

THE CONCEPT OF THE "FALSE SHEPHERD"
IN ENGLISH PASTORALS

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PREFACE

My interest in the allegorical figure of a "false shepherd" began with a study of Milton's *Comus* as a type of "false prophet" or "wolf in sheep's clothing." After examining the concept of a "false shepherd" as it is manifested in Milton's *Lycidas* and in three eclogues of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, I permitted the scope of my study to be widened accordingly. My thesis will hopefully offer a more complete treatment of the religious and philosophical allegory present in those select works of English pastoral poetry in which the role of a false or profligate shepherd is significant.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The "false shepherd" can be seen as one of several developments in the history of the pastoral genre. The basic conventional aspects of pastoral poetry were probably derived from the Greek Theocritus. The "pastoral setting" as an idyllic country setting was characteristically Theocritan, although the "pastoral setting" was not to be identified with a Golden Age until Virgil's time. Dialogues between shepherds were also part of the Theocritan technique. The use of the pastoral genre as a vehicle for allegorical expression, however, began primarily with Virgil and continued much later with the so-called neo-Latin poets. Pastoral eclogues were written in the late Middle Ages and in the Renaissance by a considerable number of European poets of various nationalities. In a sense pastoral poetry reappeared--in the last century--in such works as Adonais by Shelley and Thyrsis by Matthew Arnold. However, writing in the pastoral genre was, for the most part, abandoned in England and in the rest of Europe after the seventeenth century.

The overall development of the pastoral genre was such that the genre came to have a double significance: first, as a genre simply concerned with the delights of a bucolic existence or, secondly, as a genre which--beyond its bucolic trappings--served as a medium for satire or commentary of a political, moral, or ecclesiastical nature.

The writers of religious eclogues were to find a ready source in biblical ideas for use in pastoral allegory. The Judaic-Christian scriptures are rife with examples in which "shepherds" and "sheep" have moral and ecclesiastical implications. The concept of a benevolent deity as a "shepherd" ("the Lord is my shepherd") in Psalms xxiii.1 is probably the best known. The Lord of Isaiah xl.11 is a sustainer of life who "shall feed his flock like a shepherd." The "wandering sheep" of Ezekiel xxxiv.6 are associated with spiritual waywardness. Those who are sent forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matthew x.16) are those who--as followers of Christ--are beset with demonic influences as well as worldly contempt.

A number of biblical references to "shepherds" and "sheep" have to do with different kinds of spiritual leadership and service. Christ's reference to "the shepherd of the sheep" is a case in point. The Good Shepherd (John x.2) is one "that entereth in by the door"--one who is truly "called" to his clerical or pastoral vocation. By urging one of his disciples to "feed my sheep" (John xxi.16) Christ is emphasizing religious service as a meeting of the moral and spiritual needs of others. Those who presume to carry out the work of Christ without the proper motivation are--intentionally or otherwise--"false prophets in sheep's clothing" (Matthew vii.15). The clerical figures who are not true servants of God--those who are "blind watchmen" because of apathy or greed--are referred to as "shepherds that cannot understand" (Isaiah lvi.11) as well as "shepherds . . . that do feed themselves" (Ezekiel xxxiv.2). On the other hand, Christ--as an exemplar of religious guidance and service--is referred to as the "Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (I Peter II.25) and as the "chief Shepherd" (I Peter v.4).

The concept of the "false shepherd"--as well as that of the "sheep which have gone astray"--recurs in the pastoral eclogues of Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Mantuan and other neo-Latin or Renaissance poets. The purpose of this treatise is to show how the biblical "false shepherd" operates as an essential concept in pastoral works by Edmund Spenser and John Milton. Those English pastorals which are best known in terms of ecclesiastical allegory are the following: the "May," "July," and "September" eclogues in Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar; Comus (a masque) by Milton and Lycidas by Milton. Whereas the "false shepherd" tends to serve as a foil to the "good shepherd" in Spenser's "July" and Milton's Lycidas, the "false shepherd" of Spenser's "May" comes to be known through a moral exemplum, the "false shepherd" of Spenser's "September" is a clerical figure who "went wrong," and the "false shepherd" of Milton's Comus is an active tempter of the individual soul. This treatise will involve an examination of the various ways in which the concept of the "false shepherd" is developed in the selections by Spenser and Milton.

CHAPTER II

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOX AND KID TALE

IN SPENSER'S "MAY" ECLOGUE

Many interpretations have been assigned to the ecclesiastical criticism present in the "May" eclogue of Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar. On the basis of E. K.'s gloss to the "May" eclogue, it is generally assumed that Piers represents a Protestant view and Palinode represents a Catholic view concerning the ministry or priesthood. A number of critical analyses have involved the identification of political and ecclesiastical figures in sixteenth-century England as objects of Spenser's satire in "May." Other critics--such as W. J. Courthope¹--have shown evidence of Spenser's Puritan influences in The Shepherds's Calendar (and in "May," particularly). Very little of the critical work on "May" has been focused on the philosophical aspects of the eclogue itself. Nor has there been a clear attempt, so far as I am aware, to interpret Piers' Fox and Kid tale apart from the views in E. K.'s gloss to the "May" eclogue. It appears as though more consideration should be given to the manner in which the concept of the "false shepherd" evolves from the dialogue between Piers and Palinode and from Piers' tale.

In his Argument for "May," E. K. asserts that Piers and Palinode represent "two formes of pastoures or Ministers, or the protestant and the Catholique." However, the distinction between two ecclesiastical

groups is not necessarily an important element in the eclogue itself. E. A. Greenlaw compares Piers' lines of denunciation ("Those faytours little regarden their charge," etc.) with Chaucer's lines about the parson ("Prologue," ll. 477 sq.), and Palinode's attitude (ll. 63 sq.) with Chaucer's description of the monk.² According to Greenlaw's analysis, the distinctions between Piers and Palinode in "May" would be based (as is the case with the monk and the parson in Canterbury Tales) on differences in character.

Walter W. Greg contrasts Piers and Palinode in much the same manner as does Greenlaw. The main distinction between Piers and Palinode might be seen as one of point of view. Greg indicates that the discussion between Palinode and Piers revolves around "the lawfulness of Sunday sports and the corruption of the clergy."³ Greg relates the "May" eclogue to the pastoral tradition and to Spenser's views in this statement:

Here we have a common theme/viz., the corruption of the clergy/ treated from an individual point-of-view. The eclogue is interesting as showing that the author, whose opinions are placed in the mouth of the precise Piers, belonged to what Ben Jonson later styled "the sourer sort of shepherds."⁴

Paul E. McLane indicates (as do Greg and Greenlaw) that the difference between Piers and Palinode is not strictly of an ecclesiastical nature. This is McLane's observation:

It is clear . . . that Piers in May largely represents Spenser's point of view, and that Palinode is a paper antagonist who takes a position designed to give Piers a chance to express himself strongly on church evils. The May-games business is mere foolery (as Piers recognizes), and E. K.'s argument on the irreconcilability of Catholic and Protestant relates not to the eclogue proper but to the fable of the Fox and the Kid and the political allegory that lies immediately behind it.⁵

McLane also makes the point that Spenser's ecclesiastical criticism is not directed primarily at Catholics, but could also be applicable to the Anglican Church.

With regard to the ecclesiastical criticism in "May," Harold Stein makes this observation:

Everyone agrees that Spenser's wolves and foxes are false prophets, men who lead the people away from the true religion; but the commentators either neglect or try to decide too hastily exactly which false prophets Spenser had in mind.⁶

While Stein attempts to provide an identification of Spenser's "wolves and foxes" in "May," W. L. Renwick--in his edition of The Shepherd's Calendar--speaks in terms of the philosophical tone of the eclogue. Renwick declares that Spenser's Puritanism "was probably that of an average earnest layman who accepted the average Protestant ideas with all their implications, and had no axe to grind."⁷

In the "May" eclogue, the movement of the Piers-Palinode dialogue is such that a clear distinction cannot be made between Protestant and Catholic attitudes. Piers indicates a concern about shepherds who "little regarden their charge," yet Piers does not necessarily bear the identity of a "good shepherd" who stands in opposition--as one might infer from E. K.'s remarks--to a profligate Palinode. There is a fundamental sense of comradeship rather than disagreement between Piers and Palinode. Neither need Piers' tale of the Fox and the Kid be interpreted as an attack on Roman ecclesiasticism (as E. K. seems to suggest). The moral in the Fox and Kid tale is applicable to the Church and to churchmen in general, and not just to Rome's corrupting influence.

The spirit of the opening lines of "May" is one of concord between

Piers and Palinode rather than of the conflict suggested in E. K.'s Argument. Both Piers and Palinode present the introductory stanza of the eclogue with these words:

Is not thilke the mery moneth of May,
When loue lads masken in fresh aray?⁸

Yet Piers chides Palinode--as well as himself, presumably--by noting that "For Younkers . . . such follies fitte,/ But we tway bene men of elder witt" (ll. 17-18). When Palinode indicates that he would like to participate in May festivities, Piers replies in this manner:

Perdie so farre am I from enuie,
That their fondnesse /i.e., the "fondnesse" of the playful
shepherds/ inly I pittie (ll. 37-38).

In the dialogue between Piers and Palinode, it appears as though Piers is trying to prove himself as being above frivolity. This might seem to create an atmosphere of tension between him and Palinode. However, Piers levels his remarks at shepherds who waste their time in "lustihede and wanton meryment" (l. 42). Apparently Piers is warning Palinode, rather than criticizing him directly, when he makes this statement:

I muse, what account both these /viz., the profligate
shepherds/ will make,
The one for the hire, which he doth take,
And thother for leauing his Lords taske,
When great Pan account of shepeherdes shall aske (ll. 51-54).

At this point in the eclogue it is not really clear as to whether Piers' conscience is bothering him--for his part in the opening lines of the eclogue in which he and Palinode wondered "How falles it then, we no merrier bene,/ Ylike as others, girt in gawdy green?"--or whether Piers is attempting to justify his own seriousness by making irrelevant remarks about ecclesiastical corruption.

Judging from Palinode's replies to Piers, Palinode considers Piers' remarks on clerical corruption and judgement (or Pan's "account of shepherdes") to be somewhat irrelevant. In comparing Piers with the more relaxed group of shepherds Palinode says: "Sicker now I see thōu speakest of spight, / All for thou lackest somedele their delight" (ll. 55-56). Palinode seems to have in mind the idea that poverty or discomfort is not--in and of itself--a sign of virtue. He says that "Good is no good, but if it be spend: God giueth good for none other end" (ll. 71-72). Piers calls Palinode a "worlde childe" and declares that "shepheards (as Algrind used to say,) / Mought not liue ylike, as men of the laye: / With them it sits to care for their heire,/ Enaunter their heritage doe impaire . . ." (ll. 75-78). Piers speaks of former times when shepherds lived by faith ("Pan himselfe was their inheritaunce"). Piers contrasts an age of fidelity to Christ with other times in which shepherds involved themselves in politics and worldly living and neglected the needs of their parishioners--"their owne sheepe."

Although Piers' brief dissertation on clerical infidelity has its merits, it does seem to be a bit removed from Palinode's point that shepherds--like others--should enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Palinode is justified in telling Piers that "Thou findest faulte, where nys to be found,/ And buildest strong warke vpon a weake ground:/ Thou raylest on right withouten reason,/ And blamest hem much, for small encheason" (ll. 144-147). When Palinode suggests that shepherds should live in an atmosphere of felicity and harmony, Piers replies that "I list none accordaunce make / With shepheard, that does the right way forsake" (ll. 164-165). There is again no reason to believe that Piers

is aiming his remarks directly at Palinode and thereby attempting to answer the type of question that is posed in E. K.'s Argument: "Whether the life of the one must be like the other." If Piers is speaking of Palinode when he says "I list none accordeance make / With shepherded, that does the right way forsake," then it appears as though Palinode is being charged with deeds that he has not ostensibly performed.

Thus Piers' remarks about the kind of shepherd "that does the right way forsake" are not necessarily applicable to Palinode. If they are applicable, then the reader has simply failed to receive enough evidence to show that Palinode has forsaken "the right way." Piers' remarks seem to be more indicative of his own personality than of a judgement upon Palinode or even upon Catholicism. When Piers speaks of the "unfaithful shepherd," he uncharitably says: "And of the twaine, if choice were to me, / Had leuer my foe, then my freend he be" (ll. 166-167). If these words are directed at Palinode, then Palinode has had all the more reason to say "thou speakest of spight" (l. 55). However, Piers' statement "For what concord han light and darke sam?"--which is reminiscent of II Corinthians vi.14--is true insofar as relations between Christians and pagans are concerned. Yet if Piers has Palinode in mind when he makes the "light"--"darke" and "Lambe"--"Lion" contrasts, then his remarks seem to smack of irrelevance.

Paul E. McLane observes that "Palinode is a paper antagonist who takes a position designed to give Piers a chance to express himself strongly on church evils."⁹ Palinode serves to goad Piers merely by disagreeing with him over such a minor affair as "May-games." Palinode demonstrates diplomacy on his own part in the following reply:

Now Piers, of felowship, tell vs that saying /viz., of the
 "Fuxe and the Kidde"/:
 For the Ladde can keepe both our flocks from straying
 (ll. 172-173).

The wording of Palinode's reply is such that he not only knows how to assuage Piers' temper, but he also seems willing to agree with Piers on general principles (rather than to differ in the manner suggested by E. K.'s Argument).

Since the dialogue between Piers and Palinode tends to follow the form of a friendly argument rather than a clash between "the protestant and the Catholique," there is reason to believe that E. K.'s interpretation of the Fox and Kid tale loses some of its validity. E. K.'s suggestion that the Kid represents "the simple sorte of the faythfull and true Christians" seems fair enough. The Kid's position in the tale is such that he represents the "flock" generally alluded to in pastoral poetry. However, E. K. has the "dame" designated as Christ ("that hath alreadie with carefull watchewords . . . warned his little ones, to beware of such doubling deceit") and the "Fuxe" as "the false and faithlesse Papistes, to whom is no credit to be giuen, nor felowshippe to be vsed." It is more likely that the position of the Dame to the Kid is analogous to that of the Church of Christ (or of a "shepherdess") to youthful believers, and that the Fox simply represents a satanic or worldly influence.

The Dame can be identified as Christ's Church in that she once became a "Bride of Christ." She is now a widow in the sense that Christ is not present to deliver the Word of God, and the witness of the Word must be offered indirectly through her. Just as the Dame bears the identity of the Church and of the Bride of Christ, her role is that of a shepherdess who "had a motherly care / Of her young

sonne . . ." (ll. 181-182). The description of the Kid as being "full of favour, as kidde mought be" seems to echo the account of young Jesus in Luke ii.52:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

When the Dame speaks of the kid's father as one who was betrayed "into the traines of hys foe" (l. 200), she is obviously referring to Christ. Either God or Christ can be spoken of as a "father" to the Kid in the sense that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" ¹⁰ The Kid is a "son" of Christ by virtue of God's crucifixion in Christ. The Kid--as a representative of all Christians--is urged to follow the example of Jesus Christ. When the Dame indicates to the Kid that she wants to see him "succeede in thy fathers steade" (l. 203), she is voicing the desire of a spiritual leader that Christians would "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." ¹¹

The Dame sees in the Kid's face "the old lineaments of his fathers grace" (l. 212). The Kid is thus signified as being Christian in a spiritual sense (i.e., by "the grace of God"). Nevertheless, the Kid is "young" in terms of spiritual experience. Because of her greater maturity and understanding, the Dame is compelled to speak to the Kid in the following manner:

Kiddie (quoth shee) thou kenst the great care,
I haue of thy health and thy welfare,
Which many wyld beastes ligen in waite,
For to entrap in thy tender state:
But most the Foxe, maister of collusion:
For he has voued thy last confusion (ll. 215-220).

The Dame realizes that her role as the Church must be carried on by a new generation (viz., the Kid). Earlier in the tale, the Kid was

described as having reached manhood. Thus the Dame's departure from the house signifies that the Kid must begin to act independently. As E. K. indicates, the Dame's stumbling at the threshold is to be noted "as an evill signe." The Dame is well aware of the possibility that the Kid may fail to heed the warning Word which she has delivered.

The arrival of the Fox is that of the proverbial "wolf in sheep's clothing." The Fox identifies himself in the following manner:

I am a poore Sheepe, albe my coloure donne:
For with long traueile I am brent in the sonne (ll. 266-267).

In the disguise of a "poore pedler," the Fox carries a "trusse of tryfles at hys backe,/ As bells, and babes, and glasses in hys packe" (ll. 239-240). E. K. speaks of the Fox's wares as being "the reliques and ragges of popish superstition, which put no smal religion in Belles: and Babies .s. Idoles: and glasses .s. Paxes, and such lyke trumperies." However, the Fox's "trumperies" are not necessarily applicable just to "popish superstition." When the Fox takes a glass out of his pack, we are told that the Kid "was so enamored with the newell,/ That nought he deemed deare for the iewell" (ll. 276-277). E. K. defines "newell" as "a newe thing." In the situation of the Kid, a "newell" is tantamount to any novelty of a worldly nature which can sidetrack the Christian believer.

The Fox's treachery is also effected by his presumed kinship to the Kid. These are the Fox's words:

And if that my Grandsire me sayed, be true,
Sicker I am very sybbe to you (ll. 268-269).

"Grandsire" probably has the archaic meaning of "ancestor" or "forefather." In a metaphorical sense the Fox is claiming joint relationship to the Kid as a "son of God" or as a "brother in Christ." The

admission of the Fox into the Kid's house might be said to correspond to the admission of false doctrine or feigned Christianity into Christ's Church. The Kid's reaction to the Fox's pretended distress is also based on expediency rather than good judgement.

After the Fox has succeeded in capturing the Kid and carrying him off, the Dame returns to the house and discovers her loss. She bemoans the fact that the Kid "nould warned be / Of craft, coloured with simplicitie" (ll. 302-303). E. K. declares that the purpose of the tale is "to warne the protestaunt beware, howe he geueth credit to the unfaythfull Catholique" However, it seems more reasonable to say that the Kid's plight is analogous to that of Christ's Church whenever deceptive or novel influences are present. The Dame represents the faithful leadership of the Church which must witness the misfortune of those Christians who "of such falsers freenship been fayne [gladde or desyrous]" (l. 305).

The "May" eclogue concludes with a brief exchange of words between Palinode and Piers. Judging from his expression, Palinode seems to agree with the moral offered in Piers' tale. However, Piers is told in jest that "thou art beside thy wit, / Furthest fro the marke, weening it to hit (ll. 306-307)." Piers has presented a good story, but he has gotten far away from his point about tomfoolery among shepherds. Nevertheless, the Fox and Kid tale--as Palinode indicates--is of value for presentation as a sermon. There is nothing in the ending of the eclogue to suggest a Protestant-Catholic clash between Piers and Palinode. The reader should be able to understand the eclogue better by the interpretation of Piers' and Palinode's difference as one of point of view. Thus the Fox and Kid tale can be understood as a

statement of general truths concerning ecclesiastical Christianity.

In terms of biblical teachings the Fox is--properly speaking--

representative of the type of the "false prophet" or "false shepherd."

FOOTNOTES

¹W. J. Courthope, A History of English Poetry (New York, 1962), II, discusses the influences of Puritanism on Spenser.

²E. A. Greenlaw, "The Shepherd's Calendar," PMLA, XXVI (1911), 419-451.

³W. W. Greg, Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama (London, 1906), p. 85.

⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁵Paul E. McLane, Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar: A Study in Elizabethan Allegory (Notre Dame, Ind., 1961), p. 124.

⁶Harold Stein, "Spenser and William Turner," MLN, LI (1936), 345.

⁷The Shepherd's Calendar, ed. W. L. Renwick (London, 1930), p. 168.

⁸Citations from Spenser in my text are from The Shepherd's Calendar, ed. W. L. Renwick (London, 1930).

⁹McLane, p. 124.

¹⁰II Corinthians v.19.

¹¹II Peter iii.18.

CHAPTER III

CHURCHMEN AS REPRESENTED IN SPENSER'S "JULY" ECLOGUE

Critical interpretations of the "July" eclogue in Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar have generally involved the same approach as those of the "May" eclogue. With some exceptions the treatment of the allegory in "July" has consisted of an identifying of political or ecclesiastical figures who were contemporaries of Spenser. Outside of the view of Morrell as "proud" and Thomalin as "humble," there does not seem to have been a study of the "July" eclogue which has been focused upon the eclogue's allegory as a key to philosophical or moral truths. Neither has a conclusive interpretation of Morrell and Thomalin as, respectively, the types of "false" and "good" shepherd been rendered.

In the introductory part of his edition of the Shepherd's Calendar, C. H. Herford has made the following appraisal of "July":

This is in a literary sense among the less distinguished of the Eclogues. The honest indignation which inspires it is impressive; but this finds expression for the most part not in telling fables or anecdotes, as in May and September, but in polemical debate and historical reminiscences, which in spite of various apologies, somewhat uneasily tendered, do not become the mouths of shepherds. The pastoral form, in short, wears rather thin.¹

In comparing the "principal motive" of the "July" eclogue with a similar eclogue by Mantuan, Herford has observed that "Spenser transfers the weight of the dialogue to his lowlander Thomalin, and applies the contrast of hill and plain, in a manner quite his own, to the spiritual

contrast of pride and lowliness."² Herford's understanding of the "spiritual contrast of pride and lowliness" is, of course, a fairly conventional understanding of the "July" eclogue.

Taking his cue from the expression "Hope exhausted" (which is the "Embleme" of "June"), H. E. Cory has--in virtually the same frame of mind as Herford--declared that "of a certainty 'Julye,' in rough vigorous septenaries, is unpoetic enough to augur a surcease of inspiration."³ Cory also speaks in terms of the "contrast of hill and plain" noted by Herford. Cory perceives the symbolism of the hill and plain--in "July"--to be "a curious inversion of Mantuan's pastoral allegory in which the austere and soaring mountain ranges connote true majesty and nobility of ideas."⁴ Cory perceives an identification of the shepherd Morrell with Bishop Alymer of London ("a foe to the simple religion which Spenser championed"), and Cory provides the following explication of Thomalin's short fable:

At the close a terse, grotesque fable, apparently adapted from the strange myth of the death of Aeschylus, tells how an eagle (Elizabeth), soaring high, thought Algrind's bared head was chalk and dropped a shellfish (the Puritan Party) to crush it upon the head of the aged shepherd to his dire hurt so that he now lies in lingering pain. Thus vaguely but daringly Spenser, who worshipped "Elisa," but worshipped her this side idolatry, allegorizes his queen's attempt to overwhelm the Puritans through the agency of Archbishop Grindal who, turning from the ugly commission, was the only one injured. Though the story is accompanied by no hint from E. K. its bold criticism should not have been too obscure for Spenser's contemporaries if they chose to interpret its hidden message.⁵

Paul E. McLane's discussion of the "July" eclogue⁶ also demonstrates a concern about the "hidden message" in terms of events in Spenser's time. Hence the correspondence between McLane's approach to the allegory in both the "July" and the "May" eclogues is as follows: the figures in Spenser's eclogues are to be identified with

political and religious leaders of Spenser's time. McLane's understanding of the pastoral figures in "July" is also the same as his understanding of the shepherds in "May." That McLane does not see the contrast between the shepherds engaged in dialogue as a contrast between ecclesiastical types is evidenced as follows:

The July eclogue, which deals with a few ecclesiastical issues, is again largely amiable banter between Morrell and Thomalin: mountain goatherd and lowland shepherd who represent, respectively, ambition and humility. For the sake of argument, Morrell is "imagined to be" a proud and ambitious pastor. But there is no real disagreement between the two, who gradually work up to a mutual sympathy for Archbishop Grindal, the unfortunate victim of the Queen's wrath because of his refusal to suppress the prophesyings.⁷

McLane's view of the shepherds Thomalin and Morrell seems to suggest even more harmony between the two shepherds than does an earlier view expressed in a study of "July" by H. S. V. Jones. Jones admits that differences exist between Morrell and Thomalin, although "the shepherd of the mountain and the shepherd of the valley agree in their sympathy for Grindal."⁸ This is Jones' understanding of the discussion over Grindal:

Here at least is a kind of accord in line with that suggested by the fable of the oak and the briar; for Grindal's idea was that of reform within the communion of the Established Church. Finally, Thomalin's emblem . . . states explicitly the principle of the golden mean, which is as much the theme of the moral eclogues as it is of the Faerie Queene.⁹

The principal objection to be raised against Jones' interpretation is this: although Thomalin and Morrell may be in agreement so far as their sympathy for Grindal is concerned, the countering of Thomalin's emblem ("In medio virtus") by Morrell's "In summo felicitas" is in keeping with the basic contrast between the two shepherds. A more serious objection might be raised against such an interpretation as McLane's in that McLane does not seem to account for the pungent

remarks which set Morrell and Thomalin apart. (Morrell's reply to Thomalin's long discourse on shepherds--"Now sicker surely I see, thou doest but clatter" l. 210¹⁰ --is a case in point.)

It appears as though the allegory in the "July" eclogue can be interpreted on an ideological level at which Thomalin and Morrell are--respectively--a "good" and a "false" shepherd. There is reason to believe that Morrell is representative of the type of the "false shepherd" and that Thomalin is representative of an opposite type. The "hills" have a pagan significance for Morrell, whereas Thomalin's preference for the "plains" signifies his belief in the efficacy of God's grace apart from a man's ceremonious placement of himself nearer heaven. Moreover, the concerns represented by Thomalin and Morrell contrast in that one upholds the spiritual in man whereas the other espouses the material, even to the point of exploitation.

Thomalin's opening remarks might be described as "amiable banter" if the "July" eclogue were to be interpreted literally. However, an allegorical understanding of the eclogue should shed an entirely different light on Thomalin's observations about Morrell as expressed in this opening passage:

Is not thilke same a goteheard prowde,
That sittes on yonder bancke,
Whose straying heard them selfe doth shrowde
Emong the bushes rancke?

In his gloss to "July," E. K. provides this explication of the phrase "a goteheard prowde": "By gotes, in scrypture, be represented the wicked and reprobate, whose pastour also must needes be such." Morrell's "straying heard"--as understood by E. K.--consists of those "which wander out of the waye of truth." So far as the "straying heard" is concerned, one might consider the fact that they "shrowde"

gather themselves among the bushes "rancke" thick to be indicative of shame resulting from profligacy. Bearing in mind the scriptural admonition that the sheep will be separated from the goats in the final judgement, Morrell's "heard" can be said--in contradistinction to Thomalin's--to consist of lost souls. By way of analogy, Morrell, as a "goteheard," is a "false shepherd."

Morrell's bidding Thomalin to climb "up the hyll to me" and Thomalin's refusal to do so can also be said to have more than literal significance. Morrell suggests that the hill is better "then the lowly playne, / Als also for thy flocke and thee" (ll. 7-8). Since Morrell has included Thomalin's "flocke" in the invitation to climb the hill, it is likely that Morrell is not simply asking Thomalin to exercise some kind of personal ambition--either in the political or the ecclesiastical sense. The tone of Thomalin's reply to Morrell's invitation is such that more than the question of ambition seems to be at stake.

This is the beginning part of Thomalin's reply:

Ah, God shield, man, that I should clime,
 And learne to looke alofte;
 This reede is ryfe, that oftentime
 Great clymbers fall unsoft (ll. 9-12).

Although it might be argued that Thomalin has "climbing" associated with ambition, Thomalin could very well have the additional concept of presumption in mind. In fact, Thomalin's later reference to the "cruell scortching heate" of the sun--to which a "climber" would be exposed--seems reminiscent of the mythical situation in which Icarus became over-confident and flew too near the sun and consequently met with disaster. Thomalin's argument against "climbing" is that the "wastefull hylls unto his threate i.e., the 'threate' of the sun / Is a playne overture open or exposed place" (ll. 27-28). If

climbing a hill were to be associated with ecclesiastical ritual, particularly in terms of the "High Church" as Spenser himself might have viewed it, then Thomalin's objection to such climbing might be interpreted as follows: it is presumptuous of man to think that by the ritual--by climbing nearer to God or to the "sun of righteousness"--that he is engaged in a better form of worship or that he is any holier. (In terms of Thomalin's argument, man could provoke divine wrath as a result of such presumption.) There is--of course--much more to be said about the matter of Thomalin's disagreement with Morrell over the significance of the "hills."

Edwin Greenlaw has observed that "Morrell, the Highlander, defends the hills as shrines and the abode of saints; Thomalin regards them as symbols of superstition.¹¹ Morrell considers the hills to be of value not only because "sacred unto saints they stond" (l. 39) but because hills are to be associated with Parnassus and with poetic inspiration:

And they that con of Muses skill
Sayne most--what, that they dwell
(As goteheards wont) upon a hill,
Beside a learned well (ll. 45-48).

It seems as though Morrell has--by implication--associated himself with "goteheards" and with "Muses," both of which are of secular significance. Thus Morrell's next reference, which is to Christ ("the great god Pan"), does very little to dispel the effect of his pagan reverence for hills. Walter W. Greg has described the situation in the "July" eclogue as follows:

The confusion of things Christian and things pagan, of classical mythology with homely English scenery, nowhere reaches a more extravagant pitch than here. Morrell, the advocate of the old religion, defends the hills with the ingeniously wrong-headed argument:

"And wanned not the great god Pan
 Upon Mount Olivet,
 Feeding the blessed flocke of Dan,
 Which dyd himselfe beget?"

or else, gazing over the Kentish downs, he announces that

"Here han the holy Faunes recourse,
 And Sylvanes haunten rathe /resort early/;
 Here has the salt Medway his sourse,
 Wherein the Nymphes doe bathe."¹²

Morrell's suggestion that Christ was descended from the "flocke of Dan" is--in itself--erroneous. Christ was "of the house and lineage of David" and hence of the royal tribe of Judah. However, more worthy of consideration is Morrell's bent for high places. Among a number of biblical reproaches concerning high places is that in Isaiah lvii.7 ("Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice") and that expressed in Jeremiah xlix.16:

Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of
 thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the
 rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou
 shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring
 thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

At any rate, Morrell--as an "advocate of the old religion"--is an advocate of a form of paganism and ritualism which is anything but Christian in spirit.

Morrell's reference to "the great god Pan" is followed by this reply of Thomalin's:

O blessed sheepe! O shepherd great,
 That bought his flocke so deare,
 And them did save with bloody sweat
 From wolves, that would them teare! (ll. 53-56)

Here Thomalin is speaking of Christ as something more than a mythical figure. Christ is a "shepherd great" and Christ is characterized by self-sacrifice. However, Morrell continues his praise of hills in

terms which are more strictly mythological:

Besyde, as holy fathers sayne,
 There is a hyllye place,
 Where Titan ryseth from the mayne,
 To renne hys dayly race (ll. 57-60, etc.).

Here--as E. K. suggests--Morrell is speaking of Mount Ida. Here--as Walter W. Greg would probably suggest--there is a "confusion of things Christian and things pagan." Morrell's allusion to "holy fathers" ("church fathers," presumably) has no relevance whatsoever to his description of the "hyllye place" and to his brief recounting of the story of Phoebe's love for Endymion. Certainly Morrell's understanding of the "fall of man," as it is reflected in the following passage, is mythical rather than theological:

Whilome /formerly/ there /i.e., on Mount Ida/ used
 shepherds all
 To feede theyr flocks at will,
 Till by his foly one did fall,
 That all the rest did spill.
 And sithens /since that time/ shepheardes bene
 foresayd /excluded/
 From places of delight:
 Forthy /because of that/ I weene thou be affrayd
 To clime this hilles height (ll. 65-72).

It is worth noting that Morrell--in this passage--has Thomalin identified with the "shepheardes" who have been "foresayd / From places of delight." However, it is even more worth noting that Morrell's conception of the fall of man is not theological. For one, the fall of man from God's grace would be applicable to both categories of clerical figures ("shepherds" and "goatherds") and to both categories of mankind as a whole ("sheep" as well as "goats"). If Morrell is suggesting that the "hill" represents the "paradise" of Old Testament provenance, then it is even more apparent that Morrell's understanding of the "fall" is not theological. The theological understanding of the

"fall," in brief, is that all men at one time "fell short of the glory of God" in a spiritual or moral sense, and that "paradise" (the "hill") could be regained solely through spiritual grace. To imply that Thomalin could--if he so desired--literally regain "paradise" is preposterous on Morrell's part. Morrell's implication that he--as a "goatherd"--is somehow not affected by the "fall" is equally preposterous.

At any rate, Morrell provides a more explicit statement of his religious philosophy. This is an accompaniment to his lofty remarks about the English hills in which he presently lives:

Hereto, the hills bene nigher heven,
 And thence the passage ethe easy:
 As well can prove the piercing levin lightning,
 That seeldome falls bynethe (ll. 89-92).

E. K. points out that Morrell's "simplesse" is evidenced by his supposition that "from the hylls is nearer waye to heaven." Certainly Morrell is demonstrating his ignorance in terms of theological teachings. However, it is also possible to interpret Morrell's statement as a defense of either paganism or ritualism in religion. Hence Thomalin's indignation--as reflected in the following passage--is understandable:

Syker surely thou speakes lyke a lewde lorrell a
 foolish scoundrel/,
 Of heaven to demen so:
 How be I am but rude and borrell a plain fellow/,
 Yet nearer wayes I knowe.
 To kerke church the narre, from God more farre,
 Has bene an old sayd sawe,
 And he that strives to touch the starres
 Oft stombles at a strawe.
 Alsoone as soon may shepheard clymbe to skye,
 That leades in lowly dales,
 As goteherd prowde, that sitting hye,
 Upon the mountain sayles (ll. 93-104).

This--of course--is only the beginning of Thomalin's lengthy reply to Morrell.

Thomalin's lengthy dissertation contains more than just a generalized rebuking of Morrell's religious vanity. Thomalin's discussion on "herbs" is a case in point. Morrell had previously spoken of the healthful herbs--"melampode" and "teribinth"--which grew in the hills and which were "good for gotes." Thomalin now points out that his own flock "neede not melampode: / For they bene hale whole enough, I trowe, / And liken theyr abode" (ll. 106-108). Corollary to this is Thomalin's objection to his flock's mingling with Morrell's on the grounds that Thomalin's sheep "soone myght be corrupted, / Or like not of the frowie fede, / Or with the weedes be glutted" (ll. 110-112). There is a strong suggestion that Thomalin's flock rely upon divine grace for their spiritual welfare and--for this reason--"they bene hale enough." Morrell's flock--on the other hand--are sustained solely by material benefaction in the form of "weeds" or "herbs." The corruption of Morrell's flock might then be seen as a consequence of Morrell's paganistic or ritualistic attempt to dispense divine grace in a strictly material sacrament. Because Morrell's flock have failed to become spiritually healthy (or "hale") by means of spiritual grace, they are properly designated by Thomalin as "gotes" or as profligate individuals. Morrell's "gotes" are "natural men"--in terms of the New Testament categorization--whose religious understanding has failed to develop beyond the "herbs" and "weeds" to the truths which are spiritually discerned.

Thomalin's dissertation includes a long discussion on "good shepherds." Although Thomalin maintains that the hills themselves are

not to be considered as objects of adoration (thus placing himself at variance with Morrell's superstition), Thomalin acknowledges the example left by former "saints" who might once have lived in hills:

The hylls where dwelled holy saints
 I reverence and adore:
 Not for themselfe, but for the sayncts
 Which han be dead of yore /long ago/.
 And nowe they bene to heaven forewent,
 Theyr good is with them goe,
 Theyr sample /example/ onely to us lent,
 That als /also/ we mought doe soe (ll. 113-120).

Thomalin's allusions to "good shepherds"--which include an Old Testament figure in Moses and a contemporary figure in Archbishop Grindal--are to religious leaders characterized by humility and by a concern for the spiritual needs of their "flocks." In a sense, Thomalin seems to be identifying himself with the type of the "good shepherd" represented by Grindal (or "Algrind"). Thomalin's allusions to Grindal are observed by Paul E. McLane as follows:

In July Grindal is twice quoted as an authority on the proper behavior of the clergy. Thomalin tells Morrell that he has heard "old Algrind often sayne" that such early shepherds as Abel and the twelve sons of Jacob, Moses, and Aaron--unlike their modern counterparts--were characterized by humility, meekness, piety, mildness, courage, purity and simplicity of life, and loving care of their flocks.

This last catalogue of virtues on the ideal clergyman has often been attributed to Grindal himself by students of English Reformation history. Indeed, ample evidence exists as to Grindal's character--evidence that would make almost inevitable Spenser's choice of Grindal as spokesman for the ideal shepherd, for Grindal possessed most of the ecclesiastical and human virtues, and labored hard to correct all the Church abuses, that Spenser celebrates or adverts to in the Calendar.¹³

Thomalin's discussion of "good shepherds" is followed by his remarks about materialistic clergymen. Thomalin speaks with irony about the situation in his own time:

But now (thanked be God therefore)
 The world is well amend /amended/,
 Their weedes /i.e., the clothing of the corrupt clerical
 figures/ bene not so nighly wore /are not so nearly
 worn out/;
 Such simplese mought them shend /might put them to
 shame/:
 They bene yclad in purple and pall /rich cloth/,
 So hath theyr God them blist,
 They reigne and rulen over all,
 And lord it as they list /please/ (ll. 169-176, etc.).

The tendency of the church toward exploitation is figured by Thomalin in the following passage:

Theyr sheepe han crustes, and they the bread;
 The chippes /parings of bread crust/, and they the
 chere /meat/:
 They han the fleece, and eke the flesh;
 (O seely /poor/ sheepe the while!) (ll. 187-190, etc.).

Morrell's reaction to Thomalin's long diatribe seems to be defensive. After telling Thomalin that "thou doest but clatter," Morrell declares that "When folke bene fat, and riches rancke /abundant/, / It is a signe of helth" (ll. 211-212). (Morrell--of course--does not make it entirely clear as to whether the "folke" he refers to are the "shepherds" or the parishioners themselves.)

Although there is an expression of mutual sympathy--on the part of Thomalin and Morrell--over the fate of Algrin (Grindal), the contrast between Thomalin and Morrell seems to be sustained up to the eclogue's ending. Morrell's parting words to Thomalin are as follows: "Now farwell, shepheard, sith thys hyll / Thou hast such doubt to climbe" (ll. 231-232). (Thomalin's "doubt to climbe" might be likened to an experience ascribed to Martin Luther. Luther's realization that "the just shall live by faith" came--during a visit in Rome--when he attempted to climb Pilate's Staircase on his knees in an act of penitence. However, in Thomalin's case the futility of the ritual of

"climbing" is evidently already known.) Hence Thomalin and Morrell can be seen as something more than the respective types of "humble" and "proud." The function of Thomalin and Morrell in the July eclogue is such that both shepherds are--in reality--representative of two entirely different classes of churchmen governed by two entirely different religious philosophies.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹C. H. Herford, ed., Shepherds Calendar (London, 1895).
- ²Ibid.
- ³Herbert Ellsworth Cory, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (Berkeley, 1917), p. 26.
- ⁴Ibid.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶Spenser's Shepherdes Calender: A Study in Elizabethan Allegory (Notre Dame, 1961), p. 124 et passim.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 124.
- ⁸A Spenser Handbook (New York, 1930), p. 49.
- ⁹Ibid., pp. 49-50.
- ¹⁰Quotations from Spenser in this text are taken from the Renwick edition (London, 1930).
- ¹¹"The Shepherds Calender," PMLA, XXVI (1911), 419-451.
- ¹²Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama (London, 1906), p. 86.
- ¹³McLane, pp. 149-150.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRODIGAL SHEPHERD FIGURE IN SPENSER'S "SEPTEMBER" ECLOGUE

In the "September" eclogue of Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar a forlorn Diggon Davie has returned from a "farre countrye" and is prompted to relate his misfortunes to Hobbinol: a fellow shepherd. One Spenserian scholar--Edwin A. Greenlaw--has the "farre countrye" identified as London and the situation in the "farre countrye" as that of intrachurch strife.¹ Although Herbert E. Cory alludes to the "shipwreck" of Diggon Davie's "spirit," his interpretation of "September" is essentially the same as Greenlaw's:

The uncouth accents of the wanderer /viz., Diggon Davie/ certainly voice Spenser's own beliefs. Wolves are lurking once more in England while the shepherds quarrel among themselves or glut their greed to deck their mistresses. A fable, the usual climax of the eclogues of this type, about Roffy and his dog, drives home the warning: while the petty bickering rages within the walls of the Anglican church, while the courtiers bury their talons in church spoils, the catholics lie in wait to smite. Certainly this eclogue lent savagery to Milton's grim words in Lycidas.²

In a later study of Spenser's work, H. S. V. Jones observes that "September" is

climactic . . . in that it conveys the most sweeping indictment of the bad shepherds; and in its criticism of restless ambition it offers the most persuasive statement of the philosophy of moderation, which in the earlier eclogues had been variously set against the vice of pride in its different manifestations.³

A more recent interpretation of "September"--that of Paul E. McLane--

has as its main concern the relationship between the personages of the eclogue and political or ecclesiastical figures who were active in Spenser's time. In fact, McLane views the fable in the eclogue as having to do "with the success of Young, bishop of Rochester, in unmasking a subtle heretic who was winning converts to his doctrines."⁴ In spite of the thoroughness with which the September eclogue has been examined by McLane and others, nothing has been said about the "prodigal son" elements in the eclogue as well as the manner in which the role of the "false shepherd" is developed.

In the September eclogue the role of the "false shepherd" is not so much the role which is played by Diggon Davie as the role which Diggon makes known per exemplum. Diggon's own misfortune seems to have taken, in many respects, the form of a "prodigal son" experience. Moreover, the discussion between Diggon and Hobbinol not only involves a consideration of Diggon's folly and the loss of Diggon's "sheep" but it also involves a consideration of "false shepherds" in general as well as the plight of the Church. Diggon speaks to Hobbinol as one who has become sobered by adversity. The last portion of Diggon's warning remarks is--like Piers' tale of the Fox and the Kid in "May"--concerned with satanic influences upon the Church.

After the first several lines of the September eclogue--in which Hobbinol sympathetically greets Diggon and comments on his forlorn appearance--Diggon makes this declaration:

My sheepe bene wasted, (wae woe is me therefore!)
 The jolly shepheard that was of yore
 Is nowe nor jollye, nor shepehearde more.
 In forrein costes, men sayd, was plentye:
 And so there is, but all of miserye.
 I dempt deemed there much to have eeked increased my
 store,
 But such eeking hath made my hart sore (ll. 25-31).⁵

There are a number of ways in which the situation of Diggon is analogous to that of the "prodigal son" depicted in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. In the New Testament parable we are told that the younger of two sons--after he received his share of a family estate--"gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."⁶ In the "Argument" of the September eclogue we are told that "Diggon Davie is devised to be a shepheard that, in hope of more gayne, drove his sheepe into a farre countrye." Diggon--like the "prodigal son"--received an "inheritance" which was eventually squandered away. In Diggon's case the "inheritance" consisted of a flock of sheep which was in his charge. Diggon--like the "prodigal son"--ostensibly left his homeland in order to improve his situation in life. Finally, the journeys undertaken both by the "prodigal son" and by Diggon ended in despair in the "farre countrye" and in a desire to return home. The lost son's contrition was expressed as follows:

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.⁷

Diggon's regret is expressed as follows:

Hobbin, ah, Hobbin! I curse the stounde /time/
 That ever I cast to have lorne /left/ this grounde.
 Wel-away the while /"alas the time"/ I was so fonde
 /foolish/
 To leave the good that I had in hande,
 In hope of better, than was uncouth /unknown/:
 So lost the dogge the flesh in his mouth.
 My seely /"poor"/ sheepe (ah, seely sheepe!)
 That here by there /"here and there"/ I whilome usd to
 keepe,

All were they lustye [in a delightful condition], as
 thou didst see,
 Bene all sterved with pyne [wasting] and penuree.
 Hardly my selfe escaped thilke payne,
 Driven for neede to come home agayne (ll. 56-67).

Up to a point, the situations of both Diggon Davie and the "prodigal son" closely parallel each other. Both situations bear the same literal meaning: a young man has left his homeland for another country, has "wasted his substance" (although under slightly different circumstances) and, after coming to despair, has finally decided to return home. In both situations the figurative meaning is virtually the same: a believer (in the religious sense of the word) has departed from his "heavenly father" in an effort to live, as it were, by his wits. In both the situation of Diggon Davie and that of the prodigal son the "farre countrye" is associated with immorality. The "farre countrye" suggested by the biblical story is a place of harlotry and "riotous living." The "farre countrye" described by Diggon is characterized by the following activity:

They [the "shepherds," presumably] setten to sale their
 shops of shame,
 And maken a mart of theyr good name.
 The shepheards there robben one another,
 And layen baytes to beguile her [their] brother.
 Or they will buy his sheepe out of the cote,
 Or they will carven [cut] the shepheards throte (ll. 36-41).

The lost son in Christ's parable was one who had experienced life in a country where vice and careless living were presumably in vogue. The Diggon Davie of Spenser's eclogue was one who had experienced life in a country characterized--in the words of Herbert E. Cory--by "unscrupulous pastors" and "predatory courtiers who fatten their purses with church property."⁸ Figuratively both the "prodigal son" and the "prodigal shepherd" fell from heavenly grace upon departing from God.

However, the "farre countrye" in the September eclogue has this added significance: the "farre countrye" is not only indicative of a state of separation from God (which can be an individual condition, particularly Diggon's), but the "farre countrye" is also an analogue for the condition or situation whereby the whole Church has been victimized by corruption or spiritual apathy.

Although Diggon Davie is, like the "prodigal son," a potentially "redeemed" figure, the events subsequent to Diggon's "return" differ considerably from the final events in Christ's parable. In the biblical story the lost son is greeted by a compassionate father, is immediately restored to his former position in the family household, and is soon involved in the rejoicing of a feast. In a figurative sense the parable reads as follows: an individual who sincerely repents of his sin can be forgiven and restored to a state of spiritual grace. The case of Diggon Davie--in the September eclogue--does not involve this same kind of resolution. Diggon's desire to be restored to a state of spiritual grace is still expressed toward the eclogue's ending:

What shall I doe? what way shall I wend,
 My piteous plight and losse to amend?
 Ah, good Hobbinol! mought I thee praye
 Of ayde or counsell in my decaye (ll. 244-247).

Whereas the lost son of Christ's parable finally received pardon and comfort from his "heavenly father," Diggon Davie does not yet find such complete absolution. That Diggon's is a partial "recovery" is indicated by Hobbinol--toward the end of the eclogue--as follows:

Now by my soule, Diggon, I lament
 The haplesse mischief that has thee hent /seized/.
 Nethelasse thou seest my lowly saile /my humble
situation"/,
 That froward fortune doth ever availe.

But were Hobbinoll as God mought please,
 Diggon should soone find favour and ease.
 But if to my cotage thou wilt resort,
 So as I can I wil thee comfort:
 There mayst thou ligge in a yetchy straw bed,
 Till fayrer fortune shewe forth her head (ll. 248-257).

This principle of the "prodigal son" parable seems to hold true in Diggon's case: the son (the "child of God") must return to the father (the "heavenly father") in order to be restored to a state of grace.

If Hobbinol were "as God mought please, / Diggon should soone find favour and ease." It appears as though Hobbinol's remarks have a double meaning. Not only is Hobbinol unable to provide much in the way of material comforts and advantages as a friend, but Hobbinol's assistance in the form of spiritual comfort is necessarily limited. Absolution for Diggon--in the form of divine grace--is still forthcoming.

The "return" of Diggon Davie and that of the "prodigal son" differ in one other respect. Diggon has not only made a "return" in the sense that he is willing to eventually amend his "piteous plight and losse," but Diggon has also returned in order to impart warnings about the profligate way of life in which he had participated. (By way of contrast, Diggon's biblical counterpart does not make specific references to the "farre countrye" subsequent to his "return" home.) Diggon was a "false shepherd" insomuch as he was a part of the apathy and the oppression of the "farre countrye": the Church in a state of corruption. However, Diggon now speaks as an enlightened as well as a repentant figure to his friend Hobbinol. One is led to believe that Diggon fell into error as a "shepherd" both as a result of personal ambition and as a result of his confiding in religious practices of dubious value. Diggon's "journey"--in effect--was a "journey" into a situation where

. . . the more /"the greater number"/ bene fraught with
 fraud and spight,
 Ne in good nor goodnes taken delight,
 But kindle coales of conteck /strife/ and yre,
 Wherewith they sette all the world on fire:
 Which when they thinken agayne to quench,
 With holy water they doen hem /them/ all drench.
 They saye they con /know/ to heaven the high way,
 But, by my soule, I dare undersaye
 They never sette foote in that same troade /path/,
 But balk /miss/ the right way and strayen abroad (ll. 84-93).

Diggon warns Hobbino1 that the soul of an individual clergyman would be endangered by a following of the selfish attitudes as well as the opus operatum misconceptions of the false clergy. The attendant state of spiritual despair is described by Diggon as follows:

For they bene like foule wagmoires /quagmires/ overgrast
 /"overgrown with grass"/
 That if thy galage /shoe/ once sticketh fast,
 The more to wind it out thou doest swinck /toil/,
 Thou mought ay deeper and deeper sinck (ll. 130-133).

Diggon's decision for personal reform was probably inspired by the fact that it is better to "leave of /off/ with a little losse, / Then by much wrestling to lease /lose/ the grosse /whole/" (ll. 134-135).

The final portion of Diggon's discussion with Hobbino1 is concerned with the threat of "wolves in sheep's clothing." In Diggon's fable about the wolf which threatened a flock of sheep, the character of Roffy--who "is wise, and as Argus eyed"--is that of a "good shepherd." In his study of the September eclogue, Paul E. McLane observes that

the immediate context . . . in which the tale of the wolf in sheep's clothing appears, would suggest that the wolf represented an influential false prophet, most probably a Catholic, who had hitherto successfully concealed his true position.⁹

However Diggon's fable might be interpreted, the development of the concept of the "false shepherd" is--on the part of Diggon--still

operative. Whereas the "false shepherd" might be one who goes into the "farre countrye" in terms of ecclesiastical practices, the "false shepherd" is also one whose negligence has damaging effects upon the souls of others. (One might recall that all of Diggon's sheep were lost as a result of his journey.) Diggon--at the end of his fable--advises Hobbinol that shepherds should follow the example of Roffy and "ever ligen in watch and ward, / From soddein force theyr flocks for to gard" (ll. 234-235).

In conclusion, the indictment of false shepherds in the September eclogue can be said to involve both a particular and a general application. Diggon Davie laments his individual shortcomings as well as those of the Church as a whole. Diggon not only warns Hobbinol against a departing from the kind of faith and dedication exemplified by such a shepherd as Roffy, but Diggon also speaks of the consequences of pastoral neglect in terms of the whole Church. The concept of the false shepherd--as it is developed in "September"--involves a consideration of the profligacy of the individual shepherd, a consideration of the satanic threat (the "wolf in sheep's clothing"), a consideration of the parishioners (the "flock"), a consideration of the shepherds as a group and, hence, a consideration of the Church as a whole.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹"The Shepherds Calender," PMLA, XXVI (1911), 419-451.
- ²Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (Berkeley, 1917), p. 30.
- ³A Spenser Handbook (New York, 1930), p. 51.
- ⁴Spenser's Shepheardes Calender: A Study in Elizabethan Allegory (Notre Dame, 1961), p. 126.
- ⁵Quotations from "September" are from the Renwick edition (London, 1930).
- ⁶Luke xv.13.
- ⁷Luke xv.17-19.
- ⁸Cory, loc. cit.
- ⁹McLane, p. 163.

CHAPTER V

COMUS AS A "FALSE PROPHET"

IN THE BIBLICAL SENSE

Various critical interpretations have been assigned to the character of Milton's Comus. The critical commentaries generally involve a contrast of Comus' "natural world" to the "spiritual world" which is best typified by the Lady. A consideration of the realms of nature and of grace might help to enhance the reader's understanding of Comus' role (as well as that of the Lady). However, none of the extant critical interpretations of Comus has specifically linked the character of Comus to the type of "false prophet" alluded to in scripture.

In examining the character of Comus, one might first consider the remarks of E. M. W. Tillyard¹, R. S. Stevenson², and G. F. Sensabaugh.³ Tillyard has justified Comus' libertine views of nature by suggesting that

he is in the tradition of the Fathers of the Church praising the wonders of God's creation in their commentaries on Genesis or of the medieval theologians advising their disciples to repair the error of their first parents by seeking God in his works, "per speculum creaturarum."⁴

Tillyard explains that Comus' "riot of hyperboles" (in such declarations as "Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark't with plumes / The herds would over-multitude their Lords" [ll. 730-731, etc.]⁵) simply indicates that "he has been drinking."⁶

George F. Sensabaugh has treated Comus as an exemplar of the "false rhetoric" found in the courtly love tradition. Sensabaugh notes that

when Milton wrote Comus such devices and arguments viz., the rhetorical devices employed by Comus in his attempted seduction of the Lady/ had just received fresh vigor in Henrietta Maria's coterie of platonic love and that a controversy about them resounded through city and court.⁷

R. S. Stevenson likens the rout of Comus to the "profligate court of Charles" and to prelatical corruption in Milton's time.⁸ By way of analogy, "the Church sat, like the lady in the enchanted chair, 'in stony fetters, fixt and motionless.'⁹

David Daiches, E. M. W. Tillyard, and A. E. Dyson have--in their critical studies--dealt specifically with Comus' role as a deceiver. Daiches discusses Milton's creation of a character such as Comus in this manner:

It was Milton's study of rhetoric that enabled him to voice persuasively views that he detested. With Comus as with Satan he builds up character not by innumerable little touches which cumulatively reveal the true quality of a personality, nor yet by means of deep inward soliloquies (though in Paradise Lost Satan occasionally soliloquizes), but by devising occasions which call from his characters their most persuasive statements of their position. Comus mingles brilliant generalization with urgent personal appeal. Here is the latter:

"List Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name Virginity;"

But it moves immediately into generalization:

"Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current, and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partak'n bliss,
Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself.
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish't head.
Beauty is nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;"

And the speech concludes with the urgent personal appeal again, the movement of the verse rapid and colloquial:

"Think what, and be advis'd; you are but young yet."¹⁰

E. M. W. Tillyard has touched upon Comus' brand of deception by noting that "Comus . . . succeeds wonderfully in expressing the great cosmic commonplaces worthily while giving himself away as an imposter."¹¹ A. E. Dyson likens the role of Comus to that of Satan by noting that "both of the deceivers do much more than to tempt the emotions; they tempt the mind itself to confound good with evil."¹² Dyson compares Comus and Satan in this way: "Comus, like Satan, is a splendid creation, with striking arguments to help him in his work of tempting, and with splendid verse in which to dress them out."¹³

A. S. P. Woodhouse has spoken of Comus and the Lady as representatives--respectively--of the "order of nature" and "the order of grace." Such a categorization would seem to correspond to that of the "carnal" and the "spiritual" in Judaeo-Christian scripture. However, Woodhouse has made this qualification:

In Comus, Milton does not repudiate the order of nature; he does not deny an area common to nature and grace, on the ascent through it from natural wisdom to divine; he does not seek to divorce the two orders. But he believes that experience on the level of grace will cast a light upon nature and enable one to realize its true significance.¹⁴

The Lady's view contrasts with that of Comus in that she "does not contradict the picture of nature as given by Comus: she merely points out its incompleteness and repudiates his inference."¹⁵ Nature--as understood by the Lady--"is marked not by abundance only, but by order and rationality."¹⁶

A. E. Dyson's interpretation of Comus essentially follows that of Woodhouse in pointing out that

the visions of life belonging to nature and Grace respectively are present side by side throughout the poem, the one represented by the arguments of Comus, and the other by the type of insight and strength which protect the Lady.¹⁷

Dyson suggests--and this is largely a refutation of E. M. W. Tillyard's view of the Lady--that

the Lady stands not so much for Chastity as for self-control, insight and moral balance--or, to put this slightly differently, that she stands not for a particular virtue but for Virtue itself.¹⁸

Dyson explains that

in Comus, Chastity is more than an isolated virtue: it is symptomatic of spiritual wholeness and the life of Grace, and it is at the same time a special case, albeit the most important one, of that larger and classical issue, the control of the passions by the Reason.¹⁹

As Dyson perceives, the "debate" between the Lady and Comus "is not between Chastity and Incontinence, and still less between Virginity and Marriage, but between Reason and Passion as controlling factors in human conduct."²⁰

However, the "Reason" ascribed to the Lady is not to be thought of as a form of philosophical rationalism. This is what Dyson indicates:

The notion of "truth" as a discovery made by the intellect alone would . . . have shocked Milton deeply. "Truth" on the spiritual level was reserved for the pure in heart to know. Those who relied upon their intellects alone would fall ready victims, he would have supposed, to the rationalizations and sophistries of devils.²¹

Dyson relates the Lady's position to a Christian and Platonic view whereby "purity and moral discipline are the doorways to knowledge concerning good and evil, and that this is a knowledge which no exercise of the discursive faculties, however capable, can hope to discover."²²

Dyson contrasts the respective positions of Comus and the Lady in the following manner:

The philosophy of Comus is that of the "natural man" in the Pauline sense; he is wholly pagan in outlook, and "knoweth not the things of God." The Lady belongs to the world of Grace, and her entire attitude, even at points where it overlaps with the beliefs of stoics or other "natural philosophers" springs from a true and spiritual vision of reality.²³

A. S. P. Woodhouse--whose interpretation corresponds to that of Dyson--would suggest that the Lady's "vision of existence" is one which "only the Christian can fully apprehend."²⁴

From Dyson's categorization of Comus as a "natural man" and Woodhouse's suggestion that the Lady exemplifies a Christian "vision of existence," one might proceed to a consideration of Comus in the light of Biblical admonitions. A pertinent warning against Comus' method of deception might be found in Matthew vii.15:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

There are even more specific Biblical parallels to Comus' form of ungodliness. Comus' appeal for sensual gratification recalls the appeal of Ashtoreth (or Astarte) worship to the Israelites in Old Testament history. Comus' use of sorcery or enchantment also recalls the ungodly charms which are forbidden in Old Testament scripture. Comus is not merely a "natural man" who "knoweth not the things of God." He is actively engaged in a mission of deception. As an "unblest enchanter vile," Comus tempts the mind and body as well as the soul in order to undermine the Lady. In all three aspects of his attempted seduction of the Lady, Comus' character is akin to that of the "false prophet" alluded to in scripture.

Tillyard has referred to Comus as an "imposter."²⁵ Comus' deception is essentially that of the "wolf in sheep's clothing" spoken of by Christ. His designs upon the Lady--as revealed in the following

lines--have a diabolic quality:

I under fair pretense of friendly ends
 And well-plac't words of glozing courtesy,
 Baited with reasons not unplaussible,
 Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
 And hug him into snares. When once her eye
 Hath met the virtue of this Magic dust,
 I shall appear some harmless Villager
 Whom thrift keeps up about his Country gear (ll. 160-167).

Comus momentarily succeeds in appearing to be something other than that which he actually is. The Lady--who initially addresses him as "gentle Shepherd"--expresses this confidence:

Shepherd, I take thy word,
 And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
 Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
 With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry Halls
 And Courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd,
 And yet is most pretended (ll. 322-326).

Behind the guise of "gentle Shepherd" is the deceiver Comus.

When he fails to carry out his deception by appearance, Comus--as Dyson²⁶ suggests--resorts to "temptation of the mind." He attempts to win the Lady over to a "good life" with such words as these:

Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
 And to those dainty limbs which nature lent
 For gentle usage and soft delicacy:
 But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,
 And harshly deal like an ill borrower
 With that which you receiv'd on other terms,
 Scorning the unexempt condition
 By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
 Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
 That have been tir'd all day without repast,
 And timely rest have wanted; but, fair Virgin,
 This will restore all soon (ll. 679-689).

When the Lady resists Comus' first round of sophistry and refuses to taste his "treasonous offer," Comus resorts to the use of a "carpe diem" argument:

Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
 But must be current, and the good thereof
 Consists in mutual and partak'n bliss,

Unsavoury in th' enjoyment of itself.
 If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
 It withers on the stalk with languish't head (ll. 739-745).

As far as Ashtoreth worship is concerned, it is possible to relate the Lady's plight to Old Testament experiences and to see Comus' blandishments as they imply a spiritual trial of the Lady's allegiances. In a season of transgression, a multitude of Jews in Egypt referred to Ashtoreth as the "queen of heaven" (Jeremiah xliv.18-19). We note in Judges ii.3 that Israel was involved in the idolatrous worship of Ashtoreth. When Samuel rehearses the deliverances of Jehovah, he refers to Israel's spiritual decline as a result of Ashtoreth worship (I Samuel xii.10). We are also told in I Kings xi.5 that Solomon--in his old age--turned away from Jehovah and worshipped Ashtoreth.

In his references to nature as an end in itself and to the value of sensual experience, Comus seems to resemble a fertility priest such as might have been involved in Ashtoreth worship. One may recall--in Comus' preliminary speech--the allusions made in the following passage:

What hath night to do with sleep?
 Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wak'ns Love.
 Come let us our rites begin,
 'Tis only daylight that makes Sin,
 Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
 Hail Goddess of Nocturnal sport,
 Dark veil'd Cotytto, t' whom the secret flame
 Of midnight Torches burns; mysterious Dame,
 That ne'er art call'd but when the Dragon womb
 Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
 And makes one blot of all the air,
 Stay thy cloudy Ebon chair
 Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
 Us thy vow'd Priests, till utmost end
 Of all thy dues be done, and none left out (ll. 122-137, etc.).

There is some correspondence between the Grecian Venus, the Thracian Cotytto, and the Canaanite Ashtoreth. There is the element of sexual love present in the worship of all three goddesses. There is the more

specific relationship between Ashtoreth (or "she who enriches") and Cotytto in that both goddesses were worshipped in fertility rites. Both Venus (or Aphrodite) and Ashtoreth have a specific relationship as celestial deities. Just as idolatrous Jews alluded to Ashtoreth as the "queen of heaven," so does the attendant Spirit allude to Venus as "th' Assyrian Queen" (l. 1002). In fact, Merritt Y. Hughes--in quoting from Pausanias (I, xiv, 6) in a gloss to line 1002--indicates that "The Assyrian Queen, Venus or Aphrodite, was first worshipped as a heavenly divinity (rather than as the goddess of earthly passion) . . . by the Assyrians."

However the interrelationship of Venus, Cotytto, and Ashtoreth might be considered (whether in terms of the sexual element present in the worship of all three goddesses, or in terms of Ashtoreth's resemblance to Cotytto as a fertility goddess, or in terms of Ashtoreth and Venus as "heavenly queens"), Ashtoreth provides the most appropriate analogy in Comus so far as religious debauchery is concerned and so far as such debauchery is referred to in the Old Testament. Comus brings to mind yet another element related to Ashtoreth worship in his address to the Lady and his reference to "this tall Wood" (as well as the Lady's reference to "this tufted Grove"). The "tall Wood" can be said to correspond to the "grove" or "groves" of Canaanite provenance (in which case the "groves" were the phallic poles which were set up in "high places" and which were associated with the worship of Ashtoreth as well as Baal). Comus' "Charming Rod"--as a phallic symbol--also has important implications so far as Ashtoreth worship and other fertility rites are concerned.

Comus' appeal to the Lady's beauty and his final injunction

("be wise, and taste") correspond to Satan's wiles with Eve in Paradise Lost. However, Comus is to be better understood not so much as a satanic character as simply one who is subject to a carnal or satanic influence. Because Comus--as Dyson has suggested--"knoweth not the things of God," he must content himself with his existence as a "natural man." Comus' "mission" is to bring the Lady into conformity with the only way of life which he is capable of experiencing. He is a "false prophet" in the sense of Mark xiii.24:

. . . false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

In terms of scripture, Comus would be ranked with those who "speak great swelling words of vanity"²⁷ or who "promise liberty" to others but "they themselves are the servants of corruption."²⁸

Although Comus fails to tempt the Lady's mind (as well as her emotions), he succeeds in placing her in the "enchanted Chair" in which she sits "fixed and motionless" for some time. There are several implications in Comus' use of enchantment as it relates to Old Testament accounts of Israel's spiritual declines. There were a number of warnings made to the Israelites with respect to enchantments. We note that enchantments are expressly forbidden and are regarded as a form of unrighteousness with God. In the judgment upon Babylon in Isaiah's writings, we have the following admonition against enchantments and sorceries:

9 But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it

hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I
am, and none else beside me

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multi-
 tude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy
 youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou
 mayest /this--of course--is said in irony/ prevail (Isaiah
 xlvii.9-10 and 12).

As a result of Comus' demonic invocation and his use of enchantment,
 the Lady's position is potentially the same as that of the Israelites
 in a season of spiritual deviation. However, the Lady's situation
 differs in the sense that she succumbs involuntarily to Comus' enchant-
 ment. The point to be concerned with here is that Comus' use of
 enchantment reflects upon his character as a "false shepherd" or "false
 prophet." One may also recall the attendant Spirit's allusion to Comus
 as a "damn'd wizzard" (l. 571) and his later allusion to Comus as an
 "unblest enchanter vile" (l. 907). Comus is to be understood as one
 "unblest" in the sense that he is "cut off from the blessing of God's
 grace."

It is only through the work of the attendant Spirit and Sabrina
 that the Lady is able to be freed from her captivity. The liberation
 of the Lady from her plight is--in terms of scriptural teaching--
 comparable to the assistance of a distressed believer by means of
 divine intercession or grace. As the Spirit declares in the concluding
 lines of the masque:

. . . if Virtue feeble were,
 Heav'n itself would stoop to her.

By way of contrast, Comus' philosophical outlook is one which is both
 incomplete (as suggested by Woodhouse) and is lacking in the means of
 true freedom. As Woodhouse indicates,

it is from the vantage point of grace that the Epilogue
 takes its retrospective view, and every good falls into

its appointed place in a pattern, a vision of existence, which only the Christian can fully apprehend.²⁹

Comus may be interpreted simply in terms of a chastity-incontinence or nature-grace dichotomy. However, there is more to be gleaned from the conflict between Comus and the Lady. By relating Comus to the "false prophet" of Biblical admonitions, one may detect--in Comus' deception--an attitude which has subtle and devastating implications. It is only the grace and wisdom given the Lady which enable her to reject the quality of life represented by Comus. With these ideas in mind, the reader of Milton's masque should find more significance in Comus' role.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹E. M. W. Tillyard, Studies in Milton (New York, 1951), p. 89.
- ²R. S. Stevenson, "Milton and the Puritans," North American Review, CCXIV (1921), 825-832.
- ³G. F. Sensabaugh, "The Milieu of Comus," Studies in Philology, XLI (1944), 248.
- ⁴Tillyard, loc. cit.
- ⁵The quotations from Comus which are used in this treatise are taken from the Hughes edition: New York, 1957.
- ⁶Tillyard, loc. cit.
- ⁷Sensabaugh, "The Milieu of Comus," p. 249.
- ⁸Stevenson, "Milton and the Puritans," pp. 828-829.
- ⁹Stevenson, loc. cit.
- ¹⁰David Daiches, Milton (London, 1957), p. 71.
- ¹¹Tillyard, "The Action of Comus," Essays and Studies, XXVIII (1942), 28.
- ¹²A. E. Dyson, "The Interpretation of Comus," Essays and Studies, VIII (1955), 93.
- ¹³Dyson, op. cit., pp. 94-95.
- ¹⁴A. S. P. Woodhouse, "The Argument of Milton's Comus," University of Toronto Quarterly, XI (1941), 71.
- ¹⁵Woodhouse, op. cit., p. 49.
- ¹⁶Woodhouse, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷A. E. Dyson, op. cit., p. 89.
- ¹⁸Dyson, op. cit., p. 91
- ¹⁹Dyson, *ibid.*

- ²⁰Dyson, *ibid.*
- ²¹Dyson, p. 94.
- ²²Dyson, *ibid.*
- ²³Dyson, p. 114.
- ²⁴Woodhouse, "Comus Once More," University of Toronto Quarterly, XIX (1950), 223.
- ²⁵Tillyard, "The Action of Comus," p. 28.
- ²⁶Dyson, p. 93.
- ²⁷II Peter ii.18. The scriptural quotations used in this paper are based upon the King James Version.
- ²⁸II Peter ii.19.
- ²⁹Woodhouse, "Comus Once More," p. 223.

CHAPTER VI

EDWARD KING AS A FOIL TO THE TYPE OF THE "FALSE SHEPHERD"

In critical studies of John Milton's Lycidas, the character of the "scrambling shepherds" (in the St. Peter passage) has not been overlooked. Ruskin's observations about those "who dishonestly seek ecclesiastical power"¹ are probably well known to most scholars of Milton. With regard to the ecclesiastical criticism ascribed to St. Peter, J. M. Steadman notes that "Milton's accusation--'The hungry Sheep look up and are not fed'--was especially forceful on the lips of the disciple whom Christ had thrice admonished to 'feed my sheep.'"² Hence Steadman's observations are--as are Ruskin's--focused upon the shortcomings of corrupt "shepherds" or clergymen. Perhaps an interpretation such as that of W. Arthur Turner--which deals with the "two massy Keys" and the "two-handed engine" in Lycidas--comes closest to implying a "good shepherd"--"false shepherd" dichotomy via a discussion of the dual nature of judgement in Lycidas. Turner's interpretation proceeds as follows:

"Two massy Keys he bore of metals twain,
(The Golden opes, the Iron shuts amain)"

Certainly it was familiar to St. Peter and appropriate to him /i.e., the "office of the keys"/. It was a divine instrument. It has been mentioned before the allusion to "that two-handed engine." It was part of the door. It could smite in the figurative sense of rendering judgement, and even literally by slamming ("shuts amain," or with

force). It was two-handed in the sense of having two purposes, to admit the worthy and exclude the unworthy.³

It appears as though the character of Edward King--as it is represented in Lycidas--can be interpreted as a foil to the type of a "false shepherd." In the beginning portion of the elegy, Edward King (or Lycidas, who--throughout the poem--functions as an altera persona for King) is eulogized in conventional terms as an example of a dedicated person. However, King's character and "dedication" have a more specific meaning in view of St. Peter's dicta. In the "St. Peter outburst" which follows the initial lament in Lycidas, the types of "false" or "unfaithful" are presented as alternatives to the more faithful Lycidas. Finally--in the concluding portion of Lycidas--the fate of Edward King is significant as a triumph over the evil and the threat of spiritual death figured in the St. Peter passage. Milton's elegy is constructed in such a way that the dichotomy of "true" and "false"--in terms of Christian "shepherds," "sheep," or "followers"--is in evidence.

In the initial portion of Lycidas, the stage is set, as it were, for a contrast between the "faithful" and the "false" shepherd. The treatment of Lycidas as an example of a faithful servant of God is effected--in the beginning movement of the elegy--by means of profound questioning. To what avail does the dedicated individual "scorn delights and live laborious days" (l. 72)?⁴ Would it not have been wiser had Lycidas chosen to seize pleasure:

To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair (ll. 68-69)?

However, the character of Lycidas takes on more meaning in view of the St. Peter passage. The tone of St. Peter's opening remarks ("How well

could I have spar'd for thee, young swain," etc.) is such that the reader of Lycidas is prepared for a contrast between the fidelity of Lycidas and the infidelity of a "false shepherd."

The first aspect of the "faithful"- "false" antithesis in Lycidas is that which has to do with "calling." The corrupt ecclesiastics are those who--"for their bellies' sake"--"creep and intrude and climb into the fold." John Ruskin discusses the "three classes, correspondent to the three characters, of men who dishonestly seek ecclesiastical power" as follows:

First, those who "creep" into the fold; who do not care for office, nor name, but for secret influence, and do all things occultly and cunningly, consenting to any servility of office or conduct, so only that they may intimately discern, and unawares direct, the minds of men. Then those who "intrude" (thrust, that is) themselves into the fold, who by natural insolence of heart, and stout eloquence of tongue, and fearlessly perseverant self-assertion, obtain hearing and authority with the common crowd. Lastly, those who "climb," who by labor and learning, both stout and sound, but selfishly exerted in the cause of their own ambition, gain high dignities and authorities, and become "lords over the heritage," though not "ensamples to the flock."⁵

If Ruskin's description of the "unworthy shepherds" were to be used as a representative standard, then it appears as though the "worthy bidden guest" would bear--by contrast--such qualities as charity (in the sense of love or devoted service) and humility. The "worthy bidden guest" would be characterized--above all--by a kind of unobtrusiveness, being more influenced by the guidance of the Holy Spirit than by whims or by political considerations. Because of the manner in which a eulogy and a lament focused on Lycidas is followed by a criticism of those who "scramble at the shearers' feast," it seems as though Lycidas is--inferentially--to be classified as a "worthy bidden guest" or a "worthy shepherd." "Shoving" or obtrusiveness would certainly not be

characteristic of those shepherds who are the "called" or "worthy." The patience which, allegedly, was exhibited by Edward King at the moment of his fatal disaster might be said to be antithetical to the "scrambling" and "shoving" ascribed to corrupt or "unbidden" clergymen. The Latin and Greek portion of the poems commemorative of Edward King ("Obsequies to Edward King, drowned by shipwreck, in token of love and remembrance, by his sorrowing friends") opens with a Latin paragraph which has been translated by David Masson. The final part of that paragraph--which describes King's fate--reads as follows:

. . . the ship in which he was having struck on a rock not far from the British shore and had been ruptured by the shock, he, while the other passengers were fruitlessly busy about their mortal lives, having fallen forward upon his knees, and breathing a life which was immortal, in the act of prayer going down with the vessel, rendered up his soul to God⁶

Thus did Edward King (Lycidas) exemplify a proper humility and a receptiveness to the divine will as one who was "bidden" or who was an "ecclesiastic" in the truest sense of the word.

A second aspect of the "true"- "false" dichotomy--so far as Lycidas is concerned--is that having to do with the quality of the service which is performed by Christian clergymen. In Lycidas the epithet "blind mouths" is used to describe the corrupt or unbidden shepherds. John Ruskin has pointed out--with regard to "blind mouths"--that a "Bishop" [episcopos] means "a person who sees" and a "Pastor" [shepherd] means "a person who feeds."⁷ The ecclesiastical criticism in Lycidas is directed toward those shepherds who are not "watchful" ("Of other care they little reck'ning make, / Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast," etc.) and those ("such as for their bellies' sake") who are more concerned with personal gain than with the offering

of spiritual counsel or moral education to parishioners. Above all, the clerical service offered by "scrambling shepherds" is of little value in that such shepherds have not prepared themselves for an "episcopal" or a pastoral vocation--they "scarce themselves know how to hold / A Sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least / That to the faithful Herdman's art belongs!" (ll. 119-121) The "good shepherd" would more likely be one who has "studied to show himself approved." The tone of the St. Peter passage is such that one is led to believe that Lycidas was--again in contrast to the "scrambling shepherds"--exemplary of effectiveness as a Christian shepherd. We already have an explicit statement by the "uncouth swain"--in the introductory portion of the elegy--to the effect that both he and Lycidas had been, formerly, engaged in the "batt'ning" [feeding, fattening] of their "flocks." If "batt'ning our flocks" (l. 29) is understood in terms of the St. Peter passage, Lycidas can at least be credited with an attempt to fulfill his duties as a Christian shepherd.

There are at least two other respects in which the quality of the service rendered by Lycidas contrasts with that of the unbidden and apathetic shepherds. For one, the music and verbal expression of Lycidas are indicative of talent--"he knew / Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme" (ll. 10-11). Of the "scrambling shepherds" it is said that "their lean and flashy songs / Grate on their scrannel Pipes of wretched straw" (ll. 123-124). A typical picture of a shepherd is that of a young lad playing some wind instrument--probably to pass his time away--while his sheep graze within his sight. In the case of Lycidas, a description is given of a shepherd who was skilled both in terms of singing and in terms of poetic expression. The

"scrambling shepherds," on the other hand, do not possess such a skill. However, there is more than a literal significance to such a contrast of talents. So far as the allegory in Lycidas is concerned, Lycidas' ability to "sing" and to "build the lofty rhyme" can be seen as an ability to communicate spiritual truths, whereas the "lean and flashy songs" which emanate from "scranell Pipes" can be seen as a comparable inability on the part of unbidden shepherds.

In the St. Peter passage we are told that the "hungry Sheep" are "swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw, / Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread" (ll. 126-127). Thus the unbidden shepherds can be charged not only with their failure to "feed" their flocks (their parishioners), but the unbidden shepherds can also be charged with their contributing to a situation whereby the "hungry Sheep" must derive "food" from sources other than Christ's church. It is significant that the "hungry Sheep" are filled with "wind" rather than with "food." In holy scripture the "wind" has antithetical meanings. When Eliphaz asks Job (Job xv.2) if a wise man should "utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind," the "wind" seems to be associated with thinking which is of a transient or unsubstantial nature. In the third chapter of the gospel according to John, Christ associates the "wind" with the working of the Holy Spirit:

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii.8).

The New Testament Greek pneuma clearly exemplifies the antithetical nature of "wind" in terms of religious teaching. Pneuma can either signify the natural wind or the Holy Spirit. Along these same lines, Ruskin distinguishes between the "two kinds of breath with which the

flock may be filled; God's breath, and man's."⁸ So far as Lycidas is concerned, Ruskin associates "the rank mist" with "all false religious teaching."

Thus the false shepherds--taken as a group--are guilty of feeding their flocks or permitting their flocks to be fed with "every wind of doctrine" rather than with the spirit of God. By implication, the "good shepherds" would fill their sheep with the Holy Spirit. However, I would view the filling of the Holy Spirit to be an indirect result of the efforts of the good shepherds. (I would deem it highly presumptuous of any "shepherd of Christ" to think himself capable of investing his "sheep" with the power of the Holy Spirit.) I would see more likelihood in a shepherd's feeding his sheep with the "bread of life" (with the substantial teachings of Christ's church), thus enabling his sheep to better "grow in grace." Lycidas--as an example of a good shepherd--can be said to have provided for his flock in such a way that spiritual grace (or "God's breath") became more accessible and that less room was permitted for the "rank mist" or the "false religious teaching" of which Ruskin speaks.

In Lycidas there is a third aspect of the "good shepherd"--"false shepherd" dichotomy to be considered. Heaven and hell are figured as the respective fates allotted to Lycidas and to the "scrambling shepherds." The questions which are raised in the beginning portion of the elegy about the fate of Edward King (Lycidas) are eventually answered in terms of the New Testament understanding of death and judgment. W. Arthur Turner has pointed out--apropos of judgment--that the "two-handed engine" in Lycidas operates with the dual purpose of "admitting the worthy" and "excluding the unworthy."¹⁰ So far as

the "unworthy" are concerned, the devouring of the "grim Wolf"--which is referred to immediately before "that two-handed engine"--is indicative of the fate with which the damned are confronted. The "grim Wolf" would--in all likelihood--"devour" the false shepherds as well as the neglected or unredeemed Sheep. Since the unbidden or profligate shepherds are merely "lost sheep" themselves, the image of the devouring wolf would logically be applicable to their situation. (One might also consider the apostle's admonitions about those who have "forsaken the right way":

. . . if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.¹¹⁾

However, an assurance is given--in the final portion of the elegy--that Lycidas "is not dead, / Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor" (ll. 166-167, etc.). Lycidas is described as being "mounted high" to the kind of heaven envisioned by St. John. Lycidas--as a blessed figure--now hears "the unexpressive nuptial Song" at the "marriage supper of the Lamb" which St. John had spoken of.¹² Lycidas' tears are wiped "for ever from his eyes"--this being reminiscent of both Revelations vii.17 and Revelations xxi.4. In a gloss to line 183, M. Y. Hughes declares that

Lycidas (Edward King) becomes the Genius or protecting deity of the Irish sea and its navigators as Julius Caesar (Daphnis) is imagined by Virgil to be deified in heaven and "good" to men below (Ec. v, 65).¹³

In conclusion, the character of Lycidas (Edward King) can be seen as a foil to the type of a "false shepherd" in terms of "calling" or religious vocation, in terms of quality in ecclesiastical service, and in terms of an eternal destiny. Thus Milton's elegy can be understood

as an elegy bearing moral antitheses rather than as an elegy which merely incorporates a "digression" on corrupt clergymen.

FOOTNOTES

¹John Ruskin, "Of King's Treasuries" in Sesame and Lillies: Three Lectures by John Ruskin, LL.D. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1876), p. 29.

²John M. Steadman, "St. Peter and Ecclesiastical Satire: Milton, Dante, and 'La Rappresentazione del di del Giudizio,'" Notes and Queries, N. S. V. (1958), 142.

³Turner, "Milton's Two-Handed Engine," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLIX (1950), 564.

⁴My quotations from Lycidas are taken from John Milton's Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. M. Y. Hughes (New York, 1957).

⁵Ruskin, op. cit., p. 29.

⁶David Masson, The Life of John Milton, I (New York, 1946), 651.

⁷Ruskin, op. cit., p. 30.

⁸Ibid., p. 32.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Turner, op. cit., p. 564.

¹¹II Peter ii.20.

¹²See Revelations xix.9.

¹³Milton, op. cit., p. 125.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

In Spenser's "May" eclogue the concept of the "false shepherd" is given partial development in the dialogue between Piers and Palinode and fuller development in Piers' tale of the Fox and the Kid. The Fox and Kid tale provides a statement of general truths concerning ecclesiastical Christianity. The Fox--as a representative of the biblical type of the "false shepherd" or "false prophet"--can be seen as a potential threat to individual believers in Christ as well as a threat to the whole Church. (There is the attendant implication--in "May"--that a "good shepherd" will make the threat of the Fox known to his parishioners. It is in this respect that both Piers and Palinode agree upon the value of the Fox and Kid tale for presentation as a sermon.)

In Spenser's "July" eclogue the "false shepherd" (Morrell) is developed in contradistinction to the "good shepherd" (Thomalin). The focus of the false-good dichotomy--in "July"--is upon clerical attitudes and responsibilities. Whereas the "good shepherd" espouses New Testament concepts of faith and spiritual grace, the "false shepherd" has concerns which are of a more materialistic and ritualistic nature. Hence the two shepherds in the July eclogue come to represent two entirely different classes of churchmen governed by two entirely different religious philosophies.

In the "September" eclogue by Spenser the "false shepherd" is

associated with the profligacy of an individual clergyman (Diggon) as well as the profligacy or corruption of the Church's clergy as a group. Hence the indictment of false shepherds in "September" involves both a particular and a general application. Diggon Davie not only warns Hobbinol against a departing from the kind of faith and service exemplified by such a "good shepherd" as Roffy, but Diggon also speaks of the consequences of pastoral neglect in terms of the whole Church. (There is a significant correspondence between "May" and "September" in that--in both eclogues--foxes or wolves represent satanic influences upon the Church.)

As far as "false shepherds" are concerned, the character of Milton's Comus is more closely related to the type of "false prophet" alluded to in Judaic-Christian scripture. Comus' activity--as a demonic figure--brings to mind the Old Testament admonitions against "enchanters" as well as the New Testament admonitions against "seducing spirits." The character of Comus is that of the "natural man." The Lady, on the other hand, represents the "spiritual man" dependent upon divine grace. As a "false prophet" Comus is intent upon converting the Lady to a way of life which--in the biblical sense--is anything but godly or Christian.

Milton's Lycidas involves--as does Spenser's "July"--a "good shepherd"--"false shepherd" dichotomy. The character of Edward King (Lycidas) serves as a foil to the type of the "false shepherd" in terms of "calling" or religious vocation, in terms of quality in ecclesiastical service, and--finally--in terms of an eternal destiny. Since the quality of spiritual leadership and service and growth are necessarily interrelated, the dichotomy of "true" and "false"--in Milton's elegy--

involves Christian "sheep" (or "followers") as well as Christian "shepherds."

There is a close relationship between the concept of the "false shepherd" in English pastorals and the biblical Protestantism of Spenser and Milton. However, the findings of this study are such that the representative pastorals of Spenser and Milton are not manifestations of a strictly Calvinist or Puritan bias. Each of the pastoral selections reviewed in this treatise embodies religious observations or truths of a general significance. The "false shepherd" can be variously associated with trials upon the individual soul, with spiritual or moral infidelity on an individual basis, with the shortcomings of an individual clergyman, with ecclesiastical corruption generally, and--above all--with the plight or the fate of the whole Church.

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