 and 68 show that ‘True love is [...] ultimately a gift of grace,’ but in the next sentence says the ‘bond of love’ depends on ‘the proven worth of the lover.’”⁹² Scholars such as Gless, Kaske, and James Schiavoni have suggested that amid doctrinal (and, apparently, scholarly) irresolution—“the aporias inherent in these topics [...] the] disagreement of authorities, and tensions of ecclesiastical politics”—Spenser “could not make up his mind” about justification.⁹³ For Schiavoni, this explains why, despite *The Faerie Queene*’s general insistence upon *sola gratia*, a figure like Guyon can state “But after death the tryall is to come, / When best shall be to them that lived best.”⁹⁴ For Kaske, it explains why Una’s “Protestant advice” to Redcrosse (“In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part? / Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art? / Where justice growes, there grows eke greter grace”) is neutralized by the passage “describing the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy as part of ‘the way, [Redcrosse’s] sinfull soul to save.’”⁹⁵

These studies concentrate on Spenser’s epic. But if *The Faerie Queene*—Spenser’s coincident project—vacillated on the question of justification, might

90. Gless, 14. The speaker of one of Milton’s sonnets appears to accept the latter when he writes to his deceased friend of her entrance into heaven that “Thy Works and Alms and all thy good Endeavour, / Staid not behind [...] but] Follow’d thee up to joy and bliss for ever.” Catherine merits “joy and bliss” because her “Works” and “good Endeavour” (*rather than* her faith, whose role as a mere “hand-maid” is to “clad them o’er” and “point” them toward the judge) “speak the truth of thee on glorious Theams / Before the Judge, who thenceforth bid thee rest.” John Milton, *Poems, &c. upon several occasions* (London: Printed for Tho. Dring, 1673), 58.

91. Perkins cited in R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 75 (italics mine).

92. Prescott, “The Thirsty Deer,” 72.

93. Kaske, *Biblical Poetics*, 154.

94. James Schiavoni, “Predestination and Free Will: The Crux of Canto Ten,” *Spenser Studies* 10 (1989): 183.

95. Kaske, *Biblical Poetics*, 101.

we not expect his amatory verse do the same? Why does Spenser's lover keep writing "works" even *after* the beloved has been "tyde"—and grace granted—"with her owne goodwill" (*Am.* 67)? Why does he repair to "Catholic" language two lyrics later, relishing in "[t]he happy purchase of my glorious spoile, / gotten at last with labour and long toyle" (*Am.* 69)?

Sonnets 76 and 77 might prove surprising sites for that answer. Both poems—derivations on Torquato Tasso's sonnet "Non son sì belli i fiori onde natura"—celebrate the beloved's breasts; they are the only two sonnets in the sequence to do so. Sonnet 76 presents a short catalogue of metaphors for the beloved's "fayre bosome" (it is "[t]he neast of loue," "the bowre of blisse, the paradise of pleasure") before narrating an episode in which his "frayle thoughts [are...] led astray," display "theyr wanton winges" and "rest themselues" "boldly" "twixt" the beloved's "paps." In Sonnet 77, the lover witnesses a vision of an ivory table spread with "iuncats," whereon "twoo golden apples of vnualewd price" lie in a "silver dish." The couplet deciphers the image for us (in case we needed deciphering): "Her brest that table was so richly spredd, / my thoughts the guests, which would thereon haue fedd." How did Spenser think two consecutive sonnets about the beloved's breasts would serve his sequence? If the lover was going to linger anywhere, why here? Why translate Tasso twice? And why are *these* the two poems to immediately precede what I have just described as the "regeneration" sonnet, in which the fawn becomes the mirror-image of the hind, the lover a mirror-image of the divine beloved, a "doe[r] of the worde, and not [a] heare[r] onely" (James 1:22)?

When William Ponsonby published Spenser's *Complaints*, he understood Spenser to have written much more than what appears in the 1591 collection ("he besides wrote sundrie others," including "*Canticum canticorum* translated").⁹⁶ These lost translations of "*Canticum canticorum*," alongside what we know about early modern enthusiasm for Solomon's *Song*, imply that Spenser took an interest in the translations and expositions of the text so abundant in the sixteenth century.⁹⁷ Explications of the beloved's breasts across

96. William Ponsonby, "The Printer to the Gentle Reader," in *Complaints. Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie* (London: Imprinted for William Ponsonbie, 1591), fol. A2.

97. Spenser's period was one in which "metrical renditions of [...] Scripture, and especially [...] 'The seven Psalmes,' *Ecclesiastes* and the *Song of Songs*—virtually gushed from the pens of England's poets" (Israel Baroway, "The Imagery of Spenser and the 'Song of Songs,'" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 33.1 (Jan. 1934): 23). See also Flinker, *The Song of Songs*; George L. Scheper, "Reformation

these commentaries are remarkably consistent; Thomas Wilcox writes, “Many understand by the *two brestes*, the twoo Testamentes, which have mutuall respect one to an other, neither can one of them well easely be understood without an other.”⁹⁸ Antonio Brucioli writes, “the two breasts [...] signifie the old Testament and the New, the doctrine of the Prophets, and the doctrine of the Apostles”; Solomon “calleth them *twinnes*, because it is the selfe same God and father, which is the author and father of both Testaments.”⁹⁹ For Henry Finch, the beloved’s breasts “are full of all good nourishment of the sincere milke of the word of God, that flowes as from a strame out of both her brests of that olde and the new Testament.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, William Baldwin is the only commentator who appears to privilege the New Testament in his translation of (both) the beloved’s breasts as “charitie.”¹⁰¹

Notably, Old and New Testaments are of equal significance in the majority of these exegeses; commentators regularly remind readers of the relationship (“twinnes”) between physical and soteriological symmetry.¹⁰² Neither does Spenser’s lover privilege one “testament” over another (as it would, indeed, be strange to prefer one of the beloved’s breasts to another): his thoughts rest “*twixt her paps*,” favouring neither; both breasts make up “vertues richest treasure” and “the sacred harbour of that heavenly spright” (*Am.* 76); both apples are of “vnualewd price,” and the lover’s thoughts “would [...] have fedd” on *both* had they been given the chance (*Am.* 77). It is conceivable that the theologians’ insistence on the “twinne” testaments influenced Spenser’s

Attitudes toward Allegory and the Song of Songs,” *PMLA* 89 (1974); Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion, and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

98. Thomas Wilcox, *An exposition vppon the Booke of the Canticles, otherwise called Schelomons Song* (London: Printed by Robert Waldegrave, 1585), 92.

99. Antonio Brucioli, *A commentary upon the Canticle of Canticles*, trans. Th. James (London: Printed by R. Field, 1598), 129–30.

100. Henry Finch, *An exposition of the Song of Solomon: called Canticles* (London: Printed by Iohn Beale, 1615), fol. E4.

101. William Baldwin, *The canticles or balades of Salomon*, fol. F4. In her survey of literary deer that may have served as sources for Sonnet 67, Prescott also notes Proverbs 5:18–19: “Let [thy wife] be as the loving hinde and pleasant roe: let her breasts satisfie thee at all times, and delite in her love continually” (“Allegorical Deer,” 811).

102. For instance, Wilcox: “*That are twins* that is of equall bignes and proportion” (*An exposition vppon the Booke of the Canticles*, 92).

decision to take a single sonnet of Tasso's contemplating the beloved's "real seno" and translate it twice. Paul's affirmations of the usefulness of law in the liturgical readings for the days corresponding to both sonnets may also have influenced the lover's choice of "both testaments." Spenser would have read Romans 2 and 3 while composing Sonnets 76 and 77, and—in the midst of an Epistle otherwise emphasizing grace—would have encountered such verses as "[God] wil rewarde euerie man according to his workes" (2:6); "the hearers of the Law are not righteous before God: but the doers of the Law shalbe justified" (2:13); and "Do we then make the Law of none effect through faith? God forbid; yea we establish the Law" (3:31). The Epistles themselves insisted that both testaments—"Agar of mounte Sina" and Sara of "Jerusalem," "flesh" and "promes"—matter after all. By including Sonnets 76 and 77 in the collection, Spenser subtly aligns himself with the view that the Old Testament focus on works remains pertinent to salvation—and to requital.

I don't disagree that the *Amoretti's* uneasy conclusion is a consequence of Spenser's having to finish his sequence, for whatever reason, even as he remained faithful to the project of observing the calendrical readings—which would have meant writing his final sonnets just before the liturgical occasion of Pentecost. But scholarship that reads the sequence's conclusion in light of this holy day focuses on the culver of Sonnet 89 as a figure of "the coming of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly comforter," suggesting that "[w]hile the lover "mournes" the absence of his love, he [...] is sustained by [...] his] association with the dove and [...] with] the Holy Spirit, promising the beloved's [Christ's] return."¹⁰³ That is, scholarship focuses on the Christian holy day, which has its origins in Acts 2, when the apostles, who had gathered "all with one accorde in one place" on "the day of Pentecoste," hear "a sounde from heauen," witness "clouen tongues, like fyre," are "filled with the holie Gost, and beg[i]n to speake with other tongues, as the Spirit [gives] utterance" (2:1–4).

Christian Pentecost, however, has its origins in Jewish Shavuot, for which the apostles in the Book of Acts had assembled when the Spirit descended.¹⁰⁴

103. Larsen, ed., 224; Johnson, *Analogies of Love*, 253.

104. See David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1983), 102–08; Karen B. Westfield Tucker, "Pentecost," in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 529–30; *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 339, 403; John D. Garr, *Christian Fruit-Jewish Root: Theology of Hebraic Restoration* (Atlanta: Golden Key Press, 2015), 330–31.

Shavuot was an agricultural festival marking the end of the grain harvest; it was also a celebration of God's covenant with Israel and Moses's reception of the law on Sinai ("mounte Sina"). The narrative in Acts was understood typologically to recapitulate the law's reception in Exodus with its "thunders & lightnings" (19:16) and its heavenly revelation: except that while the first law was "written by the hand of God on tables of stone," the second law—observes Calvin—was given by "the Spirit, whose work is to write the Law in our hearts."¹⁰⁵ And while the Old Testament revelation to Moses is reserved for the people of Israel, the New Testament revelation—in which "euerie man heard [the apostles] speake his owne langage" (Acts 2:6)—was all-inclusive. There are two things to emphasize here: (1) while the advent of the Holy Spirit in Acts was understood as Christ confirming a New Covenant with his disciples—one involving a message of faith they were to spread to the world—the holy day had a long history of affirming God's *first* covenant, Mosaic Law; and (2) the "other tongues" of Acts implied that this ministry would include *more than* Jews.

What I am suggesting here is the possibility that as Spenser was composing the final sonnet of his sequence, he was cognizant of the history out of which Pentecost emerged—a possibility substantiated by the "unspotted pleasauns" and the "bared bough" of Sonnet 89. If so, the inclusive soteriology ("other tongues," first *and* second laws) of Pentecost sustains the inclusive soteriology that the device opening Spenser's 1595 edition suggests: "ET VSQVE AD NVBES VERITAS TVA," "For thy mercie is great unto the heauens, and thy trueth unto the cloudes" (along with the Geneva's gloss: "Thy mercies do not onely apperteine to the Jewes, but also to the Gentiles"). More than proposing a substantial connection between the sequence's final sonnet and the collection's title page, it would offer the prospect that even the closing sonnet of the sequence holds space for both the elect's adherence to law (the "work" of sacrifice) *and* reformed doctrine—or, in amatory terms, both poetical works *and* the beloved's "grace."

In the feast of Pentecost as described in Leviticus, the Israelites are enjoined to offer "a sheafe of the first frutes of [their] haruest[s]" and bidden to "prepare a lambe without blemish [...] for a burnt offering" (23:10–12). Christians understood the lambs of Leviticus 23 as types fulfilled by the single

105. Calvin's *Commentaries: The Acts of the Apostles 1–13*, ed. David W. and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 49.

“sacrificial lamb” of Christ crucified—in the same framework of fulfillment and supercession we saw in discussing Sonnets 18 and 54, where Christ was understood as the second, “spiritual” tabernacle, figuring the passage from the “carnal rites” and “dead works” of sacrifice to grace (Heb. 9:10, 14). Paul offers as much when he calls Christ “our Passeouer [...] sacrificed for vs” (1 Cor. 5:7). In the third quatrain of Sonnet 89, the “disconsolate” dove laments that nothing “can comfort me, but her owne joyous sight: / whose sweet aspect both God and man can moue, / in her vnspotted pleasauns to delight.” The descriptors in that final line echo the Levitical mandate (23:11) that the Pentecostal sacrificial lamb be “without blemish” (Spenser’s “vnspotted”) “that it may be acceptable” to God (Spenser’s “pleasauns”). Sonnet 89 thus subtly holds space for both the works of sacrifice (“a lambe without blemish”) and the Christian belief in Christ’s fulfillment of *all* sacrifice (the dove that remains the central figure of the poem).

The gathering of the “first frutes of [...] haruest” for the Jewish celebration of Pentecost may have been joined by another text Spenser read for Sonnet 89, which corresponds with the liturgical readings for 17 May 1594. In Matthew 15:13, Christ tells his disciples that “[e]uerie plant which mine heauenly Father hath not planted, shalbe rooted up”—a verse the Geneva cross-references with John 15:1–2, “I Am the true vine, and my Father is an housband man. Euerie branche that beareth not frute in me, [God] taketh away: & euerie one that beareth frute, he purgeth it, that it may bring forthe more frute.” The metaphor is one of grafting—the arboreal analogue, we might say, to the “unnatural” spiritual adoption of Galatians 4.¹⁰⁶ Recall that Spenser’s culver sits “on the bared bough.” It is May, so we can’t attribute its bareness to winter. Further, the bough is “bared” rather than “bare”: *made* bare, where it once was not. I think Spenser is playing, here, with both the gathered “first frutes” required of Jewish penitents in Leviticus and the “purged fruit” of John 15. Both passages suggest there is “more frute” to come. And while the former promises this “more” as a consequence of works (the ceremonial gathering and sacrifice of “first frutes”), the latter promises it through grace (God, who purges us that we may “bring

106. The marginal note to John 15:4 offers that man “bring[s] forthe no frute” unless “ingrafted in Christ.” Calvin’s commentary on this passage returns us to the rhetoric of “unnatural” spiritual lineage we saw in regards to Galatians: we are “by *nature*, barren and dry, except in so far as we have been engrafted into Christ”; grace is not “implanted in [us] by *nature*” (since “no man has the *nature* of a vine”), but by Christ himself. See *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans. Rev. William Pringle. Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 62.

forthe more”). Once again, the language of the sonnet is spacious enough to accommodate both testaments.

Sonnet 89’s “bared bough,” in Levitical and Johannine terms, is *presently* “bare” because the lover’s first fruits—the poems—have been “purged” by God (or, sent to the beloved, as the lover, in Sonnet 1, had resolved to do) “that [he] may bring forth more fruit” in the future. The gathering and the sacrifice of these first fruits (the poems, the harvest) are precisely what make room for a second harvest, a “bring[ing] forthe [of] more frute.” After the branch has been “purged,” resulting in the “bared bough” of Sonnet 89, the lover—now the bridegroom of the *Epithalamion*—asks Juno to send the newly-married couple the “timely fruit” that will bring forth “fruitfull progeny” (390–404). But it is not until the beloved “purges” the “first frutes” of the lover’s courtship by receiving and reading them—sonnets that seemed “fruitlesse” (*Am.* 23) until they bore the “early” but “sweet” “fruit” of assurance in Sonnets 76 and 77—that the bough “may bring forth more fruit,” this time as the bough of a family tree.

It is only reasonable that a poet working through doctrines of justification—particularly in the genre of amatory poetry, in which the writing-work was done in the hopes of requital—would maintain the relevance of the Old Testament along with the New. Both Spenser and his lover are extraordinary Petrarchans who *do* successfully effect requital through poetic labour. And so there is no hard and fast theological doctrine opposed to works-righteousness in the *Amoretti*, beyond the conviction that grace must precede good works: in part because reformed theology made recourse to works in spite of its aversion to them as salvational guarantees; in part because if a *sola fide / sola gratia* analogue were to be maintained, both Spenser and his lover would have had to stop writing poems after the “will” of the deer was revealed in the grace-event of Sonnet 67. Nonetheless, the sequence demonstrates the ways a Petrarchan lover might use the lyric sequence to negotiate the most fundamental theological issues of his day.

Other sequences of the period—Sidney’s, Fulke Greville’s, Lady Mary Wroth’s—don’t carry the same overt liturgical resonances the *Amoretti* does; nevertheless, Spenser’s transfer of the “practical piety” of daily liturgical readings to the “poetic piety” of daily petitions to the beloved opens a compelling possibility that we might approach other Elizabethan Petrarchan sequences through a similar theological lens.