DISCONTENTED CHARITY:
THEOLOGY, COMMUNITY, AND HERMENEUTICS, MORE TO MILTON

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ABSTRACT

EVAN AUGUST GURNEY: "Discontented Charity:
Theology, Community, and Hermeneutics, More to Milton"
(Under the direction of Reid Barbour)

This dissertation investigates one of the profound and pervasive ironies of early modern England: how charity, ostensibly an idealized ethic governing all human (and divine) relationships, was situated at the center of so many of the era's most contentious disputes. This is the project's point of origin, that charity was in fact a problem, its simple imperatives lending an urgency and power to complicated questions about devotional practice, communal identity, political economy, and literary discourse. By tracing the contours of this key nodal term's complex history throughout the period, from the vexed inception of Reformed theologies and biblical translations in the 1520s to political and ideological controversies arriving in the wake of civil war, *Discontented Charity* examines the role of charity in shaping the negotiations of early modern writers who were responding to intractable social, religious, and political demands. There was consensus of a kind during the early modern period – almost everybody agreed that charity was crucial, that it was the primary force binding together communities, and that its relationship to justice required punitive discipline – but these shared beliefs merely added pressure to a vigorous debate. Rival doctrines of justification disputed the theological primacy of charity, interrogated the spiritual sanction of good works, and articulated radically new visions of church community. Humanist scholars reinvigorated a classical tradition of charitable reading, a hermeneutics that polemicists of the period would repeatedly solicit from readers even as they refused to offer the same benefit to their opponents. Local and

national governments, meanwhile, attempted to implement practical schemes of discriminate charity to relieve the poor – charity that required magistrates to "read" and categorize their populace in various classes of need. And the looming presence of the body hovered over all of these and other concerns, as the physical embodiment of charity constantly complicated theoretical discussions of Christian love. Taking a cue from early modern English writers, who depicted charity variously as a knot, a chain, or a bond, *Discontented Charity* joins together a range of scholarship relevant to the problematic characteristics of charity taken up by William Tyndale, Thomas More, Edmund Spenser, Ben Jonson, Thomas Browne, and John Milton, all of whom, though motivated by and responding to widely varying circumstances, nevertheless choose to appropriate the word and recuperate, reform, or even parody its significance.

For Rebecca,

who makes the outgoings of my mornings and evenings rejoice;

and little August Isaiah,

the most precious harvest at the end of this long season

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INTRODUCTION:

"TOKENS OF CHARITY"

> Beholde then what loue and Charitie is emongest you, when the one calleth the other, Hereticke and Anabaptist, and he calleth hym again Papist, Ypocrite, and Pharisey. Be these tokens of charitie emongest you? Are these the signes of fraternall loue betwene you? No, no, I assure you, that this lacke of Charitie emongest your selfes, will bee the hynderaunce and asswagyng, of the feruent loue betwene vs, as I said before, except this wound be salued, and clerely made whole.[1]

Henry VIII's address to parliament on Christmas Eve in 1545 culminates in an impressive panegyric to the virtues and necessities of charity. Perhaps Henry's "finest hour," the speech has often been interpreted as a powerful exhortation to avoid the dangers of ecclesial unrest and an early attempt to forge a middle way between religious extremes in England.[2] Occasioned by the successful passage of the Chantries Act, which authorized the king to dissolve specific chantries, colleges, and hospitals and "ordre them to the glory of God, and the proffite of the common wealth," preparing the way for the continued development of governmental distribution of charity, the parliamentary address nevertheless embodies the very problems it purports to lament, and Henry's fine sentiment is complicated by a host of political, religious, and social tensions.[3] The act was probably triggered by fiscal considerations in the wake of wars with Scotland and France, for

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[1] Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (London: 1809), 864-5.

[2] The phrase is Peter Marshall's, in *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2006), 157.

[3] Indeed, two years later a more expansive and doctrinally-motivated Chantries Act was passed in Edward's new regime. Henry's statement sounds eerily similar to the shrill complaints of Henry Brinklow, who had urged the king three years earlier to seize clerical property "by acte of Parliament so that it maye be disposed to Godes glorye and the commone welthe." Brinklow published under the name of Roderigo Mors in *The Lamentacion of a Christen Agaynst the Cytie of London* (London: 1542).

example, and numerous influential members of court acquired private ownership of the lands and properties by sale, casting a decidedly equivocal shade over Henry's appeal to reforming the public good of the commonwealth. Likewise, even as he urges his subjects to reconcile their differences in behalf of charity, Henry explicitly asserts the crown's own authority in matters of church governance, ordering his "lords temporall" to bring accusations of clerical corruption to the throne: "Come and declare it to some of our Counsaill or to vs, to whom is committed by God the high aucthoritie to reforme and ordre such causes and behauiours." Royal sovereignty hardly proved to be a stable guarantor of religious concord in England throughout the early modern period, and even in late 1545 the king's confident declaration of his supremacy in ecclesial reform belies the continued contemporary disputes over how and by whom the church should be ordered – Henry conveniently waited until the final ten days of Parliament, when the influential conservative bishops Cuthbert Tunstall and Stephen Gardiner were out of the country, to introduce his chantry legislation.[4] The king appears to glance, moreover, at the intractable differences between his Reformed and Roman Catholic constituencies by including a conjunction – "what loue and Charitie" – to acknowledge and join together the lexical commitments of either faction.

Henry appeals to charity as a means of stabilizing a vexatious commonwealth, but he fails to concede that charity was also one of the primary reasons for England's unrest. That is, the problem was not necessarily a "lacke of Charitie" but too much of it, or too many opinions about what it meant, and Henry, even as he exhorted his subjects to compromise, was staking his own royal claim to serve as ultimate arbiter of charity. In attempting to reshape the definition and significance of charity for his own purposes, Henry's chantry speech thus offers a convenient illustration of this dissertation's primary

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[4] See Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 165-185.

argument: charity in early modern England was as much a problem as it was a solution, a sure sign of trouble even if the concept seems to call for peace, equal parts illness and cure in the commonwealth. This project will examine some of the period's most problematic debates, which were less the product of charity's absence than the result of competing visions about charity's demands. Henry's speech gestures at several of these thorny issues, such as the troublesome intersections between material wealth and welfare distribution or between spiritual commitments and bodily imperatives, all of which are complicated further by the dilemma of language and interpretation – the "tokens" of charity and "signs" of fraternal love. Many of these debates culminate with explosive force in the 1640s, effecting dynamic political and religious change, but the central questions about the proper role and function of charity remain unresolved. So, this study begins with Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and England's divorce from Rome, and it ends with John Milton's (partially fulfilled) fantasy of divorcing from prince, prelate, and maybe even Mary Powell, his first wife. But the following chapters also examine the works of numerous writers who employ charity to marry apparently irreconcilable desires, uniting private interest with public good, for example, or in a less abstract vision of harmony, papist with puritan.

It is difficult to overestimate the power and scope of the concept during the early modern period. As the term used to describe a state of general harmony, "the sweet cement, which in one sure band / Ties the whole frame," to use George Herbert's phrase from "The Church-floore," charity encompasses questions about the role of religion, law, politics, and commerce in forging, stabilizing, and reforming social relations, collective trust, and communal identity. Precise meanings of the concept vary, but nearly every definition has at its foundation the biblical commands to love God and neighbor, two separate directives from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18,

respectively) that Christ yokes together in the gospel narratives.[5] This accounts for the simplest but also most confounding paradox among many others that complicate this study: the matter of greatest consensus about charity was also the source of greatest contention. Because of these divine prescriptions, almost everybody agreed that charity was crucial, that it was the primary force binding together any real or imagined community, and that it occupied an uneasy middle ground between the twin obligations to perform justice and mercy, but these shared beliefs merely added pressure to a vigorous debate, those simple imperatives lending an urgency and power to complicated questions about devotional practice, communal identity, political economy, and literary discourse. If charity was part of the cultural bedrock in early modern England, it was under immense tectonic pressure and consequently prone to rupture or fissure into conflict. Equally important, charity was available to any faction who might desire to convert or subvert the concept's already contested meanings and marshal its potent claims in support of their own vision of church and commonwealth. If charity predictably found its way into apologies for the Church of England or Parliament, it was likewise a central force in shaping the rival claims of religious nonconformists like the Anabaptists and political dissenters like the Diggers. This project attempts to remain sensitive to the overlaps, intersections, and congruencies between these disparate voices and interests, not merely the conflict engendered by their mutual belief in the significance of charity.

One of the problems of charity for early modern contemporaries stems from the shared conviction that charity ought to govern, in one way or another, all social and spiritual relations. This ubiquity creates a different kind of problem for scholars studying the period, who are confronted by a term that can be (and was) deployed in a bewildering multiplicity of contexts. A quick glance at the entry for "charitable" in the *Oxford English*

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[5] See Mark 12:28-34; Matt. 22:35-40; and Luke 10:25-38. A number of writers in the period use these twin mandates to divide the Ten Commandments neatly into two tables that order one's love of God and man, respectively.

Dictionary (OED) offers a helpful illustration of the dilemma: the adjective modifies and presumably confers dignity on subjects across a wide and various spectrum of vocabulary, describing religious belief or behavior ("charitable devotion"), specific social practices ("charitable hospitality" or "charitable almsgiving") and social institutions ("charitable houses" and "charitable hospitals"), an interpretive disposition ("charitable reading"), and even precise legal terminology ("charitable trusts" and "charitable uses").[6] Although linked together by the general concept of charity, each of these subjects exists in its own semantic field, demanding an appreciation for cultural and disciplinary particularities. This challenge is exacerbated further by the diminishment in prominence afforded to charity by more recent generations in England and the United States, since the word, as Raymond Williams notes, "has become (except in special contexts, following the surviving legal definition of benevolent institutions) so compromised that modern governments have to advertise welfare benefits … as 'not a charity but a right'."[7] Our cultural imagination struggles to conceive of charity playing a crucial role in political governance or even, as Williams notes, in welfare distribution. Given the fact that this dissertation will engage a number of specific practices associated with the concept, it is worthwhile, here at the start, to provide a brief summary of crucial developments related to charity at the beginning of the period and explain several of the most relevant contexts that appear in the following pages.

"Charity begins at home, is the voyce of the world," Thomas Browne remarks in *Religio Medici*, referring to a popular adage that theorized a hierarchy of charitable obligations, privileging family and friends before strangers. But in early modern England, to oversimplify things in a helpful way, the *problem* of charity begins abroad, and chiefly on the European continent, which was enveloped in the early sixteenth century by fierce

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[6] See "charitable, adj.," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989).

[7] *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 55.

religious disputes over, among other things, the role of charity in achieving salvation and the role of the church in governing traditional modes of charity. This is not meant to dismiss or overlook important continuities between the medieval and early modern periods. Charity had been the source of debate among religious reformers in England, the Lollards in particular, long before Martin Luther and others attacked the purgatorial doctrine and penitential machinery of the church, and this native tradition of reform made London especially receptive to Lutheran doctrine; likewise, later, with Roman Catholicism and its rituals and beliefs, which were entrenched so stubbornly in local communities that the Church of England and central government were never able to eradicate their influence. Nevertheless, at critical moments during the period, especially at its beginning, imports arrive from Europe in the form of theological doctrine, church discipline, and various social and intellectual philosophies, although each receives a distinctively English inflection.

In many ways, the most important foreign development related to charity – the Reformation theologies that re-imagined its role in achieving salvation – receives the least amount of emphasis in this dissertation, although it hovers on the periphery of nearly every other debate. When Martin Luther declared that Christians were justified – that is, made or deemed righteous by God – by faith alone (*sola fide*), he reframed theological discourse for at least a century of succeeding religious thinkers. Emerging in the wake of a complicated medieval dialectic of contrition and repentance prompted by divine grace (operative or cooperative, imputed or infused), with differing conceptions of human merit (congruous or condign), Luther's soteriology drew an emphatic distinction between the justifying work of Christ and any kind of human response. This becomes a crucial difference between the theology of Roman Catholics, who considered the interior, regenerative impact of divine grace part of a longer process of justification, and Protestant reformers, nearly all of whom, though altering and refining Luther's work in various ways, conceived of justification as an event rather than process, a divine declaration of man's

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changed status rather than a product of any human endeavor, however limited. Instead, Protestants considered this process whereby a justified Christian begins to acquire the regenerative power to perform good works, though in fact inseparable from justification, to inhabit a distinct notional or conceptual space, which John Calvin assigned the term "sanctification." Neither Luther nor Calvin intended to disparage the importance of charitable works (one could argue their reforms were aimed at preserving the sanctity of charity), but they removed them from any kind of salvific economy. In response to the spread of Reformed theologies, the Council of Trent consolidated Roman Catholic doctrine and explicitly repudiated any notion of justification that denied the role of human will in cooperating with or responding to the functions of salvific grace. But most Protestant reformers meant something fundamentally different by "justification" – there are other thorny issues in early modern vocabulary besides "charity" – and this theological confusion results in at least three problems relevant to this study: the role of human volition becomes awkwardly implicated in early modern discussions about good works; the task of biblical translation, already complicated by linguistic usage, provenance, and church politics, becomes invested with theological controversies focused on problematic words like "charity," "church," and "priest"; and, more generally, religious polemicists often talk past each other on crucial points related to charity.

These misunderstandings are on full display in England throughout the period, from the fraught exchange between Thomas More and William Tyndale, contending over issues related to language and interpretation, to later debates sparked by any number of religious or political events – the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in the Elizabethan era, the Gunpowder plot, Oath of Allegiance, and potential Spanish match during the Jacobean years, and efforts at toleration by Charles and William Laud. Nor were Lutherans and Calvinists and Roman Catholics – and these are far too rigid of distinctions anyway, as we will see – the only voices debating the precise salvific role of charity in England. The

Family of Love, for example, which gained an eminence among religious sects when the work of German mystic Hendrik Niclaes (or H.N.) arrived in England during the 1570s, emphasized a kind of *imitatio Christi* that ascribed saving efficacy to the "service of love."[8] Later, in the early seventeenth century, members of the Church of England who were influenced by the doctrinal positions of Jacobus Arminius renewed discussion among English Protestants about the status and merit of charitable works. Other religious nonconformists added various nuances to the debate, contributing to the diverse theological texture of the period, which is further complicated by poets and dramatists who often appropriate and misconstrue these ideas, and, in some cases, deliberately mock them. I have tried, as far as possible, to include a variety of confessional voices in this dissertation to provide a fuller sense of charity in the period.

Although these theological concepts generated radical change, the influence of charity was more immediately felt at the level of communal and ecclesial relations – that is, the discipline rather than doctrine of the church. Historians have complicated our picture of the Church of England during the period, which was far from a neat and tidy *via media* straddling the extremes of papism and puritanism.[9] Instead there was a spectrum of competing and overlapping ecclesial interests, all of whom contributed to a vigorous debate about the proper forms of worship and ecclesial identity. In the pages that follow, charity plays a crucial role in negotiating disputes that concerned church polity (whether or not to discard the episcopal superstructure inherited from Roman Catholicism for the more democratic Presbyterian system instituted in Geneva), church ritual (whether or not

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[8] See Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 24.

[9] See, among others, Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), and Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1993).

charity demanded or disbarred one from receiving communion, for example, at the altar or at all), and church identity (whether charity should tolerate sinful behavior or strip away the reprobate from the ecclesial community). Of particular importance in all of these debates is the manner in which charity governs and regulates language, especially within the church, modifying and softening the substance of admonition, aiming for amendment rather than abuse, thinking the best of people's intentions.

Changes related to charity were not confined to matters of soteriology or ecclesiology, and perhaps the most profound occurred in the quotidian experiences of people in the city and parish. After dissolving Catholic institutions of charitable giving such as monasteries and chantries, a succession of government regimes, both national and municipal, experimented with poor relief schemes aimed at redistributing material resources to those in need of support.[10] But these efforts to reorganize social infrastructure were accompanied by several assumptions that complicated contemporary attitudes toward charity. Hospitals perhaps best embody this dilemma, as they generally offered some "charitable" combination of medical service, moral reform, penal discipline, and enforced labor. In addition to generally misunderstanding the root causes of poverty, political authorities attempted to intervene in a complex web of social relations, introducing statutory legislation that proscribed charitable gifts or hospitality to "sturdy" beggars and vagrants, persons displaced from their native parish for a variety of benign or illicit causes. Literary works throughout the early modern period betray an anxious fascination with these characters, exploring a variety of methods for identifying their ruses and disguises. Government authorities encouraged individuals to avoid this kind of

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[10] Recent work by social historians has greatly improved our understanding of the manner in which various systems of giving in England transformed in the wake of the Reformation. For a discussion of the national poor law, the seminal work of Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Longman, 1988) remains a valuable resource. Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) provides a helpful overview of charitable giving in London, and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) offers an expansive study of various informal giving practices in England.

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interpretive problem by donating to a general poor box in each parish church, leaving the task of proper distribution to officials who were supposedly better informed. The interpretive demands of performing discriminate charity, which forced individuals or magistrates to read beggars for signs of authentic or feigned poverty, bear a similarity to the hermeneutics privileged by Renaissance humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus, who stresses the importance of reading a text with a consideration for historical context, textual economy, and authorial intention.[11] So, in a roundabout way, these material imperatives lead back to the problem of scriptural interpretation and theological controversy.

In summary, then: throughout the period, a varied spectrum of religious adherents disputed the theological primacy of charity, interrogated the spiritual sanction of good works, and articulated radically new visions of church community. Humanists and biblical scholars reinvigorated a classical tradition of charitable reading, a hermeneutics that writers of the period, including polemicists and satirists, would repeatedly solicit from readers even as they refused to offer the same benefit to their opponents. Local and national governments, meanwhile, attempted to implement practical schemes of discriminate charity to relieve the poor – charity that required magistrates to read and categorize their populace in various classes of need – in addition to providing legislation aimed at promoting and protecting the status of charitable gifts. The elusive ideals of loving God and neighbor produced similar complications in matters of commerce, medicine, and natural philosophy. This project maintains that these were not discrete developments or debates linked merely by superficial resemblances in the cultural lexicon. Instead the following chapters will labor to show how charity traverses, informs, and reshapes a number of apparently distinct modes of discourse.

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[11] See Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Put another way, these contentious disputes result from certain peculiar characteristics associated with charity, traits that prove especially problematic throughout the early modern period. For one thing, charity is inevitably associated with the great doctrinal debates of the Reformation, which reduced (even for many contemporaries) complicated questions about the sources of divine revelation and the transformative powers of grace into a simple dichotomy pitting Roman Catholic works versus Protestant faith. Later a similar juxtaposition emerges between Laudian clerics and Puritan reformers, each of whom smears the opposing camp's theological commitments by noting a lack of charity or faith. In that case charity exists on a single side of the polemical coin, but it often served as the source of motivation for both debating factions, a kind of ethical or theological Janus facing in different directions. This is particularly true of two polarized discourses that repeatedly clash throughout early modern England: in the first, the respective commitments to reason and revelation repeatedly produce tension, although there is some overlap between the two causes; and in the other, a more intrinsic opposition, charity serves as the primary imperative driving movements in behalf of communal purity and communal toleration.

The inherently *performative* nature of charity proved even more challenging. As with any virtue, the interior space of moral principle and exterior sphere of moral conduct remain fused together, but in charity the traffic between intention and action seems especially charged. Stephen Batman underscores this relationship, noting, "As many as intend to be pertakers with Christ & his Apostels must vse this worke of charitie," naming in succession the corporal works of mercy.[12] That is, the earnest workings of a faithful spirit must ultimately be expressed (one might even say, written) on the bodies of the poor, those without food, shelter, and other material exigencies. By highlighting the importance of use,

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[12] *A christall glasse of christian reformation* (London: 1569), Oii.

or practice, in making real and efficacious one's intention, Batman (admittedly a moderate Protestant) is recycling a contentious piece of advice from the epistle of James – "faith without works is dead" – but charity, precisely because it is alive and incarnate and performed, remains prone to hypocrisy and misinterpretation. This is true of both givers of charity, who might employ a benevolent exterior to cloak a malicious purpose, and recipients of good works who might be altogether undeserving of such precious commodities. If Tyndale calls charitable works the "fruits of faith," there are plenty of bad apples ready to spoil the bunch, or so it seemed to the early modern English, who were deeply suspicious of men and women who might divert alms and other monies from the proper channels of charitable distribution. Throughout the following chapters, various disciplines of charity – the realms of theology, law, marketplace, and medicine – are threatened by the destabilizing presence of heretics, vagrants, rogues, and mountebanks, real or imagined. Despite their marginalized status, this shadowy assortment of characters – and theatrical players, or actors, were considered among them on account of their capacity for disguise – plays a key role in shaping early modern conceptions of charity, exposing the potential for love to be unjust or good intentions to produce bad results.

Perhaps on account of this anxiety, in an effort to clearly identify and define authentic manifestations of the virtue, there are myriad visions of personified charity in early modern literature, but these too remain unstable. If Spenser imagines charity as a fertile and chaste mother, Milton pictures a severe governess of belief. If Sir Tobie Matthew, in his *Missive of Consolation*, figures forth the two poles of active and passive charity, so-called, by reverently depicting the hands of Christ crucified encompassing the whole world in a loving embrace, the virtue was likewise prone to burlesque and parody: Sir John Harington, riffing on a riotous entertainment at Theobalds intended to honor Christian of Denmark in 1606, describes a Charity who kneels before the king to cover the multitude of sins (and possibly vomit) left by her drunken sisters, Faith and Hope. These

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embodiments of charity descend even to the level of affective passions, with Thomas Browne's cool, phlegmatic, charitable humor opposing a hot-blooded zeal for charitable reform. Charity always seems to be shape-shifting, a phenomenon dramatized by the anonymous play *Pathomachia: Or, The Battell of Affections*, printed in 1630 and performed sometime in the 1610s, which dresses up personified vices as virtues: "I will haue Selfe-loue transelementated into the shape of Charitie, for the Dunces say, Charitie begins at home."[13] Even supralunary figures for charity are vexed by their materiality. Francis Quarles envisions a charity that, mixed with faith and love, moves "in proper motion" like a planetary sphere, but its course remains vulnerable to disruption and imbalance.[14]

Charity's protean nature, not merely a matter of appearance with its consequent problems of disguise, remains bound up in rhetorical accommodation and deception as well. Embedded in the stuff of circumstance and context, charitable reading and charitable writing both require a flexibility (often associated with equity) that, imagined in positive terms, succeeds in its apostolic aims of conversion, but such practices were often accused of casuistry and equivocation. This charitable adaptability applies to beggars, too, as Thomas Browne notes, observing the interpretive skills of "Master Mendicants" who can read faces for physiognomic signs of mercy and thereby choose targets likely to offer charitable alms. A more complicated problem underlying this question involves the matter of reciprocity and exchange. By idealizing relations between man and neighbor (or text and reader), charity poses an interpretive drama as each constituent in the dynamic is challenged to think the best of the other, which makes them equally vulnerable to abuse. In his poem "Divinitie" Herbert aptly calls this reciprocal dynamic (one that involves a kind of exchange not merely between man and neighbor, but also man and God) a Gordian knot,

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[13] *Pathomachia: Or, The Battell of Affections* (London: 1630), 28.

[14] "On Faith, Love, and Charity," *Divine Fancies* (London: 1633), 32.

which is precisely the image that Milton employs and aims to sever by deploying the "all-interpreting voice of charity" in the cause of individual liberty.

Never fully resolved or stabilized, these problematic features of charity produce anxious questions about its status and role, which writers probe and examine and dramatize in different ways. Which biblical translation is more charitable: that which accommodates an individual encounter between scripture and spirit, or that which privileges the mediating power of church and tradition and (implicitly) common sense? Which is more crucial to social and ecclesial relations: charitable admonition intended to reform abuses to church and community, or a charitable recognition of mutual fallibility and sinfulness? Which is more productive of charitable use: immense stores of private wealth born of self-interest (which can be redirected toward charities) or a robust collective spirit that privileges the public good, or in fact can these apparently contradictory postures coexist in a fruitful commonwealth? Which charitable prescription possesses more authority: the medical advice of learned physicians or the spiritual wisdom of learned divines? Does charity bind together or liberate otherwise tyrannized subjects, or can it accomplish both imperatives at once in its paradoxical economy?

These questions about charity are repeatedly taken up by Thomas More, Edmund Spenser, Ben Jonson, Thomas Browne, and John Milton, all of whom, though motivated by and responding to widely varying circumstances, nevertheless choose to appropriate the word and recuperate, reform, or even parody its significance. This dissertation uses each of these writers as a locus to explore more expansive cultural discourses, placing central texts within a larger nexus of complex debates associated with charity. It is in these two qualities – its principal focus on literary texts, and its contention that understandings of charity were volatile and amorphous – that *Discontented Charity* departs from the model offered by Alexandra Walsham's study of providence, a similarly crucial nodal term in early modern religion and culture. Whereas Walsham stresses the continuity of providentialism

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throughout the period, a valuable corrective to assumptions that a puritan minority monopolized such discourse, my study places greater emphasis on the amorphous nature of charity, its mutability and its volatility.[15] Part of this is the practical consequence of focusing on literary works that are shaped by creative idiosyncrasies as well as cultural and commercial imperatives. By placing these works of literature within a holistic consideration of charity in the period, however, one that remains sensitive to the problematic ways in which charity intersects and overlaps a number of genres and disciplines, this project will prove of interest to an array of historians by implicating a number of relevant topics: church politics and confessional identity; poor relief and vagrancy law; philosophies of science; and political economy, among others.

The project's interdisciplinary character was shaped in part by the exigencies of its protean subject, but also by my intention to engage scholars outside the field of literature. My method reflects that aim. Each of the following chapters functions as a type of essay or trial piece, placing a central text or writer within a larger nexus of problematic debates associated with the key nodal term. This dissertation aims to bring together to the same table various conversations being conducted separately by scholars interested in specific applications of charity. Taking a cue from early modern English writers, who depicted charity variously as a knot, a chain, or a bond, I have joined together a range of early modern scholarship, which, like charity, often produces strident debates and conflicts born of its own mutual purpose – that is, to get to the truth and sometimes even the beauty at the heart of early modern literature and its culture. If readers, alarmed by the mess of critical methods and emphases in the following chapters, think to themselves, as a bishop in the Church of England might have in the late Elizabethan period, "Let all things be done

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[15] Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

decently and in order," this project offers its own scriptural counterblast from the same epistle: "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."[16]

As my allusion to these two scriptural quotations suggests, this project assigns a foundational role in shaping early modern constructions of charity to the Bible, which, as Debora Shuger observes, "operated as a synthetic field, the site where the disciplines converge."[17] The impact of biblical texts, and their vexed interpretation and application, extends far beyond matters related to belief and worship, implicating a host of other debates that derive in part from specific passages in scripture and key remarks by patristic thinkers, to say nothing of the central biblical mandates to love God and neighbor. There are pragmatic social and political imperatives to provide material charity for the poor, for example, but these received further reinforcement and forceful expression in the Sermon on the Mount and other biblical exhortations to perform almsgiving, which influenced matters of taxation, criminal law, medical care, and work programs. The role of charity in building and refining a church community, meanwhile, was interpreted through the prism of various Pauline epistles, but these scriptural passages had a hand in political disputes, communal reforms, and even Baconian experiment.[18] Theories of scriptural hermeneutics – ruled in part by a charity posited by Augustine and refined by other theologians – surface in literary disputes over the role of satire, and, in the hands of such unorthodox and prodigious intellects as those of John Donne and John Milton, can be deployed to defend suicide or divorce, respectively. This last point is crucial in shaping the methods of this

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[16] These passages are from 1 Cor. 14:40 and 1 Cor. 9:22, respectively. Here I quote from the Authorized Version, but throughout this dissertation I will quote from whichever translation seems most appropriate for the context.

[17] Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

[18] Bacon was particularly influenced by 1 Cor. 8:1: "Knowledge bloweth vp, but charity buildeth vp." See Jeffrey Cordell, "Baconian Apologetics: Knowledge and Charity in *The Advancement of Learning," Studies in Philology* 108.1 (2011): 86-107.

project, as my focus on scriptural interpretation provides a kind of metonymic function as well, standing in for the more general fixation in early modern England on reading texts of various kinds. Indeed, throughout *Discontented Charity* a persistent emphasis on reading and interpretation emerges: reading beggars and bibles for signs of idleness and heresy; reading admonitions for charitable intention or motives of malice; reading plays and reading wills for charitable use or for private interest; reading bodies for signs or "tokens" of disease or schism or mercy; and reading relationships for signs of authentic marital union.

It is no coincidence, then, that this study of charity begins with biblical translation and interpretation. The first chapter examines the heated debate over the correct scriptural provenance and meaning of "charity" between Thomas More and William Tyndale, who sparred in the wake of Tyndale's unauthorized translation of the Bible. Much of this chapter is preoccupied by the paradoxes of either position. Tyndale employs a putatively charitable practice of translation in order to erase the word "charity" from scripture, whereas More, in defense of charity, refuses to afford Tyndale the benefit of charitable interpretation. But this otherwise scriptural controversy takes place in the context of contemporary developments of poor relief, which exhibit similar hermeneutical methods of distinguishing – and then punishing – a sturdy beggar much like a heretical bible. In other words, the modes of distributing material charity mirror in important ways the more rarefied, intellectual practices of biblical reading and interpretation. These overlaps set the stage for the rest of the dissertation by uncovering crucial preoccupations that remain discontented throughout the period: the unabashedly punitive aspects of early modern charity, which might, depending on its recipient, administer alms or a whipping; the interpretive challenges posed by the textual and physical body; and, above all, the frantic urgency associated with the concept, which was something worth fighting for, and even a weapon to use while fighting.

The second chapter takes up a specific task of charity – how to build and reform the church – a question that posed equal amounts of hazard and opportunity for the generation immediately following the ascension of Elizabeth to the throne. In the Admonition controversy that dominated much of the religious conversation in England during the 1570s, two approaches to charity emerge, as so-called puritans deployed charity as a galvanizing force of spiritual reform while defenders of the church establishment prioritized social, political, and religious harmony. The first half of this chapter places Spenser's *Maye* eclogue in the context of this debate. I suggest that Spenser uses the pastoral dialogue to dramatize the challenges of conducting religious discourse in a contentious atmosphere, and, in voicing the principles underlying the respective positions of Piers and Palinode (including their limitations), he purposefully replicates many of the rhetorical failures of the Admonition controversy. Ultimately the eclogue offers few answers to the dilemma – indeed, it participates in the failure – but by subjecting both perspectives to close ironic scrutiny *Maye* achieves its own kind of charitable success. The second half of the chapter focuses on *The Faerie Queene*, especially its first book, which continues to interrogate various interpretive dilemmas associated with charity, dramatizing the slippage between *eros* and *agape*, tempting both Redcrosse and reader to confuse romantic love for charitable love. These various trials culminate in Spenser's enigmatic personification of charity, Charissa, whose presence stabilizes certain catalysts of interpretive anxiety – Spenser focuses on the importance of intention, for example – but also places a Reformed vision of charity in uncomfortable proximity with Roman Catholic doctrines and practices.

Spenser repeatedly uses the figure of the vagrant to unsettle material and moral exchanges, and the third chapter transports these issues of reciprocity into the literary marketplace, where Jonson attempts to negotiate the uneasy dialectic between dramatist and audience, a dynamic further complicated by the unreliable medium of actors and the

threat of censorship. I place these and other issues related to the commercial theatre in the larger context of economic growth and mercantile expansion during the early Jacobean era, when contemporary cultural norms were adapting to changes in the mercantile behavior of early modern London. More specifically, I demonstrate how the role of charitable *use* pervades topics related to commercial exchange, as Parliament introduced statutory legislation intended to encourage individual owners of private wealth to offer charitable donations that would benefit society. Jonson engages questions of literary and commercial exchange in his city comedies, probing the charitable imperatives that sometimes marry private profit with public good and sometimes mar both, and he carefully notes how professional dramatists were implicated in this ambivalent enterprise. In *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, moreover, Jonson tests the limits of charitable relations by dramatizing their vulnerability to criminal or roguish elements.

A different kind of marketplace receives the focus of my fourth chapter, as I place Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* within the context of contemporary disputes among learned physicians and rival medical practitioners, many of which involve questions related to charity. Although Browne is primarily focused (in his idiosyncratic way) on spiritual and ecclesial matters, he repeatedly deploys a vocabulary of learned physic to describe and even diagnose religious concerns. In the increasingly polarized discourse of the 1630s and early 1640s, when Browne was writing and revising his work, charity had come to signal specific, entrenched political and religious commitments, but *Religio Medici*, despite its forthright claims, manages to evade conventional markers of faction by refusing to indulge in what he calls "uncharitable Logicke," as evidenced by the enthusiastic reception of his treatise among readers of various confessions. Instead Browne envisions a charity that accommodates singularity and sociability, remaining flexible enough to move between either disposition. More importantly, by repeatedly trafficking between spiritual and affective conditions, and by expressing a reserved suspicion that religious disorders –

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heresy, schism, despair – might be discovered and cured by skilled diagnostics or experiment, *Religio Medici* offers an alternative discourse in which to perform a vigorous spiritual stocktaking.

Browne's suggestion that charity resides most fully in "coldest natures," in addition to his apparently "lukewarm" posture toward popery, provokes a stern rebuke from Alexander Ross, a rather severe clerical defender of the scholastic establishment. But Ross could not have been worried about tepid opinions when he turned his attention to one of his future targets, Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, the subject of this project's final chapter. In this treatise, which Milton revised and expanded for a second edition, and then supplemented with three additional tracts, there is more polemical fire than cool disposition. Like Browne, however, Milton deploys a similar flexibility in his manipulation of conventional figures of political and religious discourse, and charity plays a crucial role in this strategy, figuring in his efforts to refashion typical approaches to scriptural hermeneutics and Christian liberty, and adumbrating his future republican philosophies. Milton's contemporaries found it difficult to reconcile his emphasis on charity with the subject endorsed by his treatise, but even if he marshals the virtue in behalf of domestic liberty, charity functions throughout the tracts as a kind of coupling agent, linking gospel prescription with natural law, right reason with the Holy Spirit, or good works with faith. Milton tasks charity with both "binding and loosening," as he calls it: he employs a charitable hermeneutic that will free individuals from the strictures of a disaffected marriage (to a spouse or, presumably, to a sovereign), giving allowance for the potential that libertines might abuse such freedom, in order to provide the opportunity for a marriage born of authentic human companionship.

Here, at the intersection of domestic liberty and sexual license, Milton adds an exclamation point to the primary contention of this dissertation – that charity in early modern England was as much a problem as it was a solution – and brings the project back

to where it started: the challenges of charitable reading; conflicting reformist visions born of individual revelation or communal consensus; and finally, the troubling overlap between charity and carnality.

CHAPTER ONE:

"IN SPITE OF MYNE HART": TYNDALE AND MORE AND THE PROBLEM OF CHARITY

> [Tyndale] hath mysse translated thre wordes of grete weight and every one of them is as I suppose more than thryse thre tymes repeted and reherced in the boke… The one is quod I this worde prestys. The other the chyrche. The thyrde charyte.[1]

> Thomas More, *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*

When scholars choose to examine the controversy between Thomas More and William Tyndale, they often focus on the first two "words of great weight" involved in the dispute over Tyndale's translation of the New Testament – "priest" and "church" – while "charity," after receiving obligatory mention, retreats back to the margins of intellectual conversation.[2] It makes sense. The debate derives its energy and essence from the rival claims to authority and certainty of scripture and the church. Everything hinges on these two words: whence comes the power and sanction of the church and what role should its priests perform in the process of Christian salvation? Charity, of lesser consequence perhaps in such a grand contest of theological and ecclesial polemic, demands less immediate attention from either More or Tyndale or their respective scholars.

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[1] *Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, Vol. 6, part I, eds. Thomas Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour, and Richard Marius (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 285-6.

[2] There are several excellent studies of "charity" in this debate. See in particular Allan Jenkins and Patrick Preston, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), and Germain Marc'hadour provides an incisive, albeit slightly partial, analysis of the dispute in *Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, Vol. 6, part II, eds. Thomas Lawler and Germain Marc'hadour (New Haven: Yale University Press,), 512-516.

But one nevertheless senses that More intends for his inclusion of "charity" to perform a larger role than merely lending his rebuke the evocative power of 1 Corinthians 13. Instead, the discussion of "charity" seems personal to More, a topic close to his ken, and he suggests this specific "mistranslation" casts especially serious doubt on Tyndale's capacities as a translator. Gerald Hammond notes the distinction between More's attitude toward the previous two faults and this final third: "Behind this specific charge lay a deeper concern about the cheapening effects of translation exemplified in Tyndale's preference for 'love' rather than 'charity' to translate the Greek word *agape*."[3] Nor were his concerns merely aesthetic. Espousing a theory of translation that privileged the *consensus fidelium*, which incorporated the common customs and common sense of the universal church, More believed charity, as a technical term employed by the church and widely accepted by English readers, was the right word for the translation. Just as important, however, he believed "charity" gave the lie to Tyndale's claims that any radical departures from previous translations were done solely for philological reasons; More was sure Tyndale deliberately intended to translate scripture in such a way that would undercut the church's authority. In order to capture the true nature of Tyndale's endeavor, More suggests that "love," a banal word possessing dangerous sexual connotations, would be the natural preference of someone in bed with Lutheran heresy. To all of these accusations, Tyndale responds with spirited fervor in kind, defending the philological verity of his translation, indicting sundry clerical abuses in England and abroad, and rebuking More's own carnal attitudes toward charity and misappropriation of scriptural authority.

The debate between More and Tyndale provides an especially apt entry into an exploration of charity in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the dispute traverses a number of problematic discourses in which a variety of writers

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[3] Hammond, "Translations of the Bible," *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 170.

participated: the importance of translation and all its accompanying controversy (between *scriptum* and *voluntas*, for example), as well as the consequent problems of interpretation and "charitable" or "malicious" hermeneutics; the implications of the reformers' emphasis on justification *sola fide*, and distinctions between charity as a vehicle of salvific merit or evidence of sanctifying grace; the awkward overlap between ecclesial and secular authorities[4]; the looming specter of the body, especially in its erotic context, and the ways in which the physical embodiment of charity constantly complicates any theoretical discussions of Christian love; finally, the manner in which opposing sides repeatedly attempt to appropriate charity for their own polemical ends.

In addition, the controversy between More and Tyndale took place when the administration of charity was undergoing significant alteration in various municipalities around the continent, developments that would profoundly influence the future of England's efforts to reduce poverty. Luther was instigating reform in poor relief in Germany, Ypres had adopted an innovative new scheme aimed at poor relief in 1525, and a year later Juan Luis Vives (a close friend of More's) published *De subventione pauperum*, a controversial theory of relief that drew criticism from the Sorbonne and other clerical authorities on account of its premise that charity be administered by secular rather than ecclesial mandate. England's court was participating in these innovative practices at the same time that Tyndale's translation was receiving consideration by royal authorities, and, though the translation of 'charity' might seem distinct from the practical implementation of almsgiving, both developments involved similar problems of interpretation, supervision, and punishment.

Indeed, Tyndale's translation is not merely the work of an iconoclast, nor did his interest in charity spring up in a social or spiritual vacuum. Reforming the theory and

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[4] Consider that Tyndale repeatedly appealed to the king to enact ecclesial reform, and More engaged in religious polemic as an extension of his responsibility as lord chancellor.

practice of 'charity' had been the focus of a great number of English countrymen before William Tyndale. *Dives and Pauper*, for example, which was first printed in 1493 but enjoyed great popularity in the 1520s and 30s, repeatedly asserts the clergy's shortcomings with regard to charity, much in the manner of *Piers Plowman*. In addition to England's legacy of clerical satire, meanwhile, Lollardy emphasized the priority of people and practical charity over sacramental stuff.[5] These religious reformers, like Tyndale, adopted a complex attitude toward the orthodox church, radically opposing papal power and various other clerical practices but remaining unwilling to break from the church. Likewise a number of men who would later defend the church against supposed heresy attempted to enact reform from within, and charity was a constant refrain among these writers, Thomas More especially.[6] *Utopia* provides a scathing critique of the attitudes toward poverty adopted by contemporary authorities in church and government, and even in his *Dialogue Against Heresies* More acknowledges the need for reforming clerical attitudes toward property. Nevertheless, Tyndale naturally assumes a unique position in the story of English "charity" because he attempted to strike the very word from the bible, deliberately opting to replace "charity" with "love," a term more general in meaning and less encumbered by Roman freight. Tyndale's critique of the church acquired even greater force as a consequence, with its underlying suggestion that charity had become too sullied by clerical vice to adequately describe Christian love of God and neighbor.

So, charity might not have been the central debate of the controversy between Tyndale and More, but it shaped and influenced a number of key questions. Why was charity such a problematic term? Was Tyndale intending to stretch meanings of Christian love to incorporate broader, more pervasive social relationships? Was he attempting to

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[5] See Donald Dean Smeeton, *Lollard Themes in the Reformation Theology of William Tyndale* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986), who notes numerous consistencies in the respective theologies of Lollards and Tyndale.

[6] This is true of Erasmus, John Colet, and even John Fisher.

strip the concept of its "carnal" associations with salvific merit? And what precisely was More intending to protect: canonical consensus, a specific type of Christian charity, or merely ecclesiastical authority? How do various conceptions of charity metamorphose in the midst of the polemical exchange? Indeed, why do More and Tyndale seem so, well, *uncharitable*? And why should the body, with its assorted temptations to sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust prove so importunate in casting suspicion on any notion of charity?

In order to answer these questions, I will begin by examining the writers' respective approaches to language and translation. Much of the controversy, after all, was the result of misinterpreted language; indeed, one might reduce the greatest part of More's dispute with Tyndale to a quibble over diction, as C.S. Lewis suggests when he assesses their predicament: "One sees how tragically narrow is the boundary between Tyndale and his opponents, how nearly he means by faith what they mean by charity."[7] In addition to a consideration of the distinct problems posed by "charity" and translation, and the contrary attitudes of More and Tyndale in this regard, I wish to contextualize their debate through a survey of contemporary poor relief schemes, studying in particular the dangerous power of charity as a galvanizing force for punishment as well as mercy. Applying a hermeneutical practice of reading beggars much as one would properly read a text, these schemes suggest a contemporary public desirous to implement charity but wary of its potential for misapplication. That distrust is fully evident in the exchange between More and Tyndale, a controversy situated in the midst of theological discourse which had radicalized into militant extremes and was further exacerbated by exigencies particular to the polemical genre both writers employed. Tyndale and More consciously positioned themselves at opposite poles along the vague and indefinite spectrum "charity" inhabits, despite possessing numerous similarities in their respective appropriations of the word and

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[7] C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 189.

concept. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate, both writers exploited the inevitable associations between charity and the body to attack his opponent – a kind of incarnational polemics, perhaps. Any discussion of Tyndale and More inevitably culminates in a reference to their ultimate common ground as martyrs, one of those spectacular quirks of history, but the fact is rooted in more than mere coincidence, providing evidence of similar beliefs and religious priorities. Indeed, the source of much of their contention was a mutual desire to protect the sanction and practice of Christian love.

Or charity. Tyndale and More were both dead by 1536, and after them no English writer could deliberately choose to employ the word "charity" without adopting a conscious stance regarding some aspect of their dispute.

Agape: The Problems of Translation and Interpretation

In the beginning of Biblical translation was the word *agape*, which provided a solution to one dilemma and caused a multitude of problems thereafter. When translating the assortment of Hebrew words used to describe "love," all of which were deployed throughout the Jewish scriptures in a variety of contexts, the Septuagint translators generally employed the single (and relatively obscure) Greek word *agapan*, which meant 'to esteem' or 'to prefer' or 'to be grateful' in classical sources, eschewing the more accessible and inclusive term *eros*, perhaps on account of its associations with libidinous sexual desire or its established place in Greek philosophy.[8] The translators occasionally adopted *philia* to describe filial or fraternal love (even then, rarely), but its implicit reciprocity – the mutual love shared by equals – must have seemed inadequate to describe the relationship between humans and the divine. Consequently, the word *agape* acquired new significance, deriving its central importance from the injunction of Deuteronomy 6:5 to "love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,"

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[8] Anders Nygren considers Christian *agape* to be in fundamental contradistinction to Platonic *eros* in *Agape and Eros*, Part I, trans. A.G. Hebert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Thought, 1932), 23-27.

which prescribes the primary form of worship and obedience due to the God of Israel. Elsewhere, *agape* describes the love of God to his chosen people (Deut. 7:7-8), as well as an idealized social ethic commanding citizens to "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18).

These loosely related figurations of a specifically religious *agape* receive further emphasis in the synoptic gospels, particularly given the manner in which Jesus links the commands of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, implicitly aligning fraternal love with the traditional love of and obedience to God.[9] Luke, perhaps the most gifted Greek stylist of the gospel writers, demonstrates a greater subtlety in his deployment of *agape* by developing these specifically Jewish-Christian meanings of a religious love alongside more traditional, classical senses of the word. So, for example, he uses *agape* to describe the centurion's esteem for the Jewish nation (Luke 7:5), a sinful woman's gratitude for Jesus' forgiveness (Luke 7:47), and even the preference of Pharisees for their own ostentatious displays of devotion (Luke 11:43).[10] Pauline epistles further complicate the word's legacy. Most frequently deployed in its verb form in the Septuagint, gospels, and extra-biblical sources, which reflect the verb-oriented characteristics of the Greek and Hebrew languages, *agape* appears most often as a noun in the Pauline epistles, marking a profound lexical shift with serious implications for future translators. Paul generally employed *agape* to describe fraternal love between humans rather than a human response to God or Christ, which is usually figured as faith or *pistis*, but the alteration only expanded the definition of *agape* rather than reducing its scope.[11] As a word that might mean divine love, religious devotion, or mutual love among humans, in addition to an already obscure secular legacy,

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[9] See Matt. 22:37-39, Mark 12:29-31, and Luke 10:27. John's gospel, meanwhile, underscores the role of divine *agape* (John 3:16).

[10] C. Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, II, trans. M.A. McNamara and M.H. Richter (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1965),77-125.

[11] Spicq, 103-307. See Catherine Osborne's *Eros Unveiled* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 26, for a helpful chart recording each use of *agape* in verb or noun form throughout the New Testament.

agape places difficult demands on any Biblical translator, who must be attuned to circumstance, tone, verbal context, and authorial idiosyncrasy.

This, then, was the predicament facing Jerome when he answered the commission of Damasus to produce an official translation of the gospels.[12] What is more, no equivalent Latin term existed for *agape*. In order to convey the appropriate sense of each particular usage of the word, Jerome employed a combination of *dilectio* and *caritas* to convey the sense of higher love, and *cupiditas* or *concupiscentia* as a debased form of self-love, with *amor* filling in the gaps. Jerome explains his theory of translation in his letter to Pammachius, declaring the primacy of translating for sense rather than literally *verbum e verbo*, although he does claim scripture requires additional consideration and caution before adjusting any literal word.[13] At the same time Jerome defends his principle of *ad fontes*, privileging original sources over potentially corrupt derivatives. Already he articulates an approach to translation that marries the original text (in its original language) to a contemporary context and usage, but Jerome recognized the inherent dangers of such a project, an acknowledgement authorities later used to justify banning vernacular translation. Indeed, the ordinance of 1408 outlawing translation in England specifically refers to Jerome's admission that "it is a perilous thing, as the Blessed Jerome testifies, to translate the text of Holy Scripture from one idiom into another."[14] Similarly unequipped to translate the precise meanings of *agape* into English, Lollard versions of the Bible (followed by the Douay-Rheims) simply rendered *dilectio* as "love" and *caritas* as "charity,"

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[12] It does not seem probable that Jerome translated the Pauline epistles, but the unknown editor followed a similar formula when translating *agape*. See *Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 108.

[13] See Eugene Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

[14] *Constitution of the Provincial Council at Oxford*, in *Records of the English Bible*, ed. Alfred Pollard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 80-81.

but there was no easy solution for translators.[15] Later, when Tyndale answers More's initial

critique, he acknowledges the particular dilemma confronting any translator of *agape*, and

one might even observe a note of genuine exasperation in his tone: "Verily, charitie is no

knowen Englishe, in that sence which *agape* requireth… Wherfore I must haue used this

generall terme loue, in spite of myne hart oftentimes."[16] Regardless of polemical,

theological, or hermeneutical considerations, charity poses difficulties to any translator of

the Bible.

That frustrated qualification, "in spite of myne hart sometimes," voiced amid the

heat of polemical assault, might suggest that Tyndale attempted to strike his own

tremulous balance between his head and heart, between the letter and spirit of scripture,

but this hesitancy hardly depicts Tyndale's initial self-assurance as a translator. The

prologue to the Cologne fragment (interrupted after an informer alerted authorities), his

first description of what would become his life's work, provides a more apt summation of

his approach to translation:

> I have here translated … the new Testament for your spiritual edifying,
> consolation, and solace: Exhorting instantly and beseeching those that are
> better seen in the tongues than I, and that have higher gifts of grace to
> interpret the sense of the scripture and meaning of the spirit, than I, to
> consider and ponder my labour, and that with the spirit of meekness. And if
> they perceive in any places that I have not attained the very sense of the
> tongue, or meaning of the scripture, or have not given the right English
> word, that they put to their hands to amend it, remembering that so is their
> duty to do.

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[15] See the entry for "charity" in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[16] Tyndale, *An Answere Vnto Sir Thomas Mores Dialoge*, eds. Anne M. O'Donnell and Jared Wicks (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 19-20. Although *agape* seems to have flummoxed him, elsewhere Tyndale forcefully defends the English vernacular against criticism: "For the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than wyth the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin." See *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, ed. David Daniell (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 19.

It is a command performance for someone beginning a career as translator of scripture. Reading that first simple clause published in bold font and blazoned like fiat across the page, "I have here translated," it is easy to see how Stephen Greenblatt finds in Tyndale's work the "expression of a powerful *confidence*."[17] There is an urgency as well, one that immediately engages his readers. Note the rhetorical impact from Tyndale's blend of a *humilitas* topos spiced with an imperative tone, which attempts to curry favor among his elite reading audience, "those that are better seen in the tongues than I," even as he gestures toward a theology of *sola gratia* ("gifts of grace") and instructs his readers to "consider and ponder" his work with "meekness" – that is, he attempts to manipulate the reception of his translation, exhorting his audience to take the translation seriously but also to read it charitably. Consciously fashioning his vocation after the advice of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:3, Tyndale articulates a vision of personal labor where individual and communal interests intersect, fulfilling the pedagogical and pastoral responsibilities ("for your spiritual edifying, consolation, and solace") Paul asks of the congregation in Corinth. Furthermore, Tyndale reminds his readers of their own obligations to follow this scriptural imperative: "so is their duty to do." The declaration, a trumpet blast aimed at established English authorities of church and state who continued to proscribe any vernacular translation, derives its full force from the most powerful exhortation to perform charity in the Pauline canon. In other words, Tyndale suggests that he was called to translate as an act of love to God and neighbor, and others should contribute their own particular gifts to the enterprise.

Tyndale's optimism as a translator centers on his belief in the clarity and transparency of the scriptures, which he believed would explain themselves to each reader:

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[17] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 100. Greenblatt's word choice is particularly incisive given the integral role Tyndale accords confidence in matters of faith; see, for example, his translation of Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is a sure confidence of things which are hoped for."

"where the text seemeth at the first chop hard to be understood, yet the circumstances before and after, and often reading together, maketh it plain enough."[18] He did provide his own simplistic interpretive apparatus to accompany the New Testament, a fact several scholars have mentioned when questioning Tyndale's supposed confidence in Biblical transparency. But as his career continued, even as he developed a more sophisticated understanding of Hebrew and a greater awareness of the Bible's complex lexical heritage, Tyndale reduced his marginal notes and glosses dramatically, which suggests a growing degree of confidence in his audience's ability to interpret scripture with the aid of the Holy Spirit.[19] Nevertheless, what is most important is the inherent individualism of Tyndale's enterprise at both the level of translator – remember his bold declaration "I have here translated" – and reader, whose greatest interpretive aid according to Tyndale remains the interior revelation of the Holy Spirit.[20]

Although the words "translation" and "interpretation" were interchangeable in sixteenth-century English usage,[21] their compatibility was hardly guaranteed, and the text of 1 Corinthians 14, whatever Tyndale's assurances, seems hard to understand at both the first and last chop. Emphasizing the importance of prophecy, or interpretation, to which any gift in languages remains subordinate, the scriptural text is a piece of Pauline ballast counterbalancing the future Reformed principles of *sola scriptura*. The essence of Paul's counsel is communal, culminating in his vision of a fully edified Christian congregation, which will be empowered to encounter an individual unbeliever: "But and if all prophesy,

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[18] *Tyndale's New Testament*, ed. David Daniell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3.

[19] Douglas Parker, "Tyndale's Biblical Hermeneutics," *Word, Church, and State*, eds. John Day, Eric Lund, and Anne O'Donnell (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1998), 87-101.

[20] Tyndale's bold self-advertisement is, perhaps, justified by the subsequent appearance of numerous cheap imitations, but the fact that he refused to confer on others the same individual authority in translation remains telling.

[21] See the entry for "interpret" in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition.

and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is rebuked of all men, and is

judged of every man: and so are the secrets of his heart opened."[22] This dynamic becomes

all the more suggestive because Paul explicitly links it to charity in his most forceful

description of communal order, which he sets in comparison to knowledge which "puffeth

up" an individual. Which was Tyndale, the individual edifying the community by his gift in

tongues or the unbeliever? The tortuous complexity that characterizes sixteenth-century

understandings of charity stems from the concept's vexed scriptural foundation: charity

might serve to validate an individual's contributions to a community or it might justify a

congregation protecting itself from an outsider's potential threat of disruption to

communal harmony.[23]

More possessed no such sanguine trust in the individualism inherent to Tyndale's

enterprise, which hardly smacked of any "spirit of meekness."[24] Indeed, Benedek Péter

Tóta suggests that More derived his own theory of charitable hermeneutics from 1

Corinthians 14:3, in which he envisions charity as a speech-act, a performative utterance

rooted in integrity and obliged to defend the truth from false interpreters and flatterers.[25]

That is, even as charity motivated Tyndale to begin a project of translation, the same virtue

obliged More to halt its progress. Perhaps more to the point, More clearly advocated a

notion of charity that obtained its sanction and power from the communal order rather

than the other way around. The implications for More's approach to charity and translation

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[22] *Tyndale's New Testament*, 257.

[23] This concept becomes crucial to local municipal schemes of discriminate charity developed during the period, many of which explicitly refrained from relieving strangers.

[24] Likewise More did not trust the laity to interpret scripture correctly. Throughout the *Dialogue* More emphasizes the gullibility of Protestant lay readers, represented by the messenger, a simple interlocutor who cannot contend with the logic, rhetoric, and experience of More.

[25] See Tóta, "The European transmission of *caritas* in More's Dialogue of Comfort," *Travels and translations in the sixteenth century: selected papers from the Second International Conferences of the Tudor Symposium (2000)*, ed. John Michael Pincombe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 65-72.

are profound. His primary contention, that Tyndale's "mistranslations" betrayed a desire to inculcate scripture with heretical doctrine, persisted throughout the controversy, but More's antipathy for Tyndale likewise stems from this simple difference in temperament. In the *Dialogue's* equivocal endorsement of a vernacular translation of scripture, More cites the difficulties of translation as reason for hesitation, restraint, and a conservative approach to such an endeavour, especially when salvation is at stake. How can one render, More asks, "well and lyvely the sentence of hys author / whyche is harde always to do so surely but that he shall somtyme mynyshe eyther of the sentence [form] or of the grace [meaning] that it bereth in the formare tonge."[26] Consequently, he favours "comen custome" rather than any sudden lexical shift, whatever its claims to accuracy might be, and he indicts Tyndale's failure to accord with the accepted common usage of an English audience familiar with the term "charity." A profound scepticism of any solitary enterprise underlies this principle of translation, which ensures that individual beliefs remain circumscribed by authority and consensus. This is an approach which prizes the communal order first, and More believed fending off individual heretics like Tyndale – much like the unbeliever of 1 Corinthians 14 – to be a vital function of charity.

Specifically, More appears concerned that Tyndale's choice of "love" rather than "charity" effaces important distinctions between various types of love: "For though charyte be alway loue / yet is not ye wote well loue allway charyte."[27] More's phrase echoes a comment made by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* when he attempts to distinguish between *amor* and *dilectio*, which follows a similar treatment of the matter by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*.[28] Much like More, both Augustine and Aquinas recognize the

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[26] *Works*, Vol. 6, part 1, 337.

[27] *Works*, Vol. 6, part 1, 287.

[28] Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 556-8. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II.23-26, trans. R.J. Batten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

distinction between *caritas* and *dilectio*, which involves a rational act of choice, and *amor*, a general term that encompasses the former two passions in addition to friendship and concupiscence. Unlike More, however, neither of the two thinkers expresses much apprehension over the philological muddle; indeed, Augustine strenuously defends the scriptural sanction of *amor* against its detractors. More seems particularly concerned by the erotic implications of "love," which will be discussed later, but implicit in his anxiety is the belief that a neutral term like "love" facilitates misprision and erodes centuries of church tradition that clarified the nature of godly love. Nevertheless, he struggles to levy serious charges at this particular method of translation, or at least he cannot enlist the support of Augustine and Aquinas.

Tyndale does little better in response to the critique. His initial response concentrates on the philological aspects of his translation – "Verily, charitie is no knowen Englishe, in that sence which *agape* requireth" – but in comparison to his confident justifications of "congregation" or "repent," the debate over "charity" elicits a relatively confused defense. He seems genuinely flustered, relying on a series of rhetorical questions:

> For when we say, geue youre almes in the worshepe of God and swete saint charite, and when the father teacheth his sonne to saye blissinge father for saint charite, what meane they? In good faith they wot not. Moreouer when we say, God helpe you, I haue done my charite for this day, do we not take it for almes?[29]

This hardly answers More's charges, beyond delivering a jab at the church's system of merit-based alms-giving and associating charity with superstitious intercessory prayer. If he were primarily concerned with refuting More's insinuations that (heretical) theology informs his translation, Tyndale chooses a poor strategy. Although the rhetorical questions provide unconvincing support for his translation, his repeated use of the stylistic device does emphasize the difficult choice facing the translator, and Tyndale begins asserting this point more forcefully:

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[29] Tyndale, *Answere*, 19-20.

> And the man is euer childing and out of charitie, and I beshrew him sauing my charitie, there we take it for patience. And when I say a charitable man, it is taken for mercifull. And though mercifulnes be a good loue, or rather spring of a good loue, yet is not euery good loue mercifulnes. As when a woman loueth her husband godly, or a man his wife or his frende that is in none aduersitie, it is not alway mercifulnesse. Also we say not thys man hath a great charitie to god, but a great loue.

Here Tyndale seems to gesture at the dynamic complexity of Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, when the apostle uses fifteen verbs to describe the different functions of *agape*.[30] However, by describing the multiple significations of "charity" Tyndale actually provides good reason for its inclusion, as the word clearly meant more than merely "giving alms" and yet its sense remained narrower than "love." What is more damning, perhaps, is Tyndale's use throughout the New Testament's epistles of "concupiscence," a Latinate word explicitly set in contrast to charity by Jerome, a polarity further reinforced by Augustine in much of his theological writing.[31] By privileging "love" in his translation, Tyndale was not merely rebelling against church and tradition but the entire Latinate lexicon on which "charity" was founded; yet if "lust" need not consistently replace "concupiscence," why the discrepancy in the case of "charity"?

Tyndale's argument becomes plainer – although perhaps less convincing to More – when he justifies an approach to translation that empowers readers to arrive at meaning after a consideration of context: "Where the text seemeth at the first chop hard to be understood, yet the circumstances before and after, and often reading together, maketh it plain enough."[32] Articulating a rule of translation that aims for inclusivity when confronted by a philological dilemma such as *agape*, Tyndale suggests he can avoid potential inaccuracy by remaining general and allowing readers to interpret nuance from the passage's context:

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[30] Spicq, 150.

[31] Tyndale uses "concupiscence" in his translation of Romans 7, Thessalonians 4, and James 1.

[32] *Tyndale's New Testament*, trans. David Daniell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3.

> And when *M. More* saith euery loue is not charitie, no more
> is euery Apostle Christes Apostle, nor euery Angell Gods
> Angell, nor euery hope christen hope, nor euery sayth or
> beliefe Christes beleife, and so by an hundred thousand
> wordes. So that if I should alway vse but a worde y[t] were no
> more generall then the worde I enterprete, I should
> enterprete nothing at all. But the matter it selfe and the
> circumstaunces do declare what loue, what hope, and what
> fayth is spoken of.[33]

This might bolster More's argument that relying solely on scripture is a vexed approach to theology, but as a principle of translation or hermeneutics Tyndale stands on relatively firm ground, safe behind the vanguard of humanists like Erasmus and Lorenzo Valla, although Erasmus might have considered Tyndale's rigid use of "love" a parsimonious translation.[34] Moreover, one gathers that Tyndale, by limiting himself to a consistent word for *agape* in every instance, was attempting to reinforce and reproduce in English what he believed to be the self-interpreting nature of scriptural text.

This is precisely what is at issue for More, who accuses Tyndale in the *Confutation* of obscuring important distinctions between "holy virtuous affeccyon" and "lewde love." There might be occasions to translate in such a way that sacrifices precision for accuracy, but "charity" satisfies both requirements:

> Here maketh Tyndale a grete processe / and telleth vs that
> cheryte hath in englysshe speche dyuers sygnyfycacyons,
> somtyme loue, somtyme mercy, somtime pacyence. And what
> is all this to purpose? Sholde he therfore leue out cheryte
> where it may conueniently stande? … what nede was it to put
> the indyfferent worde loue in the place of the vndowted good
> worde cheryte, there as y[e] sentence well shewed that it
> sygnifyed neyther mercy nor pacyence but loue / and then
> the worde sygnyfyed that it ment good loue whych is
> expressed by cheryte.[35]

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[33] *Answer*, 20.

[34] See Gerald Snare, "Reading Tyndale's Bible," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 35.2 (2005): 289-326. Snare primarily focuses on Tyndale's evolving attitude toward marginalia, glosses, and other textual apparatus intended to aid readers in scriptural interpretation, but theories of textual context that link *oeconomia* and *decorum* clearly engage matters of translation as well.

[35] *Works*, Vol. 8, part 1, 199-200.

In this case More subtly privileges the Vulgate or conveniently forgets that *caritas* already served as a compromise in translating *agape*, but his contention remains forceful. Tyndale's choice of "love" clearly possesses just as many diverse significations as "charity," so why not preserve the term more widely accepted by contemporaries? More argues further in behalf of decorum, dismissing the importance of what the language of an original text meant to its contemporaries and claiming, "Tyndale muste nedys in hys englysshe translacyon use hys englysshe wordes in suche sygnyfycacyon as the people vseth them in hys owne tyme."[36] It might be a slight exaggeration to claim, as Germain Marc'hadour does, that "usage alone is the ground of More's rebuke," since More was obviously using this argument to support his primary accusation that Tyndale mistranslated on behalf of Lutheran heresy, but More clearly considered Tyndale's lexical iconoclasm proof of the larger hazards involved when individuals could handle and disseminate the word of God.[37] Both men were excellent scholars of Greek and their respective theories of translation were each founded in good humanist principles, but they remained unwilling to negotiate in the manner Jerome envisions necessary for any translation: Tyndale might have been too quick to dismiss a contemporary English equivalent for classical and scriptural *agape*, whereas More's shrill defense of church tradition and English usage would place impossible demands on any vernacular translation purporting to adhere to the original text.[38]

It is difficult to claim a victor in this particular aspect of the contest. But there is evidence Tyndale later recognized the dangers of his ambitious project, which placed an

[36] Ibid., 202.

[37] Germain Marc'hadour, *Works*, Vol. 6, Part II, 513.

[38] In addition to the thorough treatment of More's approach to translation in the Yale edition *Complete Works*, see Brenda Hosington, "Thomas More's views on language and translation and their place in the Classical and Humanist tradition," *Moreana* 40 (2003): 69-98, and, focusing on Tyndale, David Daniell's *William Tyndale: A Biography* and A.C. Partridge, *English Biblical Translation* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), 37-59.

enormous amount of responsibility on the individual translator. In 1534 a fellow English reformer in exile, George Joye, oversaw the publication of a pirated edition of Tyndale's translation, in which Joye replaced the word resurrection with "life after this life," a change Tyndale feared might facilitate arguments in behalf of purgatory or other doctrines rooted in doubtful scripture.[39] In order to respond directly to the change, Tyndale appended a second note to his readers at the front of his revised edition of the New Testament, in which he accuses Joye of failing to "walk after the rules of love and softness which Christ, and his disciples teach us."[40] Just as the prologue to the Cologne fragment figures his own translation as a charitable endeavor intended to edify and console, here Tyndale accuses Joye of violating fundamental precepts of Christian love by casting doubt on Biblical certainty and endangering congregational harmony. In this debate he ultimately ends up playing the role of Thomas More, defending catholic consensus and worrying over the injurious effects of ignorant or malicious translations of scripture:

> If it were lawful after his example to every man to play boo peep with the translations that are before him, and to put out the words of the text at his pleasure and to put in every where his meaning … that were the next way to stablish all heresies and to destroy the ground wherewith we should improve them.[41]

Immediately after this assertion, he founds his evidence against Joye on the twin bedrock of scriptural and canonical authority, "according to the open and manifest scriptures and catholic faith."[42] If Joye's translation of resurrection is correct, Tyndale claims, "then must my translation be faulty in those places, and saint Jerome's, and all the

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[39] Gerald Snare likewise notes the importance – and irony – of Tyndale's indictment of Joye in "Reading Tyndale's Bible," 289-325.

[40] *Tyndale's New Testament*, 13.

[41] Ibid., 14.

[42] Ibid., 15.

translators that ever I heard of in what tongue soever it be."[43] It is a diplomatic tactic as well, aligning his work with that of the Vulgate (against which many detractors opposed his translation) and subsuming his own theological views under the aegis of the church while maintaining the independent authority of the scriptures. Clearly Tyndale betrays an anxiety concerned with the impact of mistranslation, recognizing its dangerous capacity to fracture the unified faith of the church, though he remains convinced of his own project's divine sanction. But also involved in his rebuke to Joye is a personal stake, a concern that his own name remain unassociated with suspect scholarship, just the sort of individualist ethic More decries in his critique of Tyndale's translation.

The Order of Charity: Poor Relief and the Vagrant Text

In defending his notion of proper scriptural translation, More enlists charity to lend weight and authority to his defense of the larger Christian church in England. He carefully emphasizes Tyndale's individualism and even suggests the translator – hiding, of course, somewhere over on the continent – forgets "in hys englysshe translacyon [to] use hys englysshe wordes," implying that a true Englishman would never think to translate *agape* as "love" rather than "charity." This is not mere nationalism, though he tries to stoke the patriotic fervor of his audience, nor is the communal rhetoric solely intended to sanction any of the minor doctrinal arguments involved in his debate. Instead More emphasizes Tyndale's status as outsider, an undesirable import from Germany, whose travel merits the same suspicion accorded to vagabonds, figures who exploit literal charity much as Tyndale's texts abuse the linguistic provenance of charity. In the preface to his *Confutation*, after explicitly associating recent occasions of dearth and increased poverty with the influx of heretical texts, More likens Tyndale and other reformers to vagrants who support themselves with misappropriated alms: "These felowes that naught had here, and therfore

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[43] Ibid., 13.

noughte caryed hense, nor nothynge fyndynge there to lyue vppon / be yet sustayned and mayntened wyth monye sent them by some euyll dysposed persones."[44] More seems to expect his audience to have a similar attitude, adding, "We shall not need to dowte of what sort we shall reken the remanaunt." The malicious deceit of both vagrants and heretics, marginal figures who put the community at risk, clearly absolves More of any responsibility to offer charity and justifies a punitive response.

Such figures, variously described as "valiant" or "sturdy" or "able-bodied" beggars, were becoming more prominent in debates over practical administration of discriminate alms as municipal authorities across Europe introduced a variety of poor relief schemes to cope with a sudden increase in poverty. In addition to providing publicly funded outdoor relief for deserving poor, most of these reforms were intended to suppress begging and discipline (in the form of work or punishment) the able-bodied poor.[45] All of these practices, gifts of punishment as well as aid, were conceived in terms of the most powerful and authentic expression of communal harmony available to municipalities: Christ's mystical body joined by faith and charity.[46] As the town of Ypres declares in a defense of their innovative poor relief scheme instituted in 1525, the classical metaphor of the body politic neatly merged with Christ's mystical body into the predominant figuration of Christian community:

> For by no meanes can a man be thought a fauourer of mercy
> no nat a right christian excepte he perceiue and fele other
> mennes troubles to greue him as moch as his owne / for than

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[44] *Works*, Vol. 8, part 1, 12. Later More compares Tyndale's "feeling faith" to the delusions of "beggers that dreme they fynde great hepys of gold, and wax wonderouse gladde in theyr slepe."

[45] Paul Fideler, *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 48.

[46] Perhaps the clearest scriptural reference to this concept appears in Ephesians 4:15-16, which Tyndale translates: "But let us follow the truth in love, and in all things grow in him which is the head, that is to say Christ, in whom all the body is coupled and knit together in every joint." See also Romans 12.

> shall christen charite wytnesse / that we ar membres of one
> body and heed.[47]

Language of this kind was commonplace, as Paul Slack notes, and here emerges another relation between heresy and vagrancy, since anything that endangered order was conceived as a sickness or sore that threatened to infect the commonwealth's body – "All kinds of mischief, heresy, and error were 'pestilent'" – while the laws that cleaned them away were considered medicinal purgatives.[48] Not all references to the poor were directed at potential heretics, of course, and the existence of vagrants encouraged just as many arguments for reform as it stifled. Tyndale capitalizes on the contemporary state of poverty as a means of demonstrating clerical corruption, for example, declaring that the pope and his self-interested minions "haue no deuocion vn to the poore which are as christes awne person," spending their monies instead on "the garnessinge of shrines / images and reliques."[49]

Addressing the problem of vagrancy was hardly a new phenomenon in England, as local communities had already been adapting in response to the emerging population of transient poor, but in the 1520s and 1530s central authorities, perhaps influenced by the comprehensive reforms in poor relief sweeping across the Continent, vigorously attempted to "heal" a commonwealth sick of vagrants.[50] In addition to a consideration of the new poor laws developing under Henry VIII, this section will focus on the Ypres Ordinance, which was eventually translated by William Marshall and presented to Anne Boleyn in 1536, and a treatise published in 1526 by More's friend Juan Luis Vives, *De Subventione Pauperum*, that he directed to his adopted city Bruges upon request by their prefect, Lodewijk van

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[47] *Some Early Tracts on Poor Relief*, ed. F.R. Salter (London: Methuen, 1926), 59.

[48] Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

[49] *Answere*, 82.

[50] For local responses to poverty and its associated problems, see Marjorie McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

Praet, ambassador to England for Charles V.[51] Historians of social welfare routinely note the inefficacy of these early Tudor policies, which provide relatively little administrative machinery to ensure the proper execution of regulations, misunderstand the root causes of poverty, and seem overly preoccupied with the evils of idleness, but the statutes do demonstrate a recognition among the English populace of the difficulties inherent to any charitable enterprise, how the exchange of gifts involved a fragile dynamic prone to misapplication or exploitation. Moreover, the profound scepticism of beggars inherent to these poor relief schemes mirrors More's own suspicion of Tyndale, whom he considered a heretic in disguise, and More's determination to castigate Tyndale and other Lutherans reflects a larger cultural attitude that deemed punishment to be an integral feature of any charitable program. Finally, the municipal schemes, like More's ideal of scriptural translation, derives its notion of charity from the communal order.

It sounds strange to link these reforms to a clerical supporter like More. After all, the traditional narrative offered by historians of Catholic and Protestant charity after the Reformation claims that once Luther had dismissed the efficacy of good works, Protestants relied on the collective action of the secular sphere to relieve poverty in a more rational, consistent, and efficacious manner than the disorganized Catholic practice of spontaneous and indiscriminate charity intended to effect personal salvation. Certainly many municipal schemes incorporated important Lutheran principles by diminishing the scope and privilege of clerical authority, curtailing private merit-based alms or intercessory prayer, and emphasizing the public and practical role of charity in local parishes. Likewise the prohibition of begging disrupted the traditional practices of several mendicant orders in the church. But both religious persuasions practiced discriminate charity, and numerous scholars have convincingly demonstrated that institutional reforms of poor relief were

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[51] *De Subventione*, eds. C. Matheeussen and C. Fantazzi (Boston: Brill, 2002), Xix.

greatly influenced by humanist ideals, in addition to the interest of secular powers wishing

to promote political security.[52] All of these important intellectual and ideological influences

can be identified in England in the early sixteenth century, when the era's rising poverty,

exacerbated by the beginning of an inexorable rise in prices and population growth,

confounded an ecclesial establishment ill-equipped for such demands: the government had

been using royal policy to stabilize labor markets and prohibit vagrancy since the 1349

Ordinance of Labourers at least; humanists like More challenged civic magistrates to

employ reason and philosophy to improve the country's economic welfare; and religious

dissidents wished to reform the precedence of rituals such as intercessory masses for the

dead above charitable almsgiving. Finally, much of the fundamental philosophy

underpinning these schemes had been laid out in the canon law developed during the

previous four centuries, which relied on works by the Church Fathers.[53] These ideas were

hardly uniform – medieval scholars reading or commenting on the Decretals faced the

dilemma of reconciling Chrysostom's indiscriminate charity, for example, to the subtle

distinctions between the poor made by Ambrose and Augustine – but it seems the major

task of Catholic towns like Ypres as well as Lutheran towns like Wittenberg was not to

develop theological support for a new kind of charitable giving, but rather adapting

institutional schemes to meet the new and growing demands of poverty.

  These developments remain of more interest, perhaps, to historians of welfare, but

larger questions related to the concept of charity pertain to these reforms. The poor relief

schemes show how complicated the issue of charity remains even in its most practical

incarnation, but these innovations likewise implicate crucial questions of scriptural

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[52] See, among many others, Brian Pullan, *Poverty and Charity: Europe, Italy, Venice, 1400-1700* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1994) and Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[53] Brian Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959). See also Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

translation and hermeneutics, or to put it in another manner, they demonstrate certain habits of reading that shed light on the debate between Tyndale and More. Most relevant is the punitive discipline coursing through even the practical application of alms: the virtue of charity, as More and Tyndale and their contemporaries understood it, clearly was not limited to a simple act of mercy or pity, but instead demanded an integrity of life, belief, and work. The command to "'love your neighbour as yourself" might require a person to give money or food, especially in an occasion of need, but it might also oblige him to give correction or punishment. Charity also demanded a complicated and constant program of reading. In one's relationships, one's devotional life, even in the practical realities of daily living, the process of administering charity required an array of interpretive strategies to negotiate a growing recognition of the dangers inherent to charity, how it might be misapplied or exploited or misinterpreted. Such distrust is as plainly evident in contemporary poor relief as it is in More's defense of the traditional translation of "charity."

The Ypres Ordinance, which offers a grand promise of universal love and pity extended to all people, illustrates the difficulties of implementing a charitable ideal:

> Seeing that god approved no thinge more than kyndnesse
> towardes our neibour / for he that loveth his neibour
> fulfilleth the lawe: therefore we thinke that pity shuld be
> stretched to all pore peple on every syde, but yet in such
> manner that the ordre of charity saved / we preserve oure
> citizens whose persons and maners we knowe before
> strangers with whom we have none acquaintance.

After acknowledging the divine sanction of neighbourly love and then reiterating its importance, the ordinance proceeds as if with a syllogism – "therefore we thinke" – suggesting the following vision of generosity and abundance "stretched to all pore peple on every side" is at once necessary and natural. But the town inserts an important qualification, one that maintains the integrity of its project of pity but nevertheless insists on "the ordre of charity." Just in case the city's abundance is exhausted, merely as a matter of policy, Ypres will extend charitable aid first to its own citizens, "whose persons and

maners we knowe." The order of charity to which Ypres alludes had been developed in canon law with a great deal of sophisticated handwringing, as theologians attempted to establish classes of poverty by which they might prioritize their almsgiving.[54] Articulating the standard position of medieval canon lawyers, Ypres effects a compromise, preferring the careful distinctions in poverty made by Ambrose even as they professed the ultimate ideal of indifferent charity urged by Chrysostom, so long as supplies last. One reason for establishing categories of desert, interestingly, is the imperative of justice – "he that loveth his neibour fulfilleth the lawe" – as theologians had long considered charity to involve both the virtue of justice as well as mercy.[55] A relatively nuanced scepticism of the efficacy of alms likewise influenced the scheme; as the Ypres ordinance observed, following a precedent set by Augustine and others, ill-administered charity might facilitate injurious patterns of living, particularly among professional beggars: "To suche [counterfeit poor] beggynge shulde be forbidden that they shulde nat turne the goodenesse of good men into an evyll vse."[56] Finally, as Michel Mollat explains while noting the gradual inclusion of punitive measures for vagabonds among supposedly charitable schemes, the authorities were also prompted by mistrust and apprehension of poor strangers pouring into the city from rural provinces: "They no longer knew with whom they were dealing."[57]

Motivated by logic and expedience, or fear, or a sense of justice, much of the new machinery of poor relief was intended as a means of acquiring more knowledge of the impoverished recipients of aid. Discriminate charity had existed before in concept, but

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[54] Tierney, 44-67.

[55] Ibid., 35. Tierney observes how separate quotations from Augustine in the Decretum complicated medieval understandings of charity: 'Justititia est in subveniendo miseris'; 'Eleemosyna opus est misericordiae.'

[56] *Some Early Tracts*, 47.

[57] Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 251.

these new schemes instituted widespread categorization of the poor by local and national

governments, which required a thorough interrogation of each beggar. London

implemented a badging scheme in 1524, and the 1531 vagrancy statute, 22 Henry VIII, c. 12,

adopted a similar policy, requiring beggars to be examined, registered, and provided a

license to beg for alms in a limited area. In addition, the statute offered a comprehensive

illustration of the sturdy vagabonds who should be denied aid:

> Any Man or Woman being hole & mighty in body & able to
> laboure having no Lande nor using any lawful marchaundyse
> crafte or mystery, wherby he might gette his lyvyng after the
> same feast, be vagarant & can gyve none rekenyng howe he
> doth lefully gette his lyvyng.[58]

Nor does the statute stop there. Authorities were likewise expected to apprehend

unauthorized scholars, erstwhile sailors, proctors and pardoners, quacks, "and all other

ydell personnes goynge aboute … usyng dyvers & subtyle craftye & unlawfull games &

playes."[59] Almost farcically meticulous, the statute's systematic inventory of vagrants and

their various guises is intended to combat the contemporary perception that members of

the able-bodied poor were developing greater capacities of disguise that threatened to

derail any charitable enterprise.

The act reads like an addition to the burgeoning genre of rogue literature, new

pamphlets based on the late fifteenth-century work *Liber Vagatorum* such as Robert

Copland's *Highway to the Spital-house*, which excoriates "losels, myghty beggers, and

vacabonds, / And trewands that walke ouer the londs, / Mychers, hedge crepers, fylloks,

and luskes," as well as vagrants who wear the clothing of soldiers or lepers "and so beggyng

deceyue folke ouer all / … / And wyll abyde no laborous subiection."[60] The similarities

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[58] *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. 3, 329.

[59] Ibid, 330.

[60] *Selected Pieces of Early Popular Poetry*, II, ed. Edward Vernon Utterson (London: T. Davison, 1817), ll. 55-7, 208-10.

between the two texts reinforces the notion that civic officers (and to a lesser extent

charitable givers) were expected to "read" strangers like a book. Consider the detailed

description of the subprefect duties in the Ypres ordinance:

> Their offyce was appoynted to them by the prefectes to visyte
> the poore houses / shoppes / and cotages of the poore and
> nedy ons / and to marke surely where / what / and howe
> moche helpe euery one neded. Yea and ouer this by certayne
> tokens and coniectures to get the knowledge of their
> condicyon / their helth / their homly and secrete grefes /
> their maners / and (as nere as can be) theire merytes / and to
> write these in a boke or tables ordeined for the same
> purpose.[61]

The language of the ordinance expressly compares the work of the subprefects to

biographers, and in this case the beggars of Ypres were literally being written down so as to

be read and comprehended by the magistrates. These were unstable texts, however, and in

order to make a correct and informed decision, Ypres authorities desired to know all of the

beggar's circumstantial details, even his "secrete grefes," evaluating the personal, familial,

and professional context of every pauper.

      Innovations in poor relief consequently bear remarkable similarities to the growing

rhetorical and hermeneutical trend among humanists that urged readers to employ equity

and decorum and economy when interpreting a text. Kathy Eden notes how Erasmus and

other humanists intentionally revived a venerable interpretive program, favouring a

thorough study of historical and textual context when reading a work, as well as a

consideration for the writer's intention and the work as a whole.[62] This approach to reading

derived in part from a recognition of the rhetorical nature of scripture, its capacity to teach

and transform the reader, as well as an appreciation for the dynamic dialectic between

reader and text. Indeed, this was the spirit of scripture Erasmus admired so deeply, and he

linked its character of charity – what Augustine deemed the *summa* of scripture in *De*

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[61] *Some Early Tracts on Poor Relief*, 55-56.

[62] See Eden, esp. 53-78.

Doctrina Christiana – to Christ, who accommodated his earthborn audience by expressing

divine truths in parables and stories, and was himself a means whereby God made his

mystery known to mankind.[63] Of course, this type of charitable hermeneutics is precisely

what Tyndale envisions as justification for his translation of *agape* – he claims, "The

matter it selfe and the circumstaunces do declare what loue, what hope, and what fayth is

spoken of" – empowering readers to produce their own contextual interpretations of a

more general and complex word "love," rather than reducing the manifold implications of

agape into "charity." In this sense "love" functions as an accommodation that suits the

spirit of scripture. But even as Erasmus derives his rhetorical theology from the charitable

accommodation of Christ and Paul, he associates their capacity for disguise and adaptation

with Proteus, an apt figure for the rhetorical dynamism of vagrant beggars as well.[64] And as

Ramie Targoff shows, Tyndale likewise acknowledges the problem of hypocrisy, departing

from Luther's model in his *Exposition of Matthew* by emphasizing the performative

aspects of public prayer, which exposes the body as a site for interpreting inauthentic

devotion.[65] Erasmian hermeneutics, which considered context and intention, might be

employed by communal authorities questioning, as More did, whether Tyndale was

attempting "of purpose" to strip the concept of charity bare of its associations with salvific

merit, and to redefine the virtue in a way that undercut church authority. A

misappropriation (or mistranslation) of charity consequently might threaten communal

stability and subvert doctrine. In the end More was unwilling, on behalf of charity and its

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[63] See in particular his paraphrase on 1 Cor. 8:1-2 in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 43 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 110.

[64] *Ratio Verae Theologiae, Ausgewählte Werke*, eds. Holborn and Holborn (Munich: Beck, 1933). See also Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

[65] Targoff, *Common Prayer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 7-9.

powers of accommodation, to charitably accommodate someone he deemed a heretic disguised as a translator.

In some ways More's careful, communal approach to translation provides a neat and tidy analogue for contemporary poor relief. Even as Europe witnessed a dynamic and wide-reaching movement to facilitate intimate individual encounters with scripture, municipal schemes of poor relief were developing with similar speed in order to govern and mediate individual acts of charity. Like the hermeneutic trend among humanists, this was derived in part by a recognition of the rhetorical dynamism inherent to charitable encounters, which authorities attempted to regulate by means of constraint and punishment. No longer could individuals in England give alms with a glad and indifferent heart, for example, since the 1531 Statute prohibited anyone to "gyve any herborowe money or lodging to any beggers beyng stronge & able" at the risk of being fined a discretionary sum, a figure that was raised in 1536 to ten times the amount of the alms given.[66] Compelled to interrogate the recipient and ensure the beggar possessed a license, charitable givers were encouraged to give private alms only to members of their own parish and otherwise to direct all offerings to the common box in the parish church.

The laws punished individuals who offered the wrong kind of charity, but the statutes were harsher yet on the recipients of such aid. Beggars found out of their licensed limits were put in the stocks, and beggars without any license were whipped and then listed as a valiant beggar, which attempted to stabilize their identity in future encounters. The 1536 Statute instituted a milder punishment for sturdy vagabonds, the provision of forced labour, but second offenders were similarly whipped and lost their right ears, and any officials who refused to administer punishment would suffer a similar fate. England was by

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[66] Ibid., 330, 560. McIntosh notes that various local communities had already begun punishing neighbors who performed acts of indiscriminate charity, but the "serious rhetorical campaign" against vagrancy began with the government's increased attention in the 1520s-30s. See *Controlling Misbehaviors*, 54-107.

no means peculiar in this regard. In the Ypres ordinance, at the end of a section listing the

duties assigned to "prefects of the poor," a statement defending the imperative of

municipal justice sanctions the punitive measures involved in the scheme: "For iudges and

lawes in Cyties were ordeyned for nothinge els but that such as dyd amysse shulde be

punysshed accordynge to iustyce."[67] Vives, too, admits the necessity of discipline in his

plan for the city of Bruges:

> Those who frequent gaming places and wine or beer taverns
> should be penalized. If one or two reprimands have no effect,
> they should be severely punished.
>
> Penalties should be established in each city, as it will seem fit
> to those prominent for their wisdom in that city.[68]

Note how explicitly these schemes of poor relief, endorsed by each writer as a fulfilment of

the scriptural injunction to act with mercy, remain attached to a notion of justice. The

precedents for such an attitude are both classical and Christian. Thomas Elyot, in his 1531

treatise *The Boke Named the Governour*, channels the wisdom of Seneca's *De Clementia*

when he cautions the magistrate from exercising "vayne pitie, wherin is conteyned neyther

iustice nor yet commendable charytie."[69] The obligation to perform fraternal correction,

meanwhile, was a theological commonplace in this era, buttressed by Augustine and

Aquinas and others who expressed sentiments similar to the author of *Dives et Pauper*,

who claimed, "If he forfete and do ayenste charite / it is charite to chastise hym and

punysshe him."[70]

Eros and Belly-Love: the Charity of Polemic

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[67] *Some Early Tracts*, 54.

[68] Vives, *De Subventione*, 111.

[69] *The Boke Named the Governour*, ed. Henry Herbert Stephen Croft (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), book 2, chapter 7, 88.

[70] See Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), esp. 39-105.

Perhaps it is this relentless program of charitable reading that facilitates the strange traffic one observes between the text and the body – of a beggar or, as I will show, a heretic – a relationship that offers writers numerous opportunities to deploy charity as a tool of punishment. In addition to Tyndale's translations, and in spite of attempts by officials to suppress unauthorized tracts, texts promulgating Lutheran doctrines and denouncing the ecclesial authorities arrived in London from the Continent in vast numbers, creating a doubtful religious environment in which the orthodoxy of any Englishman plucky enough to advocate clerical reform was questioned.[71] Meanwhile, Henry VIII's conduct during the decade, flinging invective at Luther as a onetime *fidei defensor* and later pursuing his "great matter" of divorce, added an element of political intrigue and distrust to the movement of religious reform. English writers were just beginning to experiment with the potential of new print technology to reach widespread audiences and cultivate new communities, and the instability of textual exchange encouraged a radicalized dialectic in which polemic's verbal violence and ideological certainty thrived.[72] Just as magistrates attempting to dispense alms "no longer knew with whom they were dealing," ecclesial authorities struggled to ascertain whether writers were simply encouraging reform or explicitly spreading heresy.

Whether it is a cause or effect of this mode of writing, the fracturing of charity is evident throughout the controversial writing of the period, as texts divide their audience by clearly identifying antagonists and cohorts. As reformers and clerical supporters drew lines in the sand, the religious culture in the 1520s afforded few opportunities for deliberation or authentic debate. The penalty for heresy raised the stakes higher. Simon Fish's

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[71] See Susan Brigden, who examines the specific constraints on a person's private faith posed by the close urban communities of London, in *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

[72] Jesse Lander, *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print, and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 1-55.

Supplication for the Beggars expresses with satirical hyperbole a legitimate anxiety among laymen who feared a clergy empowered to accuse any man of heretical views:

> Likewyse say [the reformers] of all the whole sorte of the spiritualty that yf they wyl not pray for any man but for them that gyue them money, they are tyraunts and lacke charitie, and suffer those soules to be punished & pained uncharitably for lacke of theyr praiers. These sorte of folkes they call heretykes, these they burne, these they rage against, put to open shame and make them bare fagottes.[73]

The text aptly represents the world of religious polemic in which More and Tyndale's debate was situated, and there, amid exaggerated claims of abuse and outlandish ad hominem attacks, the reader encounters charity. It is a conventional move among contemporary religious polemicists, who repeatedly deploy charity as a rhetorical instrument, declaring their own good intentions and indicting the malice of opponents. Here the accusation is especially incisive, as Fish amplifies his critique by voicing the sentiments of reformers, who claimed their clerical antagonists were uncharitable opportunists inventing an idea of purgatory, and then adds his own supposedly impartial support, decrying abusive priests who respond to critique by accusing their opponents of heresy.

Of course, by accusing the clergy of sedition and recommending that the king abolish ecclesial offices, Fish was participating in the phenomenon that was exciting such violent responses from clerical authorities. As More claims in his response, Fish, after "begynnyng wyth a cloke of charyte / doth by and by no lesse dysclose hys hatered and malice."[74] More seems to believe of heretical texts what Tyndale declares of the Bible – its self-interpreting nature – but his observation also acknowledges the chameleon nature of charity, which afforded heretics (or reformers) a convenient cloak in which to disguise themselves. During the decade of the 1520s More and other supporters of clerical

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[73] Simon Fish, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggers*. Antwerp: Johannes Grapheus, 1529. STC/40:05.

[74] More, *Works*, Vol. 7.

conservatism assumed a defensive posture. Consider *The Ymage of Love*, for example, a treatise published in 1525 by John Ryckes, which includes some fairly benign satire of clerical practices, merely suggesting that authentic charity should prompt men to actual deeds of love rather than purchasing images or other church ornaments. This provoked the ire of More, who initiates his revised version of the *Dialogue* by dismissing Ryckes's treatise and worrying over heretics with a "malycyous mynde / to mynysshe & quenche mennes deuocyons." One can hear in this passage an echo of his accusation that Tyndale "laboureth of purpose to mynysshe the reuerent mynde that men bere to charyte." Underlying these statements is a deep anxiety that the forces of charity are being marshalled against its rightful defenders.

In this charged and uncertain atmosphere More was given an explicit commission by Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, to "show to simple and unlearned men the cunning malice of the heretics."[75] That is, he was supposed to uncloak these heretics and display the malicious reality underneath their charitable guise. To this purpose More wrote the *Dialogue Against Heresies*, a text that bears an initial resemblance to *Utopia's* elaborate and playful structure, but he exchanges the pervasive irony and Latin language of his earlier work, which effects an irenic distance from the turbulence of contemporary political realities, for a more straightforward vernacular better suited to confront heresy and expose its fraudulence. Ostensibly presented as a conversation between "the author" and a messenger with Lutheran sympathies, the *Dialogue* conveys with remarkable verisimilitude the impression of an intimate and terrifying scene for any reformer: More, at home and every bit the "Mayster Chauncellour," engages in a merry and digressive dialogue with a rather dim-witted religious ingénue who, as More blithely asserts the logical necessity of committing heretics to the fire, slowly comes to grips with the

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[75] See *Works*, Vol. 8, part 3, 1139.

vulnerability of his position. When More's persona grows increasingly vitriolic (and the messenger appropriately acquiescent in response), contemporary readers must have perceived the overlap between his inflammatory rhetoric and the actual violence written on the bodies of heretics.[76] His writing intentionally deploys vivid corporal imagery in order to give substance to the doctrines of his opponents. Tyndale's heretical malice is thus embodied in the texts and then chastised or cured by More's suitably severe rhetoric. There is little resemblance between the *Dialogue* and More's humane (and ultimately successful) attempts to bring his son-in-law William Roper, a Lutheran sympathizer, back into the Catholic fold; More's endeavour is not to persuade Tyndale and similar heretics, but to show others their "cunning malice."

More shows this in his *Dialogue*, oddly, by dramatizing problematic questions of charitable hermeneutics. Given the perilous traffic between *eros* and *agape* existing in the word charity, one might expect More to spend great length distinguishing the positive characteristics of "charity" from "love," but he seems to do the opposite. When the topic of Tyndale's "mistranslation" of charity arises, More's messenger (and Tyndale's supposed disciple) immediately acquiesces – there is no debate over philological verity. "Charity" is clearly the better word. Of more interest both to More and us, however, is the manner in which sex and charity, both made manifest by physical interaction, cannot easily be distinguished, and what that means for interpretation. The topic provides occasion for one of More's "merry tales":

> The more pytye by my fayth quod your frende that euer loue
> was synne. And yet yt wold not be so moche so taken yf the
> worlde were no more suspycyous than they say that good
> saynt Frauncys was / whiche when he saw a yong man kys a
> gyrle ones in way of good company / kneled downe and held

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[76] See especially Craig D'Alton, "Charity or Fire? The argument of Thomas More's 1529 *Dyaloge*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 33.1 (2002): 51-70.

> vp hys handys into heuen / hyghly thankynge god that
> charyte was not yet gone out of this wretched worlde.[77]

The diverting anecdote captures the lay reader's attention, to be sure, strategically

important in a potentially tedious discussion of translation, but the story also implicates

charity in the sexual act, a notion reinforced by More's response and the messenger's quick

rejoinder:

> He had quod I a good mynde and did lyke a good man / that
> demed all thyng to the best.
>
> So say I to quod he. But howe far be folke fallen from the
> good mynde now. Men be now adayes waxen so full of
> mystruste / that some man wolde in fayth wene his wyfe were
> nought / yf he shold but fynde her in bed with a pore frere.
>
> Forsothe ye be a wanton quod I.

In some ways the episode undermines More's agenda, his erotic jokes puncturing

the honour he intends to accord the word "charity." Invoking one of the traditional

principles of charitable hermeneutics – "charity believes all things" – in order to bring the

interpretive principle close to the edge of bathos, More and his messenger mock the

innocent misunderstanding of St. Francis and wryly condemn the distrust of a husband

who finds his wife in bed with a friar. Suddenly the *Dialogue* smacks of goliardic satire.

Although the messenger is the true "wanton" here, and More's persona shows dignified

restraint, one nevertheless wonders why the author wishes to link charity to sex so

explicitly. Perhaps More wishes to demonstrate charity's ability to transform potential

sexual sin into the rarefied air of Christian love, but given the anecdote's context, and how

the episode demonstrates the dangerous capacity for *eros* to pull charity down into the

sexual morass, it seems most likely More intends to place limits on charitable

hermeneutics. Indeed, the messenger hints at another traditional adage involving charity

from Matthew 24:12 – "The charite of manye shal wexe coold" (a phrase adopted from

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[77] The entire episode is found in *Works*, Vol. 6, part 1, 287-288.

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Wycliffe's translation, interestingly) – by citing the great mistrust of contemporary

believers, and he purports to "play saynt Frauncys parte and iudge the man [Tyndale] no

worse than the matter requyreth." Yet the mistrust appears deserved in this particular

anecdote, which More takes great pains to show. Is this the point, that More *should* be

mistrustful of Tyndale, who is in bed with Luther, that charitable hermeneutics should not

apply to heretics?

More certainly intends to prepare readers for this, the culmination of his assault on

Tyndale's translation, which deliberately associates the two men as collaborators in a joint

heresy: "For now it is to be considered that at the tyme of this translacyon Hychens was

with luther in Wyttenberge." More sounds like an Ypres subprefect examining the poor "by

certayne tokens and coniectures." Of course, such circumstantial evidence leads to the

natural conclusion that Tyndale's translation and Luther's heresy are "flecke and make,"

partners in their unholy attitudes toward charity:

> But nowe the cause why he chaunged the name of charyte / and
> of the chyrche / and of presthed / is no very grete dyffyculte to
> perceyue. For syth Luther and his felowes among other theyr
> damnable heresyes haue one / that all our saluacyon standeth
> in faythe alone / and towarde our salvation nothynge force of
> good workes / therefore it semeth that he laboureth of purpose
> to mynysshe the reuerent mynde that men bere to charyte /
> and therefore he chaungeth that name of holy virtuous
> affeccyon / in to the bare name of love comen to the virtuous
> love that man bereth to god / and to the lewde loue that is
> bytwene flecke & his make.

The passage provides a forceful example of More's attitude toward reading heretical texts.

Characterizing Tyndale's translation as something that turns gold to lead and charity to

"lewd love," More suggests that for a translator so irreverent and devoid of virtue, someone

who 'laboureth of purpose to mynysshe' the rarefied place of Christian charity, the very

rules of charity do not apply, or at least should manifest themselves in an altered fashion.

More's own 'wanton' wordplay now appears less curious. Recasting himself in the role of St.

Francis but revising the story, More imagines Luther and Tyndale – "flecke and make" –

kissing in the streets of Wittenberg, and he will not make the same mistake: this is not charity but lewd love. The expression is apt. For his part More believed the reformers' assault on church authority, especially their disregard for good works, betrayed a desire to indulge in Manichean sinfulness, and he felt his allegation was clearly substantiated by the damning evidence of Luther's marriage, an abomination "Tyndall himself (which thing is worse then the deede doing) mayntaineth in hys boke their dede for well done."[78] This, More stresses, is precisely what happens when charity gives place to love – indeed, in his *Confutation* More even suggests that Tyndale's "love" serves as a convenient translation of charity given his approval of priests marrying.[79]

Having performed his own charitable hermeneutics to sniff out Tyndale's heresy, More subsequently focuses on his obligation as Lord Chancellor to perform justice, which required him to "cure and hele well those that are all redy infected / so harde is that carbuncle catchynge onys a core ...or yf it happely be incurable, then to the clene cuttynge out the parte for infeccyon of the remanaunt."[80] His very confutation of Tyndale he conceives as a sort of violent surgery, one intended to be so incredibly painful it might dissuade others from contracting the malady. But More hardly considers his own methods to be uncharitable – indeed, he is performing this odious task in defense of charity. He justifies his approach in the *Dialogue* by citing Augustine's method of chastising Donatists and heretics with imperial force to "fere them with bodyly punyshment," and, as Alexandra Walsham has shown, More derives his validation of corporal discipline as a means of

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[78] *Works*, Vol. 8, part 1, 44. Numerous scholars have noted how More fixates on Luther's marriage, which receives mention in all of his religious polemic with astonishing regularity, but none have done so with as much facetious wit as Rainer Pineas, who portrays the device as More's *deus ex machina* in *Thomas More and Tudor Polemics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 144.

[79] Louis Martz notes More's anxiety that love can mean lechery as well as love of God in *Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 38.

[80] *Works*, Vol. 8, part I, 28.

Christian correction from a rich theological legacy.[81] Aligning an ostensibly malicious project – verbal violence intended to inflict pain and promote fear – with the theological imperative of charity, More manages to accord his polemical writing scriptural sanction. One can find a similar imperative of discipline in contemporary charitable schemes of poor relief, which whipped any false beggars under the premise that such 'sturdy vagabonds' jeopardized the spirit and practice of communal charity. And Tyndale, having not begged for but mistranslated charity, was the prime candidate to receive a figurative lashing from More's pen.

One wonders what reception Tyndale's translation might have garnered had he avoided including introductions to the gospels and epistles for his readers. Many of these short pieces encouraged a literal interpretation of scripture and explained a few interpretive principles he considered of paramount importance, but they also demonstrated an unmistakable acquaintance with Luther's doctrine and in many cases a direct translation of his work. Consequently he earned a contemporary reputation as a Lutheran.[82] And at times Tyndale does sound like a typical Lutheran, as in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, when he describes the performance of charity to earn salvation as mere "belly-love."[83] But recent scholars have defended Tyndale's theological independence from Luther and other reformers despite their shared dislike for works theology, image worship, and papal prerogative.[84] In his *Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*,

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[81] *Works*, Vol. 6, part I, 409. See Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 41-2.

[82] See *Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. 3, 145: "Tyndale's work as a whole, treatises and translations, came before [his opponents] as a part of the Lutheran movement."

[83] Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 152.

[84] A useful summary of various studies is provided by Patrick Collinson in "William Tyndale and the Course of the English Reformation," *Reformation* 1 (1996): 72-97.

Tyndale appears especially exercised by More's accusation of Lutheran heresy, claiming, "When he sayth *Tyndall was confederate with Luther,* that is not truth."[85]

And in fact Tyndale's theology remains difficult to categorize definitively. Tyndale might not have been able to articulate a clear covenantal theology, especially in the genre of polemic, but he never discounts the efficacy of good works even if he ultimately pronounces the primacy of what he calls a "feeling faith." Even More, near the beginning of his *Confutation*, suggests there exists common ground between Tyndale's theology and his own with regard to charity.[86] Indeed, Tyndale wished to secularize good works so that they would not exist outside a merely ecclesiastical (and fiscal) economy. In Alistair McGrath's study of the doctrine of justification, his treatment of Tyndale is brief but incisive; while paying heed to Tyndale's use of Luther in his early works, McGrath nevertheless distinguishes their respective interpretations of justification: "Tyndale's emphasis upon the renewing and transforming work of the Holy Spirit within humans is quite distinct from Luther's emphasis upon faith, and clearly parallels Augustine's transformational concept of justification."[87] One might claim that love (or charity) plays such an important role in Tyndale's theology that he considers it paramount to recast its scriptural sanction in more spiritually acceptable terms that are unassociated with the carnal threat of corrupt doctrine. Nevertheless, More had good reason to suspect Tyndale's translation, even if his debt to Luther remained smaller than More imagined. Despite his disingenuous claim of *sola transcripta*, Tyndale was clearly invested in ecclesiastical reform, intentionally changing several key words in his translation that had long served as the scriptural foundation of

[85] Tyndale, *Answere*, 148.

[86] More, *Confutation*, I, 51-55.

[87] McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 258-9.

various church practices.[88] The Bible was no static manuscript for Tyndale but the dynamic

word of God, and he never apologizes for brandishing scripture as a kind of ecclesial scalpel

meant to cut away corrupted clerical practices like so many gangrenous limbs. So, he may

not have discounted the efficacy of charity, but Tyndale clearly wishes to strike from good

works their supposed papal depravity and reinvest them with spirituality.

Before he can offer any positive reformulation of love or charity, however, Tyndale

must refute More's assertion that reformed theology is suffused with a latent eroticism, the

inevitable product of heresy. The frequency and hyperbole with which More indicts

Luther's marriage as well as any other reformers who reject celibacy is strategic – the

constant refrain follows the reader throughout like the howl of a single-minded fury.

Initially Tyndale appears less enthusiastic to engage in this kind of flyting match, and he

has less to gain by doing so, but his eventual rejoinders decrying the exaggerated sexual

misconduct of orthodox priests give his *Answere* the feel of a Chaucerian romp; following

the example of their pope, he claims, priests steal from the poor, take the parish tithes, and

run to Rome in order to "dwell by a stues or to carye a stewes with him / or to corrupte

other mennes wiues."[89] Both writers risk such farcical asides in order to emphasize the

carnal love of the other and demonstrate its injurious effect on authentic charity. But

Tyndale exercises a remarkable about-face when he shifts from the attack to defend priests

who choose to marry, declaring authentic charity as the sole mitigating factor that might

sanction such carnal love. Given the inexorable flow of Tyndale's energetic rhetoric and

style, his relentless progress in disproving one accusation by More after another, it is easy

to overlook the magnitude of such an assertion. Employing a hermeneutic of charity to

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[88] See Stanley Maveety, "Doctrine in Tyndale's New Testament: Translation as a Tendentious Art," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 6.1 (1966): 151-158, for a discussion of Tyndale's use of synonyms to replace doctrinally charged words in scripture, like "church," "works," or "priest." He does not discuss charity, however.

[89] Tyndale, *Answere*, 166.

justify oath-breaking, something Bellarmine would later do on behalf of recusant Catholics in protestant England, Tyndale claims that if a priest burns with such passion as to seriously jeopardize his chastity, he should abjure his monastic vows and marry: "No power amonge them that professe the trouth / maye bynd where god lowseth / saue only where loue and my neybours necessite requireth it of me…So that this law / loue thy neyboure / to helpe him as thou woldest be holpe / must interpret all mans laws."[90] One can almost see More, who suppressed a charitable hermeneutic precisely because of the threat of *eros*, cringe in response.

Tyndale is just as careful to associate More with his own kind of carnality, although he eschews accusations of lechery or sexual transgression. Instead, Tyndale's attacks on More's character remain centered on avaricious "belly-love." Despite no real evidence to support his claims, Tyndale considered More's honesty compromised by a desire for wealth, repeatedly linking his antagonist to Balaam, a false prophet who purposefully misled Israel, and Judas, the archetypal Biblical figure of betrayal: "But charitably I exhort him in christe to take hede for though Judas were wilier then his felowes to get lucre / yet he proved not most wise at the last ende."[91] The reader finds this assertion sprinkled throughout Tyndale's *Answere* nearly as often as More makes mention of Luther's marriage, a rhetorical coup de grâce usually expressed in the guise of merciful advice – "charitably I exhort him in christe to take hede" – as he smears More's reputation out of feigned goodwill. According to Tyndale, More's refusal to deploy a charitable hermeneutic when reading his translation has less to do with Tyndale's own potentially heretical views, but rather More's prior commitment to base carnality. "Worldely & fleshly minded," More is unable to be charitable rather than purposefully refusing to be so, his malicious

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[90] Ibid., 161.

[91] Ibid., 14.

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hermeneutics resulting from the spiritually bankrupt actions of exchanging his charity to

God and neighbor for lucre:

> For he vnderstandeth the Greke, and he knew them long yer I. But so blynd is couetousnesse & dronken desire of honour. Giftes blind the eyes of the seyng and peruert the wordes of the righteous [Deut. Xvii] When couetousnes findeth vauntage in seruyng falsehead, it riseth vp into an ornate malice agaynst the truth.[92]

Essentially Tyndale accuses More of betraying the cause of Christian humanism for his

thirty pieces of silver, claiming the church had purchased the services of More's mercenary

pen.

Here Tyndale expresses the failure of More's false charity and self-love, but he

might have been writing in more general terms about the peculiar capacity for polemic to

warp any charitable hermeneutic into one of ornate malice. Both More and Tyndale

suggest that charity and carnality are painted with the same brush. Nothing else adequately

explains the persistence of the body's interference in this polemical exchange: love remains

ever susceptible to accusations of lust, it seems, just as gifts of alms will always be soiled by

the coin exchanging hands. Indeed, the most persistent characteristic of charity in this

debate is its association with the body. The virtue was quite literally naked and exposed to

the lewd eyes of partisan opponents, vulnerable to aspersions that focused on its bodily

character. Whether or not his opponent lusted for flesh or mammon, worshiping the rival

demons of Luther or pope, each writer employs images of the body to cast doubt on the

other's charitable intentions. In what would become a recurring feature in sixteenth-

century discussions of the concept, both writers exploit the worldly and bodily sphere of

charity in order to accuse the other of malice, self-interest, and lust of one kind or another

– *caritas*, it seems, remains poised just this side of *cupiditas*. So then, when Tyndale

attempts to reinvest *agape* with its scriptural and spiritual intention, More claims the

translation is merely an attempt to sanction lewd love. Tyndale, meanwhile, responds to

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[92] Ibid., 119 and 22.

More's defense of the church by implicating him in the corrupt clerical machinery that perverted authentic Christian charity in order to turn a profit. It is a rhetorical tactic, smearing the ethical integrity of one's combatant, but the ploy remains bound up in the profound theological and hermeneutical implications of charity, and the persistence of each writer's corporal imagery – More's accusations of *eros* and Tyndale's identification of papal "belly-love" – merits further consideration by scholars.

There were a few alternatives, however, and it is instructive to consider the example of Thomas Lupset, if only to place the polemical techniques of More and Tyndale into sharper relief. Contrasting More's rhetoric but still opposing Tyndale's translation, Lupset's treatise *On Charity*, written in 1529 and published four years later, offers a humane, measured, and incisive model of critique. Employing a dialogue much like More's, and comparably spiced with humor, Thomas Lupset offered a similar criticism of Tyndale's translation, which he considered insufficiently precise in its replacement of "charity" with "love." The tone of the criticism directed at Tyndale, however, is much different. Lupset's own description of charity fuses a type of Christian Stoicism with Neo-Platonism, requiring a contempt for worldly passion and bodily pleasure that gradually ascends to a rarefied form of love equivalent to dwelling in God: "This charitie is god, and God is this charitie."[93] Influenced perhaps by Chrysostom's emphasis on indiscriminate charity, Lupset encourages a type of unconditional love to all men, friends and enemies alike, an approach that contrasts More's uncharitable hermeneutic for heretics.[94] Likewise, Lupset's neo-Platonism studiously avoids the specter of the body. Consequently, his notion of charity remains distanced, abstract, a product of deliberation:

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[93] *A treatise of charitie* (London: 1533), 28.

[94] It hardly seems coincidence that Chrysostom's exhortation to perform indifferent charity, which influenced Lupset's atypically irenic approach to the concept (he translated at least one of Chrysostom's sermons), had been displaced among contemporaries by a philosophy of discriminate charity.

> For trouthe it is, that all Charite is loue: but it is not trouth, that all loue is charite. In greke charite is *agape,* and loue is *eros,* as in latine loue is *amor,* and charitie *Chaeritas*. In al these thre tonges there is the same difference in the tone worde from the tother, that is a penne and a quylle. ... Likewyse loue is the common affecte of fauour: charitie is loue reduced into a due order towardes god and man, as to loue god alone for him self, and to loue man for goddes sake.[95]

Lupset's dismissal of the translation echoes the sentiments More published the same year in his *Dialogue* – "For though charyte be alway loue / yet is not ye wote well loue allway charyte" – but here no accusation is levied at Tyndale himself, merely his translation. When asked by his sister what fault lies in Tyndale's choice of words, the brother responds: "The same defaulte I put in hym, y^t you wold put in one, the whiche doth giue to you wiers for perles, or quilles for pennes. But sister, remembre, you wolde haue me be short." It is as if Lupset wishes to distance himself from the fray, desiring to enact that indifferent love he espouses earlier. The critique remains rational, even aesthetic, without devolving into ad hominem attacks or rumor-mongering. Obviously Lupset's project differs from More's, but the work does suggest an alternative to polemic, one in which charitable reading is embodied in the actual discourse. Perhaps Lupset, a Christian humanist deeply involved in the political vicissitudes of Henry's court, wished to promote a constructive theological dialectic by aiming for his own positive description of charity without marshaling an offensive against Tyndale's opinions and beliefs.

As for More and Tyndale, neither writer could declare himself to be an innocent practitioner in this polemical exchange, as they were both utilizing whatever resources they possessed in order to claim, as More does, "I have in such wyse confounded hym and all his hole doctrine utterly."[96] Such was the spirit of a polemical endeavor, a mode which affords little occasion for nuance or compromise, as each writer attempted to simultaneously appropriate charity on behalf of his respective cause and portray the other's "charity" as

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[95] Lupset, 31.

[96] *Works*, Vol. 8, part 1, 253.

mere cupidity of some kind.[97] In a larger sense, the exchange between More and Tyndale

offers a picture of the contemporary intellectual and theological landscape, one in which

the steep chasm between opposing camps afforded little middle ground for reformers

within the Catholic church to voice dissent such as Erasmus or Colet had once done. In this

atmosphere of distrust, charity proved particularly troublesome as justification theologies

developed increased nuance and gained larger audiences. Given the concept's central

importance to any Christian sect, charity was one of the main causes for a war of words and

one of its major weapons as well.

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[97] Consider Louis Schuster's lament at the polemical mode in "Reformation polemic and renaissance values," *Moreana* 43 (1974): 47-54.

<h1 style="text-align:center">CHAPTER TWO:</h1>

<h2 style="text-align:center">SPENSER, CHARITABLE ADMONITION, AND "DEAR LOVE"</h2>

A cursory glance at a concordance might suggest that Edmund Spenser is a true heir of Tyndale. Whereas the word "love" occurs over 500 times in *The Faerie Queene*, more than ten times that of faith and almost five times as much as grace, charity is explicitly mentioned in only two instances.[1] It is tempting to construct a theological argument from this evidence, to suggest, for example, that Spenser preferred the word "love" because it remained free from vestiges of Roman Catholicism and offered more flexibility for his allegorical purposes and Protestant narrative. The truth is far more complicated. As early as his work in *The Shepheardes Calender*, it is evident that charity plays a crucial but vexed role in Spenser's poetics, and these issues continue to inform the central themes of *The Faerie Queene*. Much of the epic's allegory concerns the central but complicated Christian imperative of loving God and loving one's neighbor, as Spenser repeatedly dramatizes the perilous traffic between charity and its more insidious expressions, taking care to show how easily good works can become implicated in darker purposes. In order to fully flesh out his virtue "of loue, and righteousnesse, and well to donne" (I.x.33), he baptizes pagan mythology and classical ethics, satirizes contemporary social ills, meditates on problematic and potentially contradictory passages in scripture, and even dabbles in mysticism. The whole of Spenserian charity is much more than the sum of its parts.

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[1] Other than Book I, Canto x, the only explicit reference to charity occurs when Malbecco hosts Britomart, Satyrane, and Paridell "more for feare then charitee" (III.ix.19).

In the first half of this chapter, which focuses on the manner in which various understandings of charity contributed to the contentious ecclesial debates of the Elizabethan era, I argue that Spenser uses the pastoral dialogue of *Maye* to dramatize the conflicting views that threatened to undermine contemporary religious discourse. Piers and Palinode articulate differing attitudes toward the role of charitable admonition in building and sustaining a reformed community, and, in voicing the principles underlying their respective positions (including their limitations), Spenser purposefully replicates many of the rhetorical failures of the Admonition controversy. Ultimately the eclogue offers few answers to the dilemma, but in the figure of material charity, which is threatened by the presence of papist vagrants and papist doctrine, Spenser discovers an apt metaphor for the challenges of his own poetic vocation.

He returns to the question of charitable interpretation and ecclesial controversy in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, which occupies the second half of this chapter, and Spenser examines some of the tense doctrinal issues related to charity between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Without ignoring the militant and punitive aspects of charity, as well as the problems of mistaking erotic or romantic service for charitable work, Spenser manages to describe a virtue that accommodates a variety of competing perspectives into a "gentle discipline." Placed in the context of contemporary theological and ecclesial polemic, Spenser's poetry can seem like a resolute evasion of the ferocious certainty with which other writers regularly deployed charity, and this chapter, by examining his peculiar approach to this key nodal term, suggests that a deep irenicism informs much of Spenser's work, especially when he engages religious controversy.

The Admonition Controversy

During the early 1570s, the Church of England still struggled to define itself as a political and ecclesial institution. Attempting to accommodate a number of disparate religious groups as it clumsily framed a supposed *via media* between religious extremes,

the Church faced vexatious unrest, not merely from Anabaptists and a resilient Roman Catholic population composed of recusants and church papists, but from so-called Puritan detractors as well.[2] Nor was the political and religious establishment that governed the church comprised of a single or coherent identity, but instead consisted of "an uneasy partnership of court bishops, prominent politicians, civil lawyers, divines and the more important heads of house at the universities working, directly or indirectly, with the monarch."[3] Given this insecure ecclesial structure and amalgam of ideologies and interests, it is no surprise that charity, which was supposed to foster concord, figured so prominently in debates over church government. In fact most disputes drew matter and energy from a fundamental disagreement about how charity ought to shape the Church of England. Puritans exhorting the political and ecclesial authorities to reform the carnal practices of a religious state still mired in Roman Catholicism might invoke Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, which underscores the role of charity in establishing a godly community of Christian believers. Conformists would cite the same scriptural passages to plead on behalf of the establishment and levy an implicit critique of reformers unwilling to compromise for the sake of unity. Various factions attempted to appropriate the concept of charity in order

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[2] Any use of terms to distinguish between various factions within the Church of England will inevitably obscure the complexities of sixteenth-century confessional identity and church discipline, so it is with some hesitation that I employ a binary between "conformists" and "Puritans." But these labels are helpful, especially as it relates to charity in this case, if they can gesture at loosely shared ecclesial priorities and disciplinary styles. I take "Puritan" in this period to mean those who argued for more thoroughgoing ecclesial reform and supported more stringent ethical criteria for church membership, demands articulated with particular vehemence by promoters of a Presbyterian polity, and I take "conformist" to mean those who supported the ecclesial regulations set forth, however contentiously, by the politico-religious establishment. There was some overlap between these positions, of course. For a thoughtful consideration of these questions, see Peter Lake's and Michael Questier's introduction to *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, eds. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000), ix-xx, and for a helpful examination of relevant ecclesial politics during the period, see Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

[3] Kenneth Fincham, "Clerical Conformity from Whitgift to Laud," *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church*, 127.

to construct their own vision of church and commonwealth. They used essentially the same means (charity) but to slightly different ends.

The paradoxes of charitable conduct were not merely scriptural and ecclesial but also implicated in cultural norms that can often seem contradictory. As the previous chapter explained, Elizabethan conceptions of charity were flexible enough to allow for severe discipline, and sixteenth-century developments in schemes of poor relief simultaneously distributed alms to deserving poor and whippings to able-bodied beggars. Whipping and almsgiving, if they were appropriately administered, were both understood as expressions of charity. A similarly rigorous imperative governed charitable social relations, which compelled neighbors to provide fraternal correction as a means of rectifying immoral behavior. But this created its own peculiar dilemma. Because of its pride of place among cultural values, charity was often invoked by contemporary laws and social norms as a guarantor of one's good name, functioning as one of the core legal and moral principles intended to protect individuals from defamation. Debora Shuger's recent study of censorship underscores this role of charity in contemporary regulation of language, or what Shuger (following John Weever's Whipper pamphlet) calls the "law of all civility."[4] Members of a community were obligated to observe decorum in their language to preserve a neighbor's reputation and honor from scandal or malice. The truth or falsity of public assertions was often irrelevant, as Shuger clearly demonstrates, since the priority of charity outweighed claims to verity. This posed a vexing challenge to members of the Elizabethan Church of England, especially those who felt compelled to discharge their charitable obligations by articulating the need for reform. Nor did it help that polemic, which encouraged or even depended on ad hominem attacks, was the characteristic (or at least most prominent) mode of debating important aspects of the ecclesial body. In the

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[4] Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

ideal scenario a charitable reader would recognize the admonisher's charitable intent, but a different kind of reciprocity was more likely to emerge in the ecclesial discourse of the 1570s: a supposition of malice generally provoked a malicious reading – "Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin" – and perpetuated the divisions separating both sides. Public discourse was dynamic and unstable, and the line distinguishing charitable admonition from uncharitable slander was a fine one. Those who offered moral correction were often accused of violating the social ethic, charity, which motivated their utterance in the first place.

These tensions received full expression in the Admonition controversy of the 1570s. After a decade and a half of Elizabeth's reign, a number of reformers had grown increasingly dismayed by the lack of reformation made by the Church of England, frustrated by vestiges of "papism" that remained entrenched in the episcopal infrastructure and ritualistic formalism of ecclesial devotion. Much of the dissent was concentrated among adherents of Presbyterian discipline who wished to model the Church of England explicitly after Geneva's polity. Their demands for further church reform eventually reached the public forum in 1572 with an anonymous manifesto penned by John Field and Thomas Wilcox, the *Admonition to the Parliament*, which outlined the various problems plaguing the church and posited Presbyterianism as an obvious and easy solution. In the Admonition controversy that followed church authorities and religious reformers debated whether or not the genre of admonition might be used as an instrument of charity. As numerous recent works of scholarship have convincingly demonstrated, Puritans differed from conformists in degree rather than kind, a phenomenon which applies to the concept of charity as well. They agreed that charity lay at the heart of any effort to build and shape a Christian church, but they placed a stricter emphasis on the ethical responsibilities of charitable conduct, which reinforced their stringent criteria for church membership. This led to inevitable conflict. Should charity serve as the "the knot of all Christian society" in an

inclusive vision of the visible church, as conformists believed, encouraging reconciliation and mutual recognition of sinfulness? Or should it be clearly evident in the refining of the church body by the good and right conduct of the godly, an instrument with which the church actively opposes any vestige of papal carnality? More to the point in the contemporary debate, does charity justify the continued use of *adiaphora*, the ceremonies, traditions, and "furniture" inherited from the Roman church, maintained by Elizabeth, and generally agreed to be irrelevant to personal salvation? Or should charity be extended to those whose consciences are somewhat more precise, whose notion of "Christian liberty" would not countenance worldly state-building that does not conform to their vision of a godly church? Finally, should charitable brethren avoid engaging in controversy altogether, or does the scriptural injunction to edify others require such controversy in the ongoing process of reforming the church? In the polemical exchanges between Puritans and conformists, notions of charity remain unstable, adapted to suit context and circumstance, as both sides appropriate the concept in order to defend a more inclusive vision of church discipline (suggesting that the opposition lacks fraternal affection) or use it to sanction an exclusive vision of the church and excommunication (suggesting that the other's charity is too carnal or too malicious for a reformed church).

Puritan adherents of Presbyterian discipline would quickly assert that their vision of charity is motivated not by exclusivity, however, but by edification, a work commanded to the Ephesians in particular and Christians in general:

> But let vs followe the trueth in loue, and in all things growe vp into him, which is the head, that is Christ, / By whome all the bodie being coupled and knit together by euerie ioynt, for the furniture therof (according to the effectual power, which is in the measure of euerie parte) receiueth increase of the bodie, vnto the edifying of itselfe in loue.[5]

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[5] Ephesians 4:15-16. Unless otherwise noted in this chapter, all biblical quotations are from *The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). See also 1 Cor. 8:1: "knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth," or the Geneva Bible's note to 1 Cor. 13, which claims, "Because loue is the fountaine and rule of edifying the Church, he setteth forthe the nature, office and praise thereof."

John Coolidge notes how Elizabethan Puritans traced this Pauline metaphor back through a rich scriptural legacy that conceived of the communal order in living, organic terms, a direct contrast to the lifeless edifices privileged by the world.[6] Charity was the transformative principle by which such communal glory could be achieved ("knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth"). Coolidge observes that this subtler, more dynamic understanding of the term "edification" encouraged Puritans to demand an active opposition to the temporal priorities of Elizabethan politics, which placed civic harmony before spiritual perfection. Conformists flattened the definition of "edify" to mean transmitting information or preaching doctrine, which, in the context of this particular debate, one could not do without wearing the vestments ordered by Elizabeth. But Puritans conceived of God's living temple in more emphatic terms – anything that was not done precisely for the health of the community contributed to its destruction. Any priest who in order to edify wore vestments, "the garments of Balamites, of popish priestes, enemies to God and all Christians," well, he had already missed the point entirely.[7] Or, to employ a phrase used by Piers in the *Maye* eclogue, "Who touches Pitch mought needes be defiled" (74).

 The original *Admonition*, in broaching the topic of vestments and other faulty aspects of church discipline, lays bare this fundamental difference in emphasis among contemporary interpretations of Pauline charity. By incorporating ceremonies and vestments into worship, the pamphlet claims, the church was operating under a false notion of charity and building a hollow spiritual edifice: "These were the meanes and instrumentes to foster and cherishe riotousnesse, to neglecte true charitie, and to be

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[6] John Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 23-54.

[7] *Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt*, ed. W. H. Frere and C.E. Douglas (London: SPCK, 1954), 35.

shorte, to bring in folish and stagelike furniture."[8] The conformists might invoke the spirit

of charity to justify ecclesial compromise, but Puritans claimed such an approach neglected

true charity, which ought to assume a more active role in shaping and reforming the

congregational body. Indeed, in Thomas Cartwright's *Replye to an answere made of M.*

Doctor Whitgifte, he vociferously (and repetitiously) defends the ecclesial function of

elders by declaring their role integral to the administration of charity. Such administration

did not, however, consist of relieving the poor – a task left in Presbyterian discipline to

deacons – but rather involved the supervision and private exhortation of congregational

members to conduct themselves in godly behavior under the ultimate threat of

excommunication: "That the principal offices of charity cannot be exercised without this

order of ancients it may appear for that he which hath faulted and amended not after he be

admonished once privately and then before one witness or two cannot further be

proceeded against according to the commandment of our Saviour Christ."[9] A decade later

John Udall would articulate demands for Presbyterian discipline with even more force:

"Without admonition by the Eldershipp, all duties of charitie cannot be exercised towards

sinners."[10] Both Cartwright and Udall used Matthew 18 as a scriptural blueprint for

ecclesial administration, envisioning a community of Christian believers who demonstrate

continued spiritual reformation in a process of discipline carefully governed by elders,

while the reprobate would be progressively lopped off the congregational body. This was

the "principal office" of charity, its most important function. And just as elders reproached

sinners at the congregational level, spiritual leaders sometimes needed to rebuke political

authorities. Thus Cartwright and others, most notably Walter Travers, implicitly justified

the polemical action initiated by John Field and Thomas Wilcox, who were fulfilling their

[8] Ibid., 51.

[9] *A replye to an answere made of M. Doctor Whitgifte* (Hemel Hempstead: 1573), 176.

[10] *A demonstration of the trueth of that discipline* (East Molesey: 1588), 90.

charitable obligations by admonishing Church, Parliament, and Queen for a wrongheaded approach to religious governance.

This attitude is evident in the preface to an anonymous pamphlet, *An exhortation to the byshops to deale brotherly with theyr brethren*, which was published immediately following the imprisonment of the *Admonition* authors. Puritans considered their inflammatory rhetoric as harsh discipline or tough love motivated by a concern for the spiritual community:

> We have in charity framed ourselves to be come all things unto all men, that at the least we mighte winne some to Christ; and have therfore thought meete to publishe this small woorke, wherein the bishops and prelates of this realm (much like to galled horsses, that cannot abide to be rubbed) are frendly admonished of their duetie towards God, and of love towardes their brethren.[11]

The writer conveniently ignores the possibility that Elizabethan authorities imprisoned Field and Wilcox because of similar communal imperatives. Instead the pamphlet boldly claims to be administering a curative discipline to a group of overly sensitive patients. Despite his initial gesture of apostolic charm, the writer quickly trades in his Pauline rhetoric for a less conciliatory allusion to Matthew 18, suggesting that the bishops have failed to honor the "laste and newest commaundement that Christe lefte unto us, that we should love one another, even as he loved us," and ought to be put out of their misery (and England's no doubt) as a consequence: "And therefore better it were for them, that a milstone were hanged about their neckes, & they drouned in the middest of the sea."[12] The scriptural analogy would have been clear to Elizabethan readers: church authorities were playing the role of Pharisees and obstructing the kingdom of God. According to the paradoxical logic of charity, such chastisement could be conceived as a good and loving act, a "frendly" admonishment to reform church government. It was important to frame the

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[11] Frere and Douglas, *Puritan Manifestoes*, 60-1.

[12] Ibid., 69-70.

polemic as fraternal correction rather than malicious abuse for legal and ethical reasons, but in this case the function of charity was not merely rhetorical – it was driving the spirit of the whole enterprise.

It was the radical conception of "offices of charity" as a spiritual force edifying the godly community that buttressed the Puritans' furious appraisal of what they deemed to be ecclesial neglect, but their role as spiritual gadflies was already sanctioned, albeit in a modified manner, by the Elizabethan 1559 *Injunctions* that galled so many reformers. The injunction against slander, although concerned with public controversy, appears to license a process of charitable rebuke:

> Item, because in all alterations, and specially in rites and ceremonies, there happen discords amongst the people, and thereupon slanderous words and railings, whereby charity, the knot of all Christian society, is loosed; the queen's majesty being most desirous of all other earthly things, that her people should live in charity both towards God and man, and therein abound in good works, wills and straitly commands all manner her subjects to forbear all vain and contentious disputations in matters of religion, and not to use in despite or rebuke of any person these convicious words, papist or papistical heretic, schis-matic or sacramentary, or any suchlike words of reproach. But if any manner of person shall deserve the accusation of any such, that first he be charitably admonished thereof; and if that shall not amend him, then to denounce the offender to the ordinary, or to some higher power having authority to correct the same.[13]

Although the injunction recognizes the discord produced by "alterations" and implicitly discourages reform, Elizabethan officials clearly identify "rites and ceremonies" as a particular source of contention, since opinions about the form and function of these events will differ according to a "papistical heretic" or a "schis-matic." The rituals intended to foster social concord inevitably provoke "convicious words," it seems, just as the festivals at the beginning of Spenser's *Maye* eclogue occasion a heated debate between Piers and Palinode. In order to facilitate moderate reform, the injunction endorses a process of admonition similar to the role afforded to elders in Presbyterian discipline. Intended to

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[13] *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1994), 345.

uphold charity and maintain the bonds of civil society, the injunction demonstrates how

mainstream was the Puritan approach to charitable admonition. Puritans and conformists

might have differed in specific aspects of application – many Puritan communities

exceeded the rubric provided by the Prayer Book in proceeding with excommunication[14] –

but both sides in this dispute agreed on the important and contentious role of charity in

shaping a community. Essentially the political orientation between Elizabeth (and the

conformists who tacitly supported her) and reformers was reversed, which illustrates the

loggerheads at which both sides had arrived: Elizabethan government invoked charity as a

means of protecting the established order by forbearing "all vain and contentious

disputations in matters of religion"; Puritans believed that charitable edification involves

just such active participation in the life of a church community, and that order will follow

by virtue of that edification.[15]

The injunction also shows how the polemical exchange initiated by Puritans,

however charitable in its intention, nevertheless ignored the officially prescribed method of

admonition. Instead Presbyterians preferred to enact their own censure outside the

established channels of justice, a tactic born of expedience since the injunction ordered

that Cartwright and others bring their objections to the very people – the ecclesial

ordinaries – about whom they were complaining. Whitgift's response to the *Admonition*

does not ignore the causes of Puritan dissent, but he reminds Presbyterians to adhere to

contemporary standards of charitable privacy. It is as much a matter of process as

principle: "Charitie doth not so couer open and manifest sinnes, that it suffereth them to be

vnreprehended, but it remitteth priuate offences, it doth not publish secret sinnes at the

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[14] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 346-355.

[15] Claire McEachern makes a similar comment about the *Injunctions*, claiming they were based "on the premise that social order wrought through the regulation of conduct cultivated spiritual correctness, rather than the other way round." See "Spenser and Religion," *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33.

first: neither doth it disclose all things that it knoweth to the defamation of a brother, when he may be otherwise reformed."[16] Although he intends to mitigate its effects, Whitgift allows for potential censure of established authorities, but other conformists were less cautious in their defense of ecclesial superiors. Conceiving of charity as a hermeneutic that willfully ignored errors, they employed the Biblical trope of charity as a cloak or veil – from 1 Peter 4 (which was citing Proverbs 10:12) – either to encourage polemicists to cease their rhetorical violence or to persuade readers to disregard potential calumnies or slanders. Henry Howard uses the trope, in addition to the analogy of the mote and beam in Matthew 7, to emphasize Puritan hypocrisy: "A mote cannot escape their censure in their neighbours eye, & yet great beames & rafters lie couered vnder their owne. I maruayle what is become lately of charitie, *Quae operit multitudinem peccatoru: which couereth the multitude of sinnes.*"[17] Later, in his *Admonition to the people of England*, Thomas Cooper underscores the divisive nature of Presbyterian discipline, with its fault-finding and formal admonishment, reminding his audience that "christian charitie will hide the blemishes and faultes of their brethren, and specially of the preachers of the gospell sincerely teaching Gods trueth."[18] One can hear in these statements Palinode's reproach to Piers: "And sooth to sayne, nought seemeth sike strife, / That shepheardes so witen ech others life, / And layen her faults the world before" (158-60).

Conformists generally marshaled charity on behalf of an irenic plea for decorum and moderation. Many bishops were genuinely sympathetic to the arguments of some nonconformists, who were still recognized as valued, albeit troublesome members of the

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[16] *The defense of the aunswere to the Admonition against the replie of T.C.* (London: 1574), 22. Cartwright uses this trope on behalf of Puritans, adding further vehemence by employing a double negative: "And then where is charitie / which covereth the multitude of faultes / especially in brethren / when you do not only not cover them / but also take away their garments / whereby they are covered." See his *Replye to an Answere*, 9.

[17] *The Defense of the Ecclesiastical Regiment* (London: 1574), 40.

[18] Thomas Cooper, *An admonition to the people of England* (London: 1589), 5.

Church, but this was also a deliberate strategy to characterize their opponents as irrational extremists. There is obvious rhetorical value in deploying charity in polemic, investing the writer with scriptural authority and conditioning the audience to favorably interpret the writer's supposedly benevolent argument, but Elizabethan conformists were hardly interested in toleration.[19] Instead, by characterizing charity as the spiritual and material bond unifying the Church, conformists implicated Puritans as inhospitable promoters of disorder, or even as potential separatists. They would employ logical arguments to oppose the content of Puritan polemic and then invoke charity to censure the mode or manner of Puritan disputation. Regarding *adiaphora*, conformists like John Bridges flipped on their head the arguments of Puritans, claiming that Puritans were neglecting true charity by nurturing dissent and condemning rituals in corporate worship: "Without concord, they are vtterly no Churches at all: for which cause, if we will haue good regard to the safety of the Church, we must wholy with diligence looke to that which Paule commaundeth, that all things be decently done, and according to order."[20]

Puritans, of course, were voicing dissent expressly on behalf of church order. The conformists' deliberate refusal to see anything amiss – to cover their multitude of sins on behalf of charity – struck reformers as irresponsible. It is a relatively safe generalization to remark that Puritans desired to use charity as an instrument whereby the godliness of both individuals and communities might become more visible, establishing clearly demarcated boundaries between the devout and the impious. Rather than ignoring the errors of ecclesial officials, Puritans believed clerics should be held to even more stringent ethical standards. Cartwright seemed to be responding directly to the Whitgift's use of charity as a

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[19] Michael Questier has shown that such tactics were rarely deployed in polemical disputes, although he notes that Robert Persons's *Christian Directory* was considered effective because it eschewed a polemical tone. *Conversion, Politics, and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 37-8.

[20] *A defence of the gouernment established in the Church of Englande* (London: 1587), 202.

cloak in his *Replye*, in which he attacks a false notion of Christian love: "Abuse not his graces in devising cloakes to cover their disorders / but that they would set before them the love of Christ."[21] Henry Barrow, in *A brief discouerie of the false church*, partially justifies his separatist movement by observing that the charity of conformists contributes to a false sense of concord. Because it obscures the spiritual condition of the church and its individual members, Barrow claims, "Charitie had need haue a good ground in these high matters, & not walke by rote, least yt destroy both them & yt self."[22] A similar anxiety about the church's vulnerability, exacerbated by political insecurities and the threat of Rome, motivates the dire vision of Piers in *Maye*: "Tho vnder colour of shepeheards, somewhile / There crept in Wolues, ful of fraude and guile" (126-7).[23] Puritans worried that charity, as understood by conformist clergy, would destroy the Church of England.

I have attempted to trace general trends among the Puritans and conformists in the Admonition controversy, but both approaches to charity, while consonant with contemporary values, were too inflexible to survive the exigencies of polemical exchange. Conformists occasionally mirrored the combative rhetoric of Puritans, for example, invoking charity to articulate a powerful and even painful defense of the church body. Rather than use the transformative power of charity to create and edify a godly church as Puritans wished, conformists considered charity an instrument to protect and defend an orderly church that had already been established. They were not upset with the disciplinary underpinnings of Puritan charity, just opposed to its specific application to their own church governance. Conformists could employ this approach with even more efficacy than

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[21] *A replye to an Answere made of M. Doctor W*, 68.

[22] Henry Barrow, *A briefe discoverie of the false church* (1590), 37.

[23] Conformists came around to his way of thinking as well. Consider the following quote by Richard Bancroft: "Many others there be, who cover their malice more cunningly, nay more hypocritically, as though all they said proceeded of meere love and Christian charitie." *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 9. of Februarie 1588* (London: 1588), 92.

Puritans because the metaphorical discipline present in their polemic was reinforced by the threat of real violence by the magistrate. Consider John Whitgift's initial reply to Cartwright in the *Admonition* controversy, when he apologizes for the severe discipline of charity:

> I whet the sworde no otherwise agaynst you, than Christian charitie and the state of the Church requireth. It is neither the sworde that taketh away life, nor fire that consumeth the body, which I moue vnto, but it is the sworde of correction and discipline, which may by sundrie other meanes be drawne out, than by shedding of bloud.[24]

Emphasizing the figurative nature of his violence – a violence he claims is at once justified and rendered obligatory by charity – Whitgift likewise reminds readers of the "sundrie other meanes" by which a Christian magistrate might enforce conformity, an implicit reference to the current church establishment's continued, albeit restrained policy of combating heresy with "fire that consumeth the body."[25] Like the earlier generation of English ecclesial conservatives who defended the Roman church against Protestant reformers, Whitgift aligns Christian charity with the "state of the Church." That is, by situating the precedence of ecclesial unity and claiming that the Church defines charity rather than the other way around, he suggests that adherents of extreme ecclesial reform are motivated by a perverse kind of anti-charity. Thus Whitgift was embodying the very office Cartwright wished to invest in elders, admonishing the Puritans and tacitly threatening excommunication. Meanwhile, neither conformists nor Puritans acknowledged the close kinship their conceptions of charity bore to the argument made by "Bloody" Edmund Bonner in his *Homily on Charity*, which articulated the two offices of charity as a twin task of encouraging the godly and chastising sinners:

> And such evil persons, that be so great offenders of God and the commonweal, charity requireth to be cut off from the body of the commonweal, lest they corrupt other good and honest persons; like as a

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[24] *The defense of the aunswer*, 56.

[25] See Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 39-105.

good surgeon cutteth away a rotten and festered member for love he hath to the whole body, lest it infect other members adjoining to it.[26]

Quite simply the virtue of charity could be co-opted by any religious faction. Whitgift and other figures in the religious establishment were perfectly content to justify coercion based on a communal imperative, even as they exhorted Puritans to soften their censure on behalf of Christian love.

Puritans noticed this discrepancy. Unwilling and no doubt frustrated to receive their own "charitable" chastisement, Puritans suggested that conformists intentionally misinterpreted their efforts at fostering concord. Cartwright – who elsewhere emphasizes the crucial role of excommunication in safeguarding the church – castigates Whitgift for levying accusations of heresy and schism. In his *Replye* Cartwright underscores the communal project of reform-minded brethren:

> But as our knowledge and love is imperfect here in this world / so is our agreement and consent of judgment unperfect. And yet all these hard speaches of yours or uncharitable suspicions of papism, anabaptism, catharisme, donatisme etc whereby you do as much (as lieth in you) to cut us clean of from you / shal not be able so to estrange us or seperate us from you."[27]

It is a remarkable passage. The main thrust of Cartwright's argument is unmistakable – that Whitgift's "uncharitable suspicions" violate contemporary (and Christian) laws against slander –but he adds a tempering note of skepticism. He begins by invoking 1 Corinthians 13, which recognizes the fallibility of human knowledge and privileges the power of charity to "never fall away," but Cartwright modifies the scriptural passage and conflates love and judgment, suggesting that both processes can go awry despite the best intentions. There is an implicit recognition of human failure, something Piers admits as well: "So often times, when as good is meant, / Evil ensueth of wrong entent" (101-2). Finally, it offers an

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[26] *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547)*, ed. Ronald Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 125. On account of his active role as Bishop of London in eliminating heresy during the Marian years, Edmund Bonner earned a reputation among Elizabethans as a cruel persecutor.

[27] *A replye to an Answere made of M. Doctor W*, 79.

important reminder that Puritan dissension during Elizabeth's reign, even in its most radical form, was in fact motivated in behalf of church unity rather than religious separatism.

Despite its well-intentioned premise, the Admonition controversy remained a disappointment for Puritans, failing to initiate any immediate reform and prompting the religious establishment to entrench itself against vocal opposition. It was a rhetorical failure too, and for both sides. Despite the animadversions practiced by both Whitgift and Cartwright, a technique which placed both writers within close proximity on the page, a sense of absurd distance pervades the entire polemical exchange. Unable or unwilling to recognize the good intentions of the other side, they completely miss each other. The Puritans, keen to admonish out of charity, remained unwilling to receive their own admonishment from ecclesial superiors; and conformists, desirous of charitable interpretation that would "cover a multitude of sins," were reluctant to offer that service to dissenters. This helps situate the strange behavior of the two shepherds in Spenser's *Maye* eclogue, as Piers repeatedly engages Palinode on behalf of reform despite being rebuffed by the supposedly affable shepherd. Like the Admonition controversy, the shepherds' dialogue stalls on account of their limited perspectives.

"This charitable Acte" and the Problem of Vagrants

The problematic aspects of charitable exchange were mirrored – and even exaggerated – in the realm of practical almsgiving, which prompted similar disputes over church discipline and charitable hermeneutics. Much of the ecclesial debate in the 1570s, in fact, was prompted by concerns about local church administration of material charity. Puritan reformers emphasized the importance of a preaching ministry, to be sure, but they were similarly troubled by the Church's nominal and largely inefficient efforts to relieve the poor, which were further hampered by multiple benefices and absenteeism. The

Admonition promotes the role of deacons in the primitive church as a suitable remedy to

the problem:

> Touchyng Deacons, though their names be remaining, yet is the office fowlie
> peruerted and turned vpside downe, for their duty in the primatiue church,
> was to gather the almes diligently, and to distribute it faithfully, also for the
> sicke and impotent persones to prouide painefully, hauing euer a dylygent
> care, that the charitie of godly men, wer not wasted vpon loiterers and idle
> vagabounds.[28]

Note that the "charitie of godly men" (and the charity of God as well, by implication) does

not exist in a plenum – it can run out and must not be wasted, adding further significance

to the administrative machinery of poor relief. More importantly, however, that precious

commodity "is wasted vpon loyterers and idle vagabonds." The blame, as far as the

Admonition is concerned, is clearly due to "popish" church discipline, which has perverted

the office and responsibility of deacons. As opposed to the deacons of reformed churches

on the Continent, whose charge is "to search for the sicke, needy, and impotent people of

the parish, and to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell," the deacons

of England's Church merely "sing a gospel when the bishop ministreth the Communion"[29]

During the same 1572 parliament that the *Admonition* writers targeted as their

audience, the Elizabethan government was actively seeking to remedy poor relief,

introducing substantial revisions to earlier statutes that were intended to organize parish

administration more efficiently. To that end *An Acte for the Punishment of Vagabonds and

for the Relief of the Poor and Impotent* (14 Eliza. I c. 5) established the first mandatory

poor rate, a tax that would form the backbone of the state's future welfare program, and

continued the evolution of government-sponsored poor relief that began in earnest during

the reign of Henry VIII.[30] Anyone healthy enough to perform labor – disregarding whether

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[28] Frere and Douglas, *Puritan Manifestoes*, 15.

[29] Ibid., 16.

[30] *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. IV, 590-598.

any work was actually available – was classified as a vagrant. "This charitable Acte" initiated severe measures of repressing vagrancy, declaring that all offending vagabonds or sturdy beggars must be "whipped and burnt through the gristle of the right eare with a hot Yron." Those arrested for their third offense of vagrancy were hanged. Both of these measures, the impressive poor rate and the repression of vagrants, were conceived as an extension of charity: "Forasmuche as Charitye would that poore aged and ympotent psones should as necessarylye be provided for, as the said Roges Vacabondes and Sturdye Beggers repressed."[31]

For the most part these advancements met with approval from ecclesial reformers. Although they remark that Presbyterian deacons would be better equipped to perform acts of charitable consolation (and Travers was even more emphatic on this point), the authors of the *Second Admonition* were quick to congratulate the Queen for putting poor relief "in so good a way … and to continue that other braunche still, for the suppressing of idle and wicked vagabonds," whom elsewhere they call simply "the other swine." Interestingly, they observe that such measures should accommodate "the godly straungers that are of the churches in deede," urging parliament "not to be greeved that they are so many, but to pitie their present persecution."[32] Essentially these reformers wanted poor relief to function as a marker of the church's boundaries; English or not, such "swine" who participate in malicious idleness are anathema, whereas godly believers who arrive in England should be welcomed and supported. Some contemporaries did not link discipline so explicitly to charity, as most Puritans did, but nevertheless excluded vagrants from poor relief on account of their alien status. Paul Slack notes, for example, that Thomas Wilson acquiesced

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[31] Ibid, 591.

[32] Frere and Douglas, *Puritan Manifestoes*, 124.

to the "lewdness of the times" in defending the measures to repress vagrancy in the 1572 Act, when he claimed that "it was no charity to give to such a one as we know not."[33]

The popularity of rogue literature – pamphlets based on the late fifteenth-century work *Liber Vagatorum*, such as John Awedely's *Fraternity of Vagabonds* and Thomas Harman's *Caueat or warening, for common cursetors* – suggests an anxious fascination among all Elizabethans, not merely legislators and religious reformers, with vagrants who leveraged the pity or fear of individuals to beg and steal for a living. The literary genre might have even influenced statutory responses to this so-called social problem.[34] Among others who "lamentably demand charity," there is the Ruffler, first in Harman's taxonomy: "And with stout audacitie he demaundeth where he thinketh hee may be bolde, and circomspecte ynough, as he sethe cause to aske charitie, rufully and lamentably, that it would make a flyntey hart to relent, and pyttie his miserable estate."[35] Although scholars often indict the authors of rogue literature as repressive and elitist propagandists, the tone of a text like Harman's is difficult to establish. One might note that Harman describes how Rufflers defraud men and women whose hearts are already "flyntey." Likewise there is something impressively resourceful in the way these false beggars invert the conventions of charitable giving by reading the circumstances of potential givers and adapting so as to present the most convincing spectacle of pity. Harman's work is clearly a self-congratulatory project intended to exalt his own ingenuity and courage, but there remains a hint of irony, a tacit acknowledgment of complicity in the deception, which requires him to use "fair flattering words, money, and good cheer" of his own. Piers performs a similar act in his fable, employing poetic agency to indict the fox, who "can chat, / And tell many

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[33] *Poverty and Policy* (London: Longman, 1988), 125.

[34] See Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

[35] *The Rogues and Vagabonds of Shakespeare's Youth*, eds. Edward Viles and F.J. Furnivall (New York, 1907), 29.

lesings of this, and that" (ll. 284-85) – that is, Piers vilifies the fox for doing just as he is.

Nevertheless, one can also find in Harman's preface the rationale for discipline, that

shadowy twin of charity, directed to Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury as a means of

educating her naïve kindness:

> Where as in dede, if it be well waied, it is set forth for their synguler profyt
> and commoditie, for the sure safegard of their lyves here in this world, that
> they shorten not the same before their time, and that by their true labour
> and good lyfe, in the world to com they may save their Soules ... So that
> hereby I shall do them more good than they could have deuised for them
> selves.[36]

I will not offer alms, Harman seems to say, but consider this book the best charity a ruffler

and his roguish kin could ever receive.

The 1572 legislation, and the evolution of discriminate charity more generally,

participates in this uneasy dialectic by creating a set of ethical and legal obligations for the

giver to correctly interpret the recipient's moral standing, a kind of merit-based theology of

almsgiving in which the charity of a giver was dependent on the goodness of the recipient.

In devoting such energy toward the problem of vagrancy – the statute declared that anyone

who offered "Harboroughe Money or Lodgynge or any other Releefe" would be fined

(Statutes, IV, 592) – contemporary legislation contributed to a general anxiety associated

with charity. In a spital sermon otherwise intended to spur on charitable giving, Edwin

Sandys reminds his audience that the wrong kind of charity will incur divine wrath: "God is

woont euer to blesse the countrie, for reteining and releeuing godlie religious strangers: so

is he woont to powre his plagues on them that nourish Cananites among them."[37]

Numerous historians consider this apparently pernicious society, a vagrant population

willing (or forced) to cheat, beg, and steal for a living, as a phenomenon of dubious

historical reality, and nearly all historians agree that actual numbers of vagabonds

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[36] Viles and Furnivall, *Rogues and Vagabonds,* 22.

[37] *The sermons of Edwin Sandys*, ed. J. Ayre, 2 (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1842), 266.

constituted at worst a minor threat to the political and social order of the state.[38] Yet vagrancy remained an important phenomenon of the cultural moment on account of its metaphorical power, presenting an apt figure for a writer who wished to dramatize the instability of any interpretive encounter.

Walter Travers employed the vagrant as figurative evidence of ecclesial disorder, comparing the owners of multiple benefices to actual beggars, presumably because they, like rogues and vagabonds, are not attached to a specific church: these non-resident clergy "in the meane tyme eyther do nothinge / or ells goe about as they list in all the realme as roges and masterles servantes seekinge some mayster that will hyre them and use ther Labor."[39] Later he links the pomp of bishops to an earlier misappropriation of alms: "For a great part off ther Goodes is that which in the beginninge was geven for the reliefe off the poore: which was committed as an almes unto the Bishopp … They made themselves those pore men / and tooke almes to ther owne use / an so grew riche and welthie / by the want and necessitie off others."[40] Field and Wilcox make use of a similar metaphor in the *View of Popishe Abuses* that was annexed to the *Admonition*, excoriating absentee clergy who "get benefices by friendship or money, or flattery, where they can catch them: or to conclude, if al these faile, that they may go vp & down like beggers, and fal to many follies" (Frere and Douglas, 31). Spenser's Piers likewise adopts this figure in his censure of ecclesiastical abuses. But the concept of vagrancy and its threat to charitable reform was neutral matter, and Whitgift countered the Puritan accusations in kind, claiming that their dissent convinced potential preachers to abandon any useful labor: "But since this your opinion hath bene broched, it hath not only driuen many from the ministerie, but also

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[38] Woodbridge provides a thorough summary of scholarly opinion in *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 1-37.

[39] *A Full and Plain Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline*, trans. Thomas Cartwright (Heidelberg, 1574), 39.

[40] Ibid., 123.

caused diuers to loyter and cease from preaching." Moreover, Whitgift compared Puritan church reform to the typical apparel of vagrants, suggesting that they will take the church and "piece it and patch it like a beggers cloke, with putting too and taking fro, with altering and chaunging sometyme this, and sometyme that."[41]

Clearly the concept of charity was fraught with tension among Spenser's contemporaries. A fundamental obligation for the individual Christian, as well as a crucial communal and ecclesial imperative that promoted concord, charity likewise exposed its practitioners to the threat of fraud and its recipients to the threat of corrective discipline. There was fear of unknown and potentially criminal beggars, and fear of unknown and potentially seditious papists and separatists; there was outrage at a perceived misuse of precious goods, as well as a desire to continue fashioning a prosperous and godly commonwealth; there was an imperative to establish a clear legal framework in regulating language, which was increasingly recognized as unstable; and so too there was a genuine desire to love one's brother as oneself. Many of the same problems of charity in polemic were replicated in the practical administration of charity. How does one foster concord but remain safe and godly at the same time? Who deserves charity? Or if everybody deserves charity, what form should it take: merciful alms or rigorous punishment?

Spenser's *Maye* Eclogue and Charitable Admonition

From its very inception, Spenser's *Maye* eclogue in *The Shepheardes Calender* has been understood as a representation of contemporary ecclesial disputes in Elizabethan England. According to E.K.'s confident gloss, the "moral" eclogue is framed as a debate between two pastors, a Protestant with a satirical pedigree named Piers (Plowman) and a "Catholique" named Palinode, "whose chiefe talke standeth in reasoning, whether the life

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[41] *Defense of the Aunswere to the Admonition* (London, 1574), 780.

of the one must be like the other."[42] E.K.'s easy dichotomy, accompanied by the implicit

supposition that Piers represents an authoritative Spenserian voice, has propped up most

scholarly examinations of the piece.[43] These studies, which persuasively align Spenser with

the movement for continued Protestant reform, typically note the poem's affectionate

portrayal of Archbishop Edmund Grindal, or associate Palinode with the "Romish foxe" of

traditional anti-Catholic iconography, or presume that Spenser would have condemned the

rites and festivals of May, which were associated with Roman Catholic practice as well as

sexual licentiousness.[44] Summing up the conventional approach to reading the Maye

eclogue, Harry Berger notes, with the slightest hint of irony, "For most commentators the

ecclesiastical allegory makes the debate coherent."[45] Berger's remark subtly calls attention

to the fact that many readers of the poem, setting E.K.'s tidy allegory to the side, find the

debate between Piers and Palinode stubbornly incoherent and even unconvincing. Indeed,

despite the persuasive evidence scholars have marshaled to clarify Spenser's own religious

views, the eclogue remains unstable and obscure, and its pastoral dialogue often illegible,

while Piers and Palinode resolutely defy the simple roles E.K. assigns to them. In

particular, why does Piers, who "list none accordaunce make / With shepheard, that does

the right way forsake" (ll. 164-5), almost immediately disregard his own austere principles,

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[42] All quotations are from *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, vol. 7, eds. Edwin A. Greenlaw, C.G. Osgood, F.M. Padelford, and Ray Heffner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

[43] For a hyperbolic example of this perspective, see James Jackson Higginson's declaration that "Piers manifestly expresses Spenser's own views" in *Spenser's Shepheard's Calender in Relation to Contemporary Affairs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), 72.

[44] For the most convincing treatment, see John King's evenhanded *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 35-42. See also Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 15-28; Nancy Jo Hoffman, *Spenser's Pastorals* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 104-118; and Lynn Johnson, *The Shepheardes Calender: An Introduction* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1990), 77-82. All of these studies take E.K. more or less at his word, although they disagree as to whether Piers articulates Puritan or more moderate Protestant sympathies.

[45] Berger, Jr., *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 299.

leave his flock, and sit down with a troublesome interlocutor to tell a fable? Moreover, as Berger himself observes, the two shepherds employ radically different allegorical registers, essentially talking past each other for the entire eclogue.[46] Patrick Cullen has noted the ambivalent valences of Spenser's dialogue form, which dramatizes the limited perspectives of fallible humans in earnest conversation, and others have muddied the moral and allegorical waters further, emphasizing the complicated aesthetic and dialectical dynamics present in the poem.[47] The most comprehensive treatment of this kind is provided by Patricia Phillippy in her study of the Renaissance palinode tradition, which illustrates how Spenser's use of the palinodic gesture ultimately demonstrates the failure of dialogue when perspectives "confront each other as two separate, incommensurate poetic discourses" – in such a reading, both Palinode and Piers are thus joint recipients of Spenser's critique.[48]

This reading attempts to combine both approaches to the *Maye* eclogue, confronting the problematic aspects of Spenser's dialogue but placing this dynamic within the context of contemporary religious debate. Rather than using the ecclesiastical allegory to make Spenser's pastoral debate coherent, I intend to make sense of its incoherence by way of the ecclesiastical allegory. I suggest that the debate between Piers and Palinode intentionally echoes the Admonition controversy, which dominated religious conversation during the 1570s, and reflects cultural concerns about the status and exchange of charity

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[46]Berger, Jr., 294-306.

[47] *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

[48] Phillippy, *Love's Remedies: Recantation and Renaissance Lyric Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 174-181. Palinode has been a source of scholarly confusion over the years. Higginson suggests he represents clerical careerists like Andrew Perne in *Spenser's Shepheard's Calender*, 181-184; A.C. Hamilton claims he has retracted the life of epic labor in favor of permanent pastoral *otium* in "The Argument of The Shepheardes Calender," *ELH* 23 (1956): 179-181; Robert Lane considers him a political opportunist employing his poetic agency to ingratiate himself to superiors in *Shepheards Devises: Edmund Spenser's Shepheardes Calender and the Institutions of Elizabethan Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 113; or the shepherd could personify the urge to amend a false defamation out of charity or civility, as in the exemplary palinode form employed by Stesichorus and described by George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 136.

more generally. As best I know, nobody has provided a sustained analysis that links the *Maye* eclogue to the Admonition controversy, despite the close proximity between the publication of *The Shepheardes Calender* in 1579 and Thomas Cartwright's *Rest of Second Replie* in 1577, when the polemical artillery of Cartwright and John Whitgift finally fell silent.[49] Spenser was a student at Cambridge when Whitgift relieved Cartwright from the Lady Margaret chair on account of his inflammatory lectures on the primitive church and episcopacy. Perhaps the controversy has not merited further comment among Spenser scholars because its influence is too obvious. There are striking similarities between the eclogue's conversation and larger contemporary discussions of ecclesial polity, as many others have noted, but rather than aligning Spenser with one camp or another, I hope to show how he dramatizes the challenges of voicing or receiving charitable admonition. If we do not immediately implicate Palinode as a crypto-Catholic, his case for concord can be heard to echo aspects of the conformists' consistent (and often impatient) response to Puritan arguments; and if we do not immediately congratulate Piers for a courageous satire, his rigid criteria for spiritual community embody some of the limitations inherent to the reformers' discourse. E.K., meanwhile, by polarizing the dispute in his commentary, participates in the larger cultural and conversational dilemma that Spenser's eclogue stages. Consequently, even if it is unclear whether Spenser intends the allegory E.K. suggests, he has obviously constructed a problematic dialogue between two different ethics of concord: one, Palinode's, which refuses to acknowledge that which "may not be mended" and thus avoids "conteck," and another that envisions a community in which careful governance and sober conduct is clearly visible and safe from "such faitors, when their false harts bene hidde" (170). Neither Piers nor Palinode, however, are able to sustain their

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[49] Robert Lane provides a thorough treatment of contemporary ecclesial politics and religious reform in his reading of the eclogue in *Shepheards Devises*, 101-114, emphasizing the word and concept of pastoral "care." Gregory Kneidel places the eclogue in the context of contemporary discussions of pastoral rhetoric in an excellent article, "'Mighty Simplenesse': Protestant Pastoral Rhetoric and Spenser's 'Shepheardes Calender,'" *Studies in Philology* 96.3 (1999): 275-312.

ideologies under the pressures of debate; Palinode, the friendly voice of fellowship, almost immediately assumes a defensive posture and curtly dismisses Piers's efforts at reform, while Piers, who desires stable guarantors marking his reformed community, ultimately shrouds his own ethics in the murky world of poetic fable-making.

I wish to provide additional texture by examining the manner in which Spenser conflates spiritual and material conditions of charity in the eclogue, and placing this dynamic within the context of contemporary discussions of Poor Law, vagrancy, and charitable giving. Linking these related but distinct spheres, Spenser treats questions about pastoral leadership and communal boundaries and social exchange. I intend to highlight certain problems of interpretation that Spenser identifies and links to charity in ethical and material circumstances, noting in particular how accusations of envy can cast an ambivalent shadow over well-intentioned charitable admonition, just as pitiful compassion can pervert good judgment and jeopardize the safety of an individual or community. The fable which closes Spenser's eclogue, narrated by Piers to convince Palinode of the real dangers plaguing the Church of England, illustrates the exigencies of social as well as ecclesial politics. The ill-fated protagonist, motivated by some combination of pity, self-love, and stupidity, opens his doors to a begging vagrant who destroys him. Piers's earlier figurative discussion of irresponsible clergy becomes literalized in a scene of authentic experience. But if Piers intends for the fable to provide a compelling allegorical framework to warn Palinode of backsliding into the Roman religion, it eventually circles back to sabotage his own enterprise. There is a myopic impulse at work in the story that encourages both Palinode and the reader to construct a general principle from an isolated instance – the fox dupes the kid, so charity to strangers is dangerous and wrong – but the moral itself depends on a charitable reading. Piers's belligerent suspicion can paralyze good works just as much as Palinode's hypersensitivity destroys good dialogue.

The connection in this eclogue between material and interpretive charity is more than a superficial one, I believe, and it signifies a deep anxiety in Spenser's poetics. He is clearly concerned with the intractable problems of performing charity in any context, on account of the vagaries of intention, the inevitable intrusion of the passions, and the duplicity of mankind. And yet Spenser's work repeatedly acknowledges that the poet himself is a type of vagrant – in the case of Spenser a wonderfully eclectic one – forced to beg charity from the reader, holding out his hand for a good reading of the text. There is a pervasive sense throughout his work of poetic complicity in the problem of charitable judgment, an awareness that poets, who are equipped to stimulate pity by way of rhetorical eloquence, contribute to the problem of envious or malicious textual interpretations by casting doubt on the enterprise. On the other hand, Spenser's allegorical poetics of *The Faerie Queene*, prefigured here in Piers's fable and gestured at more generally by the pastoral framework, present the reader with a "darke conceit," the poet's response to and embodiment of 1 Corinthians 13, when Paul describes the limited understanding of humans who "se through a glasse darkely." By employing a Pauline rhetoric of accommodation, what Gregory Kneidel calls "the poetics of all believers," Spenser simultaneously participates in and comments on the problematic tension that threatened to derail contemporary church-building and communal reform.[50] If the false beggar of a fox in the *Maye* eclogue's fable holds up a dark glass for the kid, so too does Spenser require his readers to engage in the perilous but crucial act of charitable reading.

Throughout the course of the *Calender's* critical reception, most of the pastoral characters have acquired a personality upon which readers can generally agree, which is a testament to the vivid psychological coloring of Spenser's work. Even if readers disagree as to just how much Spenser intends to critique Palinode, there is nevertheless a consensus

[50] Kneidel, *Rethinking the Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Literature* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2008), 28-51.

that he represents a kind of communal instinct, a desire for friendship, a celebration of springtime ritual, and a weakness "of fellowship" for hearing fables and tales from his companions. Piers, meanwhile, whether or not one considers him a frosty malcontent or a courageous champion of clerical piety, apparently adopts the iconoclastic pose of a solitary reformer who "list none accordaunce make" with disreputable shepherds. Note that I include quotations to support these characterizations, as the text itself repeatedly substantiates them. The narrative offers a slightly different story, however. It is Palinode who spends most of the eclogue accusing Piers of faultfinding, calling him names, and deriding his "fooles talke." Why is he, whose emblem declares "that who doth mistrust is most false," so curt, so mistrustful? What conditions his oversensitive response? And Piers, who finds no "faith in the faithlesse," who prefers a world of clear divisions between bad and good, persistently engages a companion who possesses dubious pastoral credentials and proves a recalcitrant interlocutor, even altering his tone and method halfway through the eclogue.[51] The dialogue seems unlikely from the start. But it makes more sense if we keep in mind the paradoxes evident in the Admonition controversy, and though Piers and Palinode do not serve merely as mimes for Cartwright and Whitgift, aping their exchange under a pastoral sky, the shepherds dramatize a similar conflict.

I would like to begin at the initial point of tension, after Palinode concludes his opening paean to the "mery moneth of May" by asking Piers, "Bene not thy teeth on edge, to thinke, / How great sport they gaynen with little swinck?" (89). Piers's response is surprising:

> Perdie so farre am I from enuie,
> That their fondnesse inly I pitie.
> Those faytours little regarden their charge. (37-9)

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[51] See E.K.'s explanation of the emblems in *Variorum*, Vol. 7, 58.

Despite its festive spirit and colloquial irony – "Bene not thy teeth on edge" – Palinode's question elicits a jarring response from his companion, who takes it so seriously that he worries over the moral implications of his answer, immediately introducing the ethical conditions of his response. By insisting that his ensuing rebuke stems from a virtuous disposition, motivated by pity rather than envy, Piers intends to circumscribe his critique within the sanction of Christian admonition. Imagining a spectrum of ethical responses to the revelry (channeling his inner Aristotle), Piers introduces two important poles – "so farre am I from enuie, / That their fondnesse inly I pitie" – which help him navigate the complicated act of interpretation or judgment and likewise establish the parameters of his moral discourse. Piers is concerned about accusations of envy, a vice conventionally considered in opposition to communal fellowship on account of its willfully malicious misinterpretation, and often invoked by poets like Immeritô, whose prefatory poem "To His Booke" warns the newly penned *Calender* "if that Envie barke at thee, / As sure it will" (5-6).[52] Moreover, an envious disposition would implicitly suggest some kind of virtue among the hireling shepherds Piers derides.[53] Instead, he frames his critique in terms of charitable rebuke, employing pity – with all its valences of Christian love, mercy, and piety – to achieve a moral equilibrium. Piers wants his statement to fall within the purview of fraternal correction, a safeguard which would transform his critique into a genuine admonition concerned for the communal wellbeing and distinct from mere detraction. And his actual rebuke justifies that stance to a degree; decrying the abuses of nonresident clergy with multiple benefices was a fairly moderate position of reform, one that garnered

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[52] See Lynn Johnson's note describing the political valences of Envy in *The Shepheardes Calender: An Introduction*, 30.

[53] Consider, for example, Thomas Rogers, quoting Cicero: "I haue always bine of this minde, that I haue thought enuie gotten by vertue, to be no obscuring of my name, but an illustrating of the same," *The anatomie of the minde* (London, 1576), 46.

sympathy even from a number of conformists, and it was linked to the charitable imperative of poor relief.

Later I will discuss whether his premise is sound, but as a rhetorical tactic Piers's remark fails completely. Any declaration of pity typically sounds hollow and disingenuous when followed by relentless scornful derision, as it is here and throughout the eclogue when Piers hurls insults at clerics. More importantly, however, his fairly simplistic framework remains incapable of stabilizing the discourse. He claims to "inly" pity those shepherds, a significant adverb which E.K. chooses to gloss as 'entirely', although 'inwardly' might have been a more apt synonym in both contemporary and archaic parlance. Highlighting the potential discrepancy between appearance and actuality, Piers suggests he might be performing his own hypocritical act, engaging in the very sin with which he smears those hireling shepherds. Moreover, his apology acknowledges the importance of intention, which, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Thus the entire premise of his admonition is vulnerable to the interpretation of his interlocutor, Palinode, who promptly accuses him of envy:

> Sicker now I see thou speakest of spight,
> All for thou lackest somedele their delight.
> I (as I am) would rather be envied,
> All were it of my foe, then fonly pitied:
> And yet if neede were, pitied would be,
> Rather, then other should scorne at me:
> For pittied is misshape, that nas remedie,
> But scorned bene dedes of fond foolerie. (55-62)

Recent scholarship has emphasized the failures of the dialogue by diagnosing the shepherds' different poetic registers – they simply miss each other. But in this case, Palinode does not retract the careful interpretive criterion employed by Piers, but rather inflects it, filtering the spectrum of objective response through his own field of preference. There is a hypersensitivity in his reply, a tension that strains the debate, and if Piers imagines a judge of his judgment, Palinode tacitly acknowledges that his own behavior,

much like those May-gaming shepherds, is under review. That self-referential position buried in a parenthesis – "I (as I am)" – might remind the reader of E.K.'s warning, that Palinode's is the voice of a self-interested "Catholique" priest, but the statement also suggests a defensive posture: feeling the withering glance of his companion, he (as he is) "would rather be envied" by such as Piers. Lacing his response with ironic conditionals – "All were it of my foe" and "yet if neede were" – Palinode launches a complicated assault on Piers's judgment: although I suspect you are speaking out of envy, he declares, even your claims of pity are foolish ("fonly pitied") and consequently merit this scornful reply, since "scorned bene dedes of fond foolerie." Later Palinode will rebuff Piers in similar fashion, claiming his didactic carping is mere "fooles talke" (141). If Piers offers pity, Palinode wants none of it. Spenser adds to the ironic texture here, since Palinode seems to be the pastor who follows most closely the wisdom of E.K., who declares in the eclogue's argument that "it is daungerous to mainteine any felowship, or giue too much credit to their colourable and feyned goodwill."

This friction governs the entire exchange. Piers invokes the conventional nostalgia of satirists (as well as Presbyterians like Field and Wilcox), longing for a simpler society, a pastoral golden age, something akin to first-century Christianity when spiritual leadership was plainly better: "Well ywis was it with shepheardes thoe: / Nought having, nought feared they to forgoe" (109-10). Palinode might have responded with something like Mammon's pithy reply to Guyon – "Thou that doest liue in later times, must wage / Thy works for wealth" (*FQ*.II.vii) – but he ignores the obvious counterargument. Rather than critiquing the impracticality of such pastoral idealism, Palinode chooses to attack Piers's malice, much like a conformist defending the church establishment. As opposed to deeming all things to the best, Piers "findest faulte, where nys to be found," he "buildest strong warke upon a weake ground," and he "raylest on right withouten reason" (144-6), aligning himself against truth and justice. Here Palinode combines his defense of the

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communal interest with something of a personal validation: "Nay sayd I thereto, by my deare borrowe, / If I may rest, I nill live in sorrowe" (150-1). This is an authentic palinode or retraction, inverting the final rhyme Piers uses earlier to express his dire view of contemporary religion: "This was the first sourse of shepheards sorowe, / That now nill be quitt with baile, nor borrowe" (130-1).[54] E.K. remarks of Palinode's "borrowe," "that is our Saviour, the commen pledge of all men's debts to death," but the word was also used to denote a loan or pledge of surety, or even an elaborate agreement among ten neighbors – a tithing – to hold themselves jointly accountable before the law (leading sixteenth-century writers to confuse "borrowe" with "borough").[55] He makes his oath in the language of economic and social community in order to dismiss Piers's troublemaking. Indeed, Palinode would later ask to "borrow" the fable for Sir John to use in kirk. The difference in attitude between the shepherds *seems* clear: whereas a suspicious Piers, worried about "wolves, full of fraud and guile," rejects the efficacy of borrowing, Palinode is more confident in the positive aspects of community:

> And sooth to sayne, nought seemeth sike strife,
> That shepheardes so witen ech others life,
> And layen her faults the world before,
> The while their foes done eache of hem scorne.
> Let none mislike of that may not be mended:
> So conteck soone by concord mought be ended. (158-163)

Like Whitgift and other conformists, Palinode wants peace and concord, an end to strife, a general fellow-feeling that relies on trust, whereas Piers "list none accordaunce make / With Shepheard, that does the right way forsake" (164-5).

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[54] Both Piers and Palinode repeatedly appropriate the other's diction and purposely refashion it. In this case, Palinode has echoed his companion's word "borrowe," dressing it up with the adjective "deare," which gains E.K.'s approval. But later Piers recycles "deare" for use in his fable, attaching the modifier to a "jewell" (276) that eventually proves the kid's undoing, an implicit suggestion that Piers remains skeptical of Palinode's capacity to survive the rigors of temptation.

[55] See "borrow, n., 3.," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989).

And yet there clearly is an ironic undercurrent, a recognizable gap between Palinode's ideals and his practice, as he himself refuses to interpret Piers's critique in a positive manner. I find myself persuaded by Patrick Cullen's suggestion that Palinode's "petulant unwillingness to accept Piers's frosty rigidity … represents human nature, with its natural desires and limitations," but there seems to be something more at work than mere petulance.[56] Readers genuinely sympathize with Palinode, whose springtime encomium meets a frigid reception, but one also senses that he has exploited the terms of verbal exchange in this dialogue by refusing to offer Piers any legitimacy. He articulates communal boundaries – "by my deare borrowe" – only to stifle a contrarian perspective. He is not a stupid interlocutor but an oversensitive one who feels all too keenly the implications of Piers's remarks, and he does a masterful job of appropriating the rules of charitable interpretation in his own behalf, refusing Piers the sanction of well-meaning admonition. Such behavior declines to "touch pitch" after its own fashion.

"When their false harts bene hidde": False Beggars, Poets, and Preachers

Just when the eclogue appears to reach an impasse, Piers revises his strategy, telling the truth but telling it slant by way of beast fable: an ill-fated kid, left alone by his mother, and motivated by some combination of pity, self-love, and stupidity, opens his doors to a begging fox who destroys him. Piers's earlier discussion of irresponsible clergy becomes allegorized into a scene of actual experience. Presumably Piers intends for the fable to reiterate his earlier message and convince Palinode of the real dangers plaguing the Church of England, but the story complicates any easy dichotomy between right and wrong, importing the previous interpretive criteria of Piers and Palinode – envy and pity – into a more complex social situation. If pity worked as a corrective to envy for Piers in his criticism of absentee "shepherds," the passion remains prone to misapplication, especially

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[56] Cullen, 49.

in the context of foxes who disguise themselves as members of the deserving poor. The "inly" pity Piers advertises earlier will get the kid into trouble when he encounters the fox and, "pittying hys heavinesse" (259), lets in his destroyer. Piers desires a clear world reduced to binary oppositions, but the real perils of hypocrisy and misrepresentation cloud his own vision. Consequently, the stark ethical alternatives he espouses earlier feel inadequate or inhumane.

On the other hand, this shift in tactics signals a change in Piers, a recognition of rhetorical contingency that could enable him to adapt his moral to any type of audience. The sudden alteration might also suggest the impracticality of using the Admonition controversy as an analogue for the poem, but the contemporary debate does help in explaining why Piers does not merely walk home earlier after receiving abuse from Palinode. Like Cartwright and Travers and others, Piers is not simply an iconoclast – at least he does not think so – and his advocacy for more precise standards of godly conduct within the church stems from a communal imperative rather than a separatist agenda. Gregory Kneidel reminds us that Puritan reformers emphasized the importance of educating a ministry that could adapt to circumstance: "Spenser's very mode of allegorical fabulistic argumentation coyly allies his poetic project with the preaching that prudently accommodates the intellectual capacities of various audiences."[57] But the episode also provides a reminder of why fables and parables and allegories are unreliable. Piers intends for his fable to warn Palinode against prioritizing harmony before righteous conduct, but his allegory sabotages his own enterprise. That is, Piers must disguise his message in order to receive a charitable reading from Palinode, but he complicates his own lesson by dramatizing the actual dangers of a charitable act. It is impossible to know, when Palinode rebuffs his companion a final time at the eclogue's conclusion, if Piers fails outright or is

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[57] Kneidel, "'Mighty Simplenesse'," *Studies in Philology*, 96:3 (1999): 300.

merely a victim of his rhetorical success. That the fatuous and possibly papist "Sir John" will acquire the fable gives this paradox a humorous edge – now Palinode might very well ask, "Ah Piers, bene not thy teeth on edge." Spenser clearly delights in the ironic ambiguity of the moment, which shows, I think, that he remains more interested in highlighting the situation's hermeneutical instability than promoting any partisan doctrine or discipline. And by including the fable and its consequent failure, Spenser closely aligns the functions of poet and priest, dramatizing the limitations of discourses available to both pastors and pastorals.

Spenser also underscores the problematic aspects of storytelling by suggesting that Piers is complicit in the danger he describes. Much like the kid's mother, Piers abandons his own flock to potential foxes as he tells Palinode his fable. In fact, the eclogue's woodcut suggestively portrays the kid's demise occurring right under Piers's nose. This paradox bears a resemblance to the accusations Whitgift levies at Puritans, who he claims have abandoned their ministerial responsibilities because of mere *adiaphora*. Moreover, Piers obviously relishes the art of entertaining. Berger is right to note the sheer poetic delight with which the shepherd describes the fox of his fable, which is "closer to the playful or impious spirit of popular beast fable than to the reform voice"[58]:

> But all as a poore pedler he did wend,
> Bearing a trusse of trifles at hys backe,
> As bells, and babes, and glasses in hys packe.
> A Biggen he had got about his brayne,
> For in his headpeace he felt a sore payne.
> His hinder heele was wrapt in a clout,
> For with great cold he had gotte the gout.
> Then at the dore he cast me downe hys pack,
> And layd him downe, and groned, Alack, Alack.
> Ah deare Lord, and sweete Saint Charitee,
> That some good body woulde once pitie mee. (238-248)

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[58] Berger, Jr., *Revisionary Play*, 302.

Note the excessive detail, the elaborate alliteration and assonance, the lively sarcasm –

Piers is having fun playing the poet. It is no surprise to find Piers later in *October*

participating in a protracted dialogue examining the purpose and power of verse. Although

he aligns himself with the alliterative tradition of Langland, Piers also typifies the crude

prosody of uncourtly poets, the "rakehelly rout of ragged rymers" E.K. takes to task for

hunting the letter.[59] Or is Piers aiming here for parody, with the excessive alliteration

lending a comedic shine to the fox's obvious attempts at emotive affect? Certainly the long

litany of ailments, accelerated by the prosody, culminates in a final groan that seems like

outright caricature: "Alack, Alack, / Ah deare Lord, and sweete Saint Charitee, / That some

good body woulde once pitie mee." But the fox's statement is also reminiscent of Daun

Russell's request of Chaunticleer in the Nun's Priest's Tale, just before he grabs the cock by

the throat – "Now syngeth sire for seinte charitee" – and his heel, "wrapt in a clout," bears

the emblem of Spenser's own pastoral voice, Colin, as well as that of the anti-prelatical

satirist who took on Cardinal Wolsey, John Skelton. What are readers to make of the fox,

depicted as he is with such vibrant energy and heir to a proud literary legacy? At the very

least Spenser constructs an interpretive dilemma for readers that partially echoes the kid's

predicament, as he demonstrates how poetry participates in the fictive spectacle that

enables the fox to capture the kid.

Clearly Catholic in iconography and expression – he bandies in trifles that smack of

superstitious relics in addition to his saintly invocation[60] – the fox's disguise also

characterizes the class of vagabonds and rogues Spenser's contemporaries worried over, a

type of transmogrified trickster such as Shakespeare's Autolycus taking advantage of the

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[59] For a treatment of Spenser's use of the native English satirical tradition, see King, 20-31.

[60] Anthea Hume emphasizes the anti-Roman connotations of such a "trusse of trifles" in *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*, 22-26. The term was a neutral one, however. In his *Defense of the Aunswere*, Whitgift retorted to Cartwright (in phrasing that gestures at Spenser's Blatant beast), "But I perceyue you wyll playe small game before you sitte out, and picke out very small trifles (though without the booke) to braule and barke at" (537).

charity of strangers. Making this fox's appeal all the more tempting, he claims rights of

kinship too. No mere stranger, who is to be helped only near the end of a long list of

familial and communal priorities, the fox is "base kinred," and his status lends him even

greater qualifications for aid. It is wise to place a limit on just how much pragmatic

material concerns inform Spenser's allegorical poetics, but the literal framework of the

fable remains suggestive. Transforming an Aesopic fable into something more akin to the

Reynard tradition, Spenser introduces a contemporary twist; this is not merely an itinerant

monk or friar from medieval literature, however apparent his Catholic associations, but a

wandering vagabond straight from the statutory pages of the Poor Law, or rather Harman's

Caveat.[61] Consider Harman's Rogue, who "will go fayntly and looke piteously" with "a

kercher, as white as my shooes tyed about their head" and "faineth to seke a brother or

kinsman of his," or the Upright Man, who will steal a peddler's "packefull of wares, and so

goeth a time for his pleasure, because he would lyue without suspition" and often

approaches a gentleman's house with his "armes bounde vp with kercher or lyste, hauinge

wrapte about the same filthy clothes, either their legges in such maner be wrapped halting

down right" in order to beg or rob the house.[62] Spenser clearly took the threat of false

beggars seriously. During an early episode in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, Spenser draws a

contemporary scene of begging with similar verisimilitude: aware of statutes forbidding

unlicensed begging, the fox and ape know better than to "wander in the worlds eye /

Without passport or good warrantye, / For feare least we like rogues should be reputed /

And for eare marked beasts abroad be bruted" (185-8).[63] After forging licenses and

fashioning themselves as veteran soldiers late from the wars (they would be termed

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[61] Woodbridge makes a convincing argument that Spenser was well versed in rogue literature, which was a close cousin of the jest books he exchanged with Gabriel Harvey. See Woodbridge, 19-20.

[62] *The Rogues and Vagabonds of Shakespeare's Youth*, 29-60.

[63] *Variorum*, Vol. 8. Recall that the 1572 statute called for the ears of all offending rogues or vagabonds to be burnt.

"Rufflers" according to Awdeley and Harman), they trick the husbandman and slay his entire flock of sheep for pleasure. If a husbandman, who offers the fox and ape the opportunity to labor for their relief rather than doling indiscriminate alms, proves ineffectual in discerning the malicious guile of such rogues, what is a child to do? Certainly the poor kid is unprepared for what awaits him. His source of authoritative wisdom, the Gate, has abandoned her child to the vagaries of fate, presumably leaving for similar festivals as the "hireling shepherds" on their way to May Day, which leads one scholar to suggest he represents "the exploited, innocent folk."[64] Simply told to beware foxes, the kid encounters a stranger dressed "not as a Foxe, for then he had be kend, / But all as a poore pedler" (237-8). "Pittying hys heavinesse," the kid conducts a discriminate inquiry, asking "the cause of his great distresse, / And also who, and whence that he were" (259-61). His conduct is perfectly appropriate, even responsible, although he perhaps should have requested to see the pedlar's license to beg. That is to say, at this juncture the kid has done nearly everything right, unless Piers suggests he should cower and hide behind the gates.

Of course, it is more complicated than that. Ultimately the "wanton" kid is not victimized by native sympathy or even mere naïvete, but rather his own self-love and its consequent perversion of judgment, as Spenser takes great pains to show by emphasizing the glasse attracting the kid's eye: "Tho out of his packe a glasse he tooke: / Wherein while kiddie unwares did looke, / He was so enamored with the newell, / That nought he deemed deare for the jewell" (276-7). Here are obvious resonances of the Narcissus myth, with its associations of pride and even lust – we have already seen the frankly erotic depiction of the kid's "blossomes of lust" and "flowres of lusty head" (187, 204). Less interested in forceful coercion, Spenser nearly always prefers to dramatize dangerous situations in which a character falls victim to fraud or suggestion. Notice that the fox asks if "some good

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[64] See Nancy Jo Hoffman, 112. Robert Lane likewise discusses this act of blatant disregard for parental care in *Shepheards Devices*, 101-114.

body would once pitie me," insinuating that pity signifies goodness in a logical and theological fallacy. Might the fox be playing the serpent here, holding out the apple of works theology? Is there is an implicit sense that charity in this case means a self-congratulatory act, that the kid, just before he is "popt" in the basket, poisons his goodwill by engaging in a kind of merit-based almsgiving? There is precedent for this perspective in regard to sturdy beggars, although it is not necessarily linked to an anti-Roman agenda, as in Thomas Wilson's *Discourse upon usury*:

> In geuing without discrecion, you shal oftentimes more offend god in bestowing almes upon some, then you shoulde doe in holding your handes, for that in gevinge to loyterers and vagabonds, whom you knowe not whether they haue nede or noe you do rather maintaine them in their idlenes then benefit their pouerty, and offende god highly because you geue without choise or iudgement, for whiche you shal aunswer another day.[65]

These sentiments are expressed by the Lawyer, however, a selfish, unreliable authority who represents the widespread commercial opinion Wilson intended to critique. Furthermore, the kid never actually gives alms to the fox, but instead receives his own trifling merchandise of bells and balls. It might stretch the allegorical vehicle too far to claim that Spenser purposefully employs a contemporary scene involving a false beggar in order to dramatize the doctrinal dangers of indiscriminate charity, but he nevertheless draws a convincing picture of the inherent problems in such a compassionate enterprise.

The fable itself is a failure, of course, at least as far as Piers is concerned, and Palinode remains unconvinced. Palinode revises the performance of the kid, refusing to fall victim to the foxy rhetoric of his fellow shepherd; he seems to have grasped the fable's intended lesson but directed its force against Piers. After hearing the story to its conclusion (but not before jumping to his own conclusions about Piers's motives), he ridicules his companion – "Truly *Piers,* thou art beside thy wit, / Furthest fro the marke, weening it to hit" (306-7) – and proceeds to appropriate the story in behalf of "Sir John,"

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[65] *A Discourse Upon Usury*, ed. R.H. Tawney (New York:George Bell, 1925), 243.

precisely the type of unlearned priest Piers derides. Note that Palinode bears to his local priest the sort of interpretive posture that would facilitate a constructive dialogue with Piers: "For well he meanes" (317). At the poem's conclusion what appears to preserve the shepherds' friendship is silence, as Piers mutters to himself, before they both head back home under the evening sky, "Of their falshode more could I recount" (314). The narrative's moral works against itself, and one wonders if Piers ultimately represents the kid, fallen victim to his own conception of pastoral heroism. Indeed, Richard Chamberlain reads the poem as a commentary on the limitations of a particular brand of totalizing allegorical criticism, and instead of reinforcing the authority of E.K. or underwriting the ascetic impulse of Piers, "the work is produced by a fellowship of interpretation and text" – that is, the poem plays a joke on Piers and E.K., and supports Palinode's optimism in human fellowship.[66] Such a reading probably valorizes Palinode and his reductive notions of community more than Spenser himself intended, but it underscores the instability of allegorical interpretation as well as the eclogue's failure to provide a resolution to the conflict it dramatizes.

Perhaps the eclogue itself does not *fail* as much as circumscribe its aims. Much of this essay has labored to suggest that the Admonition controversy offered Spenser a model of unsuccessful dialogue between two irreconcilable sides, one aptly summarized by the final pair of emblems in the eclogue: "Who doth most mistrust is most false"; "What fayth then is there in the faythlesse."[67] And in terms of rhetorical success, Piers accomplishes little more than Cartwright does in the face of intractable opposition from Palinode and Whitgift. Spenser may be sympathetic to arguments for church reform – Piers is the eclogue's central speaker, after all – but he seems content merely to dramatize the mutual responsibility of both parties in the ongoing conflict. If we do not immediately implicate

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[66] Chamberlain, *Radical Spenser* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 49.

[67] *Variorum*, Vol. 7, 58.

Palinode as a crypto-Catholic, his case for concord can be heard to echo the conformists' impatient response to Puritan arguments; and if we do not immediately congratulate Piers for a courageous satire, his rigid criteria for spiritual community embody some of the limitations inherent to the reformers' discourse. Rather than praising and blaming either Piers or Palinode, Spenser seems most interested in the dilemma itself, an immediate predicament facing the Church of England but also linked to Spenser's own vocation, with its fragile dialectic between poet and audience. The *Maye* eclogue provides Spenser an opportunity to stage important issues of charitable interpretation that were immediately relevant to contemporary church discipline, but these questions preoccupied him throughout his career. Even as he developed a more sophisticated allegorical poetics, Spenser continued to explore the complicated relationship between mutually competing truths and virtues – the inevitable clash of temperance and militant chastity, for example. And his paradoxical treatment of a highly charged ecclesial controversy gestures toward the rich, complex, and sometimes contradictory engagement of theology and biblical imagery in *The Faerie Queene*, which has generated fruitful readings from scholars like Carol Kaske and Darryl Gless. Finally, if Spenser treats the inadequacies of polemical discourse with a delightfully ironic understanding, it was probably because he recognized the limitations of his own poetic discourse, acknowledging the likelihood that his fables would not merely meet the ridicule of Palinode but also suffer the "venomous despite" (FQ.VI.xii.41) of the Blatant beast.

The Faerie Queene

If Palinode indeed represents a type of envious and uncharitable reader, Spenser returns to the problem in *The Faerie Queene*, especially in his discussion of holiness in Book I. When Redcrosse knight travels to the House of Pride, he encounters a catalogue of deadly sins, and Envie in particular is described in terms of malicious interpretation. Casting Enuie as the symbolic combatant of Charity is typical in religious iconography, and

the pairing takes its cue from 1 Corinthians, which declares that "Love is not enuious."

Spenser's depiction of the vice departs from the norm in several surprising ways, however,

especially in its suggestive resemblance to the worst kind of Protestant reader, who

misinterprets the good works of both almsgivers and poets:

> He hated all good workes and vertuous deeds,
> And him no lesse, that any like did vse,
> And who with gracious bread the hungry feeds,
> His almes for want of faith he doth accuse;
> So euery good to bad he doth abuse:
> And eke the verse of famous Poets witt
> He does backbite, and spightfull poison spues
> From leprous mouth on all, that euer writt:
> Such one vile Enuie was, that fifte in row did sitt.   (I.iv.32)

Lucifera's Roman trappings and Idleness's monkish habit prepare the reader to expect a

different type of vice. Reformers often deployed iconography as a means of representing

corruptions of the papal court, and Enuie in particular was used to illustrate Rome's

interference with the spread of the Gospel.[68] Instead Spenser takes the opportunity to

celebrate almsgiving by antithesis, although some scholars remain unconvinced: "Envie

may sound like a Protestant when he attacks almsgiving because of 'want of faith' (st.32),

but this charge is fraudulent because he must really believe in good works in order to envy

them."[69] Protestants believed in good works too, however, considering them the fruits of a

sincere faith; they merely disregarded the efficacy of good works in meriting justification.

This must have been too subtle a theological distinction for many contemporaries, since

English preachers constantly lamented seeing "olde charitie accused of heresie" among

Protestant faithful, whose Reformed zeal, much like Enuie, refused to acknowledge any

redeeming quality in almsgiving and disparaged any emphasis on good works as a sign of

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[68] Consider the emblem "Of Enuie" in Stephen Bateman's *Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation* (1569), in which a friar and bishop forcibly remove a preacher of godly zeal from his pulpit.

[69] King, 88.

Popish superstition.[70] This attitude was enough of a commonplace for Thomas Cooper, two decades later, to claim it as one of the eight enemies to charity: "A fift Policie, whereby Sathan keepes men from charity and true bounty, is a foolish feare that they may be esteemed Papists."[71] In the House of Holinesse Spenser offers an intentional corrective to Protestant attacks on material charity which threatened to devolve into mere antinomianism, and it is a reminder that he is unwilling to confine his concept of holiness to a reductive model that excludes the best vestiges of Roman religion. Indeed, by repeatedly privileging charitable works, Spenser tempts the reader to deploy his own envious, Protestant hermeneutic.

Perhaps even more surprising is Spenser's conflation of alms and poetry. Both kinds of "good workes" are balanced at either end of the stanza, their parallelism indicated by a coordinating conjunction: "So euery good to bad he doth abuse." In my discussion of the *Maye* eclogue, I suggested that Spenser recognized the vulnerability of poets and pastors, who often are forced like beggars to exploit their rhetorical gifts in order to effect a charitable reading. Here, however, Spenser links the poet to the almsgiver in a scenario which casts the reader as the recipient of "gracious bread." Despite the inversion of power, the poetic vocation remains susceptible to accusations of guile. Joining "all, that ever writt" in receiving abuse from Enuie, Spenser likewise associates his own work with merit-based almsgiving, at least if the stanzaic conceit is carried to its logical conclusion, and he remains preoccupied with the status of poetry throughout *The Faerie Queene*: consider the fate of Malfont's tongue in Mercilla's court, for example, or his snipe at Burleigh and other "stoick censours" in Book IV's proem, and the pessimistic final stanza in the Book of Courtesy, when he predicts, "Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest, / Hope to escape his venemous despite" (VI.xii.41). The allegory here is a particularly useful vehicle for

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[70] Tobie Bland, *A Baite for Momus* (London, 1589).

[71] *The Art of Giving* (London, 1615).

examining an interior condition of this kind, as it reinforces the fact that transgressive approaches to language, either by writing or reading, produce material, physical injury. Here Enuie embodies a hermeneutics of malice that resurfaces elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene* as Sclaunder or the Blatant Beast, as well as Detraction, the sister-hag of Enuie in Book V, who can "misconstrue of a mans intent, / And turne to ill the thing, that well was ment" (V.xii.34). These are various representations of the threat to charitable reading, which reflect a growing concern among contemporary writers with the reception of their work.[72] It is clearly important to Spenser – the poet as well as the pastor – that good works remain an ideal worthy of aspiration.

The problem of envious reading changes the course of Book I's narrative, when Redcrosse initially abandons Una. The action of the second canto begins when "*Phoebus* fiery carre / In hast was climbing vp the Easterne hill, / Full enuious that night so long his roome did fill" (I.ii.1). In itself the description is rather unremarkable, a conventional rendering of the sun's progress at dawn, but the phrasing creates an atmosphere of haste and fretful agitation. More importantly, that haste (soon to be mirrored by Archimago's "feigned faithfull hast") is associated with envy, a characteristic repeatedly linked to misinterpretation, or "Enuies false surmise" (I.v.46). Accompanied by wrath, its brother vice, envy produces an energy in these early stanzas that is frantic and misapplied, all of which contributes to Redcrosse's error and, Spenser suggests, directly opposes charitable and faithful reading. Even Archimago, his meticulous contrivances thwarted, succumbs to the cosmic influence, "all in rage to see his skilfull might / Deluded so" (I.ii.2). His next scheme – implicating Una in a random act of fornication – is simpler, smacking of desperate improvisation, but it succeeds on account of a breathless speed which seems to sweep up Redcrosse, who "All in amaze he suddenly upstart" (I.ii.5). The knight quickly

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[72] Perhaps most memorably expressed by Joseph Hall's opening poem in *Virgidemiarum,* "His Defiance to Enuie." See also Jonson's *Poetaster* and others.

acquires the physical characteristics of envy – "He could not rest, but did his stout heart eat, / And wast his inward gall with deepe despight" – as well as irrational anger – "The eye of reason was with rage yblent" (I.ii.5) – and gallops away in the morning light. His failure to perform a charitable interpretation becomes clearer if the reader looks ahead to Spenser's own normative model of charity, Charissa, who resolutely teaches Redcrosse "wrath, and hatred warely to shone" (I.x.33). The adverbial qualification, "warely," suggests an appropriate corrective to the envious haste practiced in succession by Phoebus, Archimago, and Redcrosse. Even here, however, one should hesitate before assigning any ultimate signifier to the event. For example, the reader might appreciate Archimago's persuasive rhetoric when he restrains Redcrosse from committing murder, but the knight's earlier victory over Errour stems from a similarly angry and hasty resolve, when he waxed "halfe furious vnto his foe" (I.i.24); would Redcrosse's impulse to slay the false spirits in his "furious ire" have solved this hermeneutic puzzle as well? And Charissa is not so passive herself: "Cupid's wanton snare / as hell she hated" (I.x.30). In this case, dealing as he is with false spirits "in wanton lust and lewd embracement" (I.ii.5), might Redcrosse's righteous anger and his sword be the truest instruments of charity?

The real problem for Redcrosse at this juncture, however, is less a matter of resolve and more a problem of reading. Facilitating a general misprision, envy enables a wrongful appropriation of charity by those who would subvert its purpose. Consider how Redcrosse's own envious posture later allows Despair to gain a rhetorical foothold: "Is not great grace to helpe him over past, / Or free his feet, that in the myre sticke fast? / Most enuious man, that grieves at neighbours good" (IX, 39). The knight is never quite the same in this particular encounter after receiving such an unexpected assault. Mimicking the future behavior of Mercie, who will help Redcrosse over various obstacles, Despaire counters Redcrosse's invocation of justice by claiming the superior obligations of charity, observing that he himself offers a beneficent euthanasia based on a travesty of Epicureanism: "let him

die of ease." If Spenser's contemporaries worried over the deleterious effects of

indiscriminate charity in promoting idleness, Despair casually redefines the concept as

"eternal rest," "happy ease," "sleep," or "port after stormie seas." Many commentators note

Despaire's emphasis on justice throughout the debate, how he reflects Redcrosse's fierce

vengeance back on the knight's own misdeeds, but Despaire also manages to cause

Redcrosse to ignore or misread his good deeds as well, to direct his envy inward and accuse

himself of wanting faith.

And yet it is difficult to assign too much blame to Redcrosse. The lessons of Piers's

fable in the *Maye* eclogue remain relevant here as trouble with guile – and foxes –

immediately threatens Redcrosse knight's quest for holiness. Spenser introduces a

complicated dialectic intrinsic to charitable rhetoric, suggesting that principles of

accommodation inherently threaten to undermine interpretation. Archimago takes

advantage of the proximity between *cupiditas* and *caritas*, manipulating a pair of lustful

spirits who "have knit themselues in Venus shamefull chaine" to make a travesty of Una's

genuine love as well as the communal bonds of charity, which are "knit together in love"

(Colossians 2:2).[73] Archimago can twist the knot of charity into an erotic chain, but he also

pretends "with feigned faithfull hast" (I.ii.4) to perform his own charitable act in behalf of

his supposedly betrayed guest. Like the foxe in Piers's fable, "subtill" Archimago is a

chameleon who can take "As many forms and shapes in seeming wise, / As ever Proteus to

himselfe could make: / Sometime a fowle, sometime a fish in lake, / Now like a foxe"

(I.ii.10.3-6). Here he becomes an insidious doppelganger of the charitable rhetorician,

whom Renaissance mythographers considered Protean as well, a compliment Erasmus

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[73] Una clearly represents Faith or Truth, but she is repeatedly associated with Love as well. See
I.iii.30 or I.vii.49. English translators often used the verb "knit" to describe the workings of charity;
see, for example, the Geneva Bible's version of 1 Cor. 1:10: "Be ye knit together in one mind, and in
one iudgement." See also Ephesians 4:15-16. All Biblical quotations are from the 1560 Geneva
translation.

gives to Christ and Paul, who could adapt to any circumstance on behalf of civil concord.[74]

Given the vatic reputation of Proteus and the traditional link between rhetoric and poetry,

Archimago likewise assumes a diabolical laureate crown, becoming a poet who marshals

the forces of charity against itself. Pauline rhetoric, or the "poetics of all believers" as

Gregory Kneidel calls it, bears the seeds of its own destruction, and the accommodating

tropes used to represent charity are often deployed to travesty the concept. The injurious

power of language, its ability to erode as well as edify communities, remains a problem

throughout the entire work that is never fully resolved, and Spenser seems to acknowledge

the potential for his own verse to contribute to this abuse.[75]

Within the narrative itself Redcrosse is clearly unequipped to combat Archimago's

false prophecy, but it remains unclear whether readers should focus on the allegorical level

of the episode, and consequently disregard the occasion as mere evidence of Redcrosse's

previous lack of faith, or examine his active participation in the process and decide how

things went wrong (presumably so the reader could avoid replicating the error). On the one

hand Redcrosse is the victim of plain deceit, abused by a hermit "simple in shew, and voyde

of malice bad" (I.i.29.7), but the knight's act of infidelity at this moment is also the most

notable among his various occasions of misreading – Redcrosse confuses the true Church,

the bride of Christ, with the whore of Babylon. Is the knight's lack of charity toward Una

mere evidence of his unsanctified condition, or is it a bad work (as opposed to a good) that

contributes to Redcrosse's subsequent trouble? This particular episode demonstrates the

difficulty in assigning a clear value to charity in Spenser's allegory. The virtue seems

relevant to nearly every episode, as a crucial hermeneutic principle or a theological

imperative or merely as a social code, but it slips, Protean, out of the reach of definition.

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[74] See A. Bartlett Giamatti, "Proteus Unbound: Some Versions of the Sea God in the Renaissance," *Exile and Change in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 115-150.

[75] See King, 75-6, and Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975), 118-134.

Compounding matters, the interpretive moment is almost always volatile in his world of faerie. Few personages are as simple or static as Enuie in the House of Pride, an iconographic set piece who never intrudes on the narrative. More often readers encounter an Archimago, who is similarly motivated by envy but practices the pernicious art of transforming love into lust by coloring charity with half-truths. Others, like Despair, invert that formula and dress up vice in the clothes of virtue.

Consequently one might expect an especially stable representation of charity in the House of Holinesse, where, scholars often remind us, Spenser takes care to circumscribe the messier folds of his allegorical poetics in order to provide an unambiguous exposition of his theological beliefs.[76] Unfortunately, the supposed clarity of the episode has never resulted in a defined doctrinal position that readers can confidently ascribe to the poet. The House of Holinesse is spacious enough, it seems, to accommodate a great number of supposedly irreconcilable theologies: Spenser was a Puritan, staunchly following his master Calvin in matters of doctrine; unless he was not a Puritan but instead a conservative defender of the ecclesial establishment; he was so conservative, in fact, that he favored human volition, sacramental efficacy, and other trappings of the Roman faith; but this is merely equivocal matter, which Protestant doctrine could include under its flexible umbrella of sanctification; these equivocations are actually scriptural in origin, and Spenser is attempting to replicate this particular aspect of the Bible; and finally, all this fuss over contemporary doctrine ignores the relevant influence of Greek fathers, especially in matters of *theosis*.[77]

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[76] Isabel MacCaffrey, for example, notes the "innocent simplicity about the method" and "perfect visibility of meaning" in Canto X, in *Spenser's Allegory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 189.

[77] For a puritan emphasis, see D. Douglas Waters, *Duessa as Theological Satire* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1970), and Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*; a more conservative Protestant poet emerges in Virgil Whitaker, *The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950), and John King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*; several scholars have noted aspects of Catholic ritual in the canto, among them Thomas

This discussion will not ignore these important doctrinal conversations, though it will be limited in scope to Spenser's representation of charity, and I intend to supplement these theological issues with a consideration of the problematic contemporary matters I have been tracing that are related to ecclesial identity and material giving. I will examine the varied spectrum of references to charity and charitable encounters in Book I, all of which contribute to the general impression that Spenser believed the concept to be complicated and contentious, even in its idealized form, but also crucial to any discussion of holiness. I hope my discussion of Canto x will offer its own contribution by demonstrating how Spenser attempts to reconcile his poetic project to a number of competing notions of charity among religious factions as well as the apparent oppositions of Pauline charity: the simple command of Romans 12:9 which seems an apt mode for moral didacticism – "Let love be without dissimulacion" – jostling uncomfortably next to the model of ideal apostle and poet who becomes all things to all men. A similarly uneasy dialectic emerges between a Calvinist understanding of predestination and grace, which understands charity only in the context of sanctification and as a concomitant product of faith, and a theology that ascribes human volition and efficacy to good works, which can veer toward Pelagianism. If Spenser repeatedly demonstrates the easy slippage between authentic charity and its gross parody, dramatizing what Piers warns Palinode: "So often times, when as good is meant, / Evil ensueth of wrong entent" (101-2). Spenser constructs a complicated allegory that underscores the importance of reforming one's "entent" in order to shore up the vulnerabilities inherent to any charitable dialectic, between a giver and receiver or between a poet and a reader.

Nelan, *Catholic Doctrines in Spenser's Poetry* (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1943), and James Schiavoni, "Predestination and Free Will: The Crux of Canto Ten," *Spenser Studies* 10 (1992): 175-95; Carol Kaske emphasizes Spenser's equivocation in *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Darryl Gless emphasizes the flexibility of sanctification in *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); the notion of *theosis* is treated with impressive care and scholarship by Harold Weatherby in *Mirrors of Celestial Grace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

Recuperating Dearness

As I have mentioned, Spenser is truly an heir of Tyndale's scriptural lexicon insofar as he prefers the word "love" to "charity." But one way to read Redcrosse's charitable conduct in Book I, as well as Spenser's own evaluation of the concept, is by tracing the relative impact in the narrative of the word "dear," an anglicized synonym for the Latin root of charity, *carus*. homas Norton's translation of Alexander Nowell's *Catechism* employs the phrase "dear love" in the place of *caritas*, for example, and Milton, a close reader of Spenser, likewise emphasizes the etymological link between "charity" and "dearness."[78] The word carries with it, however, the inextricable link between charity and its erotic cousin, romantic affection, as it came to signify sexual as well as spiritual esteem, and both are tied up in the language of economic valuation or *quid pro quo* contract, though Spenserian charity often suggests a transcendence of mere price.[79] This romantic manifestation of "dear love," what Tyndale might call "carnal" love, can be associated with an overemphasis on pity, both in its role as a physical, affective response (traditionally seated in the bowels) and in its original relation to piety, especially a kind of outward, self-congratulatory piety. Spenser uses the close proximity between the two meanings to dramatize the difficulties associated with restoring the spirit and sanction of "dear love," maintaining its physical and economic realities but striking from it associations of eroticism and self-interest. This becomes one of the central preoccupations in Book I – indeed, one that courses throughout the entire *Faerie Queene* and the *Amoretti* as well

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[78] See *A Catechism Written in Latin by Alexander Nowell*, ed. G.E. Corrie (Cambridge: University Press, 1853), 49, 167. As for Milton: "Dwells in all Heaven charity so dear? (*PL*, III, 216); "Relations dear, and all the Charities / Of Father, Son, and Brother" (*PL*, IV, 756). The phrase was often paired with "charity" as a means of reinforcing its sense. Consider Thomas More's claims in *The Supplication of Souls* that he is countering Fish's heresies "for the dere loue & cheryte that we bere to you," (London: 1529), ii, or the English translation of Erasmus's first volume of *Paraphrases of the New Testament* (London: 1548), xxix, which describes divine charity as the "feruente burnyng fyre of his dere loue and charitie."

[79] In biblical parlance, this concept is often described as the "wages of sin" or "wages of unrighteousness."

(Sonnet 68, for example) – but Spenser takes pains to demonstrate the neutrality of the term, its problematic slippage between various affections, and the potential for any supposed Christian knight to make the wrong kind of "dear pledge," a problem that perplexes Redcrosse until he visits the House of Holinesse.

From the outset a pledge of this sort identifies Redcrosse, whose very breast bears "the deare remembrance of his dying Lord" (I.i.2). This in itself hardly announces the knight's reformed credentials – as E.K. reminds readers of the *Maye* eclogue, "Ah deare Lord, and sweete Saint Charitee" is "the Catholiques comen othe" – and in fact Redcrosse quickly falls into a crucial misunderstanding of "dearness" that is complicated by pride and lust. At the end of the first canto, asleep in Archimago's hermitage and victimized by false visions and sprights, Redcrosse dreams that Una, escorted by Venus, has been transformed into "a loose Leman to vile seruice bound: / And eke the *Graces* seemed all to sing, / *Hymen io Hymen*, dauncing all around, / Whilst freshest *Flora* her with Yuie girlond crownd" (I.i.48). Already he is in danger of confusing the nature of Christian charity, as well as his rightful relationship to Una, by reducing her spiritual love to mere physical lust. This initiates a paradoxical motif that associates loose voluptuousness with constraining chains – "a loose Leman to vile seruice bound" – one that reaches its climax in Canto VII when Redcrosse, "pourd out in looseness" with Duessa, is made Orgoglio's "eternall bondslave" (I.vii.7-14). Here the language of contract participates in a debased economy of flesh, supported by a warped vision of the Graces, whose allegorical gift exchange "seemed" to idealize mere physical pleasure. Spenser's notion of Christian liberty (and one might also claim his notion of Christian marriage, dramatized memorably in *Amoretti* 67) operates in a similar but distinct paradox, described throughout the New Testament but especially in Galatians 5. Paul begins in the first verse of this chapter by exhorting his audience to "Stand fast therefore in the libertie wherewith Christ hath made vs free, and be not intangled againe with the yoke of bondage," and later, in Gal. 5:13, this liberty enables

authentic service: "For brethren, ye haue bene called vnto libertie: onely vse not your libertie as an occasion vnto the flesh, but by loue serue one another."[80] Whereas physical love and desire employs a "loose" freedom that binds oneself to a contract of flesh, genuine Christian liberty results in the bonds of charity, and Spenser further complicates this hermeneutical puzzle by regularly employing concatenatory poetic figures – anaphora, epanalepsis, and most often a chiasmus – to figure forth both kinds of "dear love."

Redcrosse fundamentally misunderstands the one paradox for the other. Archimago's nymphette, the false Una, exacerbates the knight's confusion, explaining to Redcrosse "in wemens pitteous wise" (I.i.50) her brazen and seductive posture in his bedchamber by rewriting the origins of Redcrosse's quest and inserting a tone of romance: "Your owne deare sake forst me at first to leaue / My Fathers kingdome" (I.i.52). The spright employs a phrase that gestures at selfless love – "your owne deare sake" – but as mere pretext for asserting her claims to his service, using "sake" in its original litigious sense and ultimately suggesting that Redcrosse owes her something in return.[81] A stanza later she adds, in language that resembles Errour's "wicked bands" that "constraine" (I.i.19):

> Loue of your selfe, she said, and deare constraint
> Lets me not sleepe, but wast the wearie night
> In secret anguish and vnpittied plaint.   (I.i.53)

The bonds of love have been twisted into the service of sexual fantasy. Although Redcrosse avoids the immediate temptation – that is, he resists succumbing to the vision that has just

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[80] Although the passage was popular among contemporaries – Luther's commentary on Galatians was particularly influential in articulating a concept of Christian liberty – I do not mean to establish this as a specific biblical reference for Spenser (though cited by Hamilton to gloss I.x.6), but rather to describe the paradoxical logic of Christian liberty and its association with charity. Also of note is 1 Peter 2:16: "As free, and not as hauing the libertie for a cloke of maliciousnesse, but as the seruauntes of God," and, to portray the opposite concept, 2 Peter 2:19: "Promising vnto them libertie, and are themselues the seruants of corruption: for of whomsoeuer a man is ouercome, euen vnto the same is he in bondage."

[81] See the first and second entries for "sake, n.," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989).

been dancing through his head – his response, which echoes much of the spright's language, indicates that his understanding of "dearness" remains perilously limited: "Deare dame I rew, / That for my sake vnknowne such griefe vnto you grew. / Assure your selfe, it fell not all to ground; / For all so deare as life is to my hart, / I deeme your loue, and hold me to you bound" (I.i.53-4). Notice that Redcrosse does not necessarily deny her romantic framework, retaining an implicit reciprocity in his schema and merely postponing the moment of erotic fulfillment until "his owne deare sake" is better known by his deeds (or good works).[82] Shortly after, wasting his own weary night in the throes of lust, dreaming of "Ladies deare delight" (I.i.55), Redcrosse awakes to find that Archimago's sprights "Have knit themselues in *Venus* shamefull chaine" (I.ii.4), aping his own misguided dream of loving service. Scholars have often noted Redcrosse's generic confusion here at the outset of his journey, how he mistakes his role as Christian knight for a knight errant proper to medieval romance, to which I would merely add the obvious: in addition to his subsequent abandonment of Una on account of infidelity, Redcrosse focuses on the wrong kind of "dear love," underwriting a tacit Pelagianism that misorients his attempts at holy conduct.

By the beginning of the second canto, then, "dearness" has already been appropriated by desire, associated with constraint and service, embodied by mere physical reciprocity, and ultimately will be ascribed to Duessa in place of Una. It is more complicated than this, obviously, but the event marks a beginning to his ensuing slippage away from holiness. And, though questions of affective pity and physical desire are explored more fully when Spenser turns to Guyon and temperance, the paradox of "dear love" continues to govern the narrative of Book I, as erotic freedom ultimately results in binding constraint. The phenomenon often relates to economic currency, as if the lover has bought something at a high price in a contract. When Redcrosse encounters Fradubio, for

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[82] He employs a similar phrase during his first encounter with Duessa, offering a kind of self-congratulatory pity: "Deare dame, your suddein ouerthrow / Much rueth me" (I.ii.21).

example, his brother in doubt sums up his predicament in simple economic terms but in high poetic style, lamenting, "my deare loue, / O too deare loue, loue bought with death too deare" (I.ii.31).[83] With its monosyllables artfully set off by a caesura, Spenser's tight chiasmic verse reinforces Fradubio's constraint, which is more obviously embodied by his transfiguration into a tree. The pattern is reiterated in the house of Pride, where, "mortgaging their liues to Couetise," men and women are "condemned to that Dongeon mercilesse" (I.v.46), until finally Redcrosse himself is fully imprisoned by vanity, and Orgoglio accepts Duessa as his leman: "From that day forth Duessa was his deare" (I.vii.16).

Clearly "dear love," a term associated with the rival affections of spiritual holiness and sexual wantonness, can easily go wrong, and Spenser accentuates the reader's struggle by using comparable language and rhetorical figures to describe positive incarnations of love. When Arthur describes his encounter with Gloriana, for example, he employs a chiasmus that depicts their relationship in contractual terms much like Fradubio: "Most goodly glee and louely blandishment / She to me made, and bad me loue her deare, / For dearely sure her loue was to me bent…" (I.ix.14). Although the phrase recuperates some of its positive values in this context, it nevertheless demonstrates the challenge Redcrosse faces elsewhere in distinguishing between both planes of love. Everywhere romance courses through the narrative, tempting the knight to understand the providential love he receives as divine obligation for service he has already rendered. The trial is not merely erotic but economic, and possesses enormous theological implications.

Canto ix dramatizes these by inserting an epic convention into the midst of romantic narrative, beginning with an auspicious invocation of the golden chain of virtues, which describes the power of gift-giving to bind together men into mutual amity and

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[83] William J. Kennedy notes that Fradubio's advice is cast in a dubious light, as the style here is highly artificial and participates in a complicated act of literary imitation, in "Rhetoric, Allegory, and Dramatic Modality in Spenser's Fradubio Episode," *ELR*, 3.3 (1973): 360-1.

service. Spenser seems to have revised the Homeric chain by suppressing the strife and emulation implicit in the trope, which has encouraged numerous scholars to read the subsequent gift exchange between Arthur and Redcrosse in wholly positive terms. The epic ideal begins to break down a mere nine stanzas into the canto, however, well before any exchange of gifts, as Arthur describes how his scorn of love prompted him "to stirre vp strife" (I.10.3). Many contemporaries considered this kind of strife, born of emulation, as a benign or even positive phenomenon, as Robert Allen explains in *The Oderifferous Garden of Charitie*, lauding "gifts of one friend and neighbour to an other … for mutuall love and friendships sake; the one striving after a sort to overcome the other with kindnesse and benefites" (13). But as several scholars have observed, this dialectic, aimed at "fast friendship for to bynd," seems better suited for a discussion of friendship than holiness, and the ensuing struggle with Despaire suggests that Redcrosse errs here by submitting to a works-righteous theology.[84] When the knight demands "thine owne bloud to price his bloud" (I.ix.37), Despaire employs the same constraining logic to bring Redcrosse to the point of suicide: "Is not his law, Let euery sinner die: / Die shall all flesh? What then must needs be donne, / Is it not better to doe willingly" (I.ix.47). Arthur's present of elixir to Redcrosse creates a particularly charged allegorical moment, a gift "which to requite" Redcrosse offers "his Saveours testament / … / A worke of wondrous grace, and able soules to saue" (I.ix.19). Thomas Churchyard's poem *Churchyards Charitie*, a work that acknowledges a close familiarity with Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, offers a suggestive association, as Charitie "brings a boxe, of balm to heale ech sore / That makes sad mind." That is, contemporaries might have considered the episode's allegorical import related to charity, and Redcrosse's response suggests a confusion about the true nature of grace. Indeed, James Kearney describes the problem as a misunderstanding of the nature of gifts.

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[84] Gless offers a particularly lucid explanation of the unconscious Pelagianism at work in this episode. See *Interpretation and Theology*, 145.

Redcrosse does not freely accept Arthur's gratuitous gift, imposing on the episode his own reciprocal system of exchange.[85] Moreover the knight's focus remains on the physical plane – the book itself is a work of grace and able to save souls, rather than transmitting divine revelation that prompts a saving faith – limiting salvific grace to a contractual framework of friendship, equal in its own way to the exchanges of "dear love" throughout the earlier part of Book I.

The scene between Guyon and Arthur, after the prince has rescued Guyon from Cymochles and Pyrochles, offers a different kind of ideal. Remember, of course, that Guyon has already learned his lesson in the Cave of Mammon by refusing to participate in the chain of Philotime, whom Mammon calls "my deare, my daughter," a chain which "may thee aduance for workes and merites iust (II.vii.49). Depicted in clear terms of worldly strife, those bonds, dressed up as "workes and merites," are shown to be nothing more than mere flattery, false friendship, and "base regard" (II.vii.47). Guyon essentially rejects a works theology here. So, in attempting to express his gratitude to Arthur, the knight of temperance begins (intemperately) to declare the impossibility of responding to his savior in a manner commensurate to his obligation, but the rhetorical question is itself stifled by a Virgilian half-line, reinforcing the passage's sense: "What may suffise, to be for meede repayd / Of so great graces, as ye haue me shewd, / But to be euer bound_____"
(II.viii.55). Traditional Protestant theology would emphatically agree; the bonds of love cannot be logically explained by spiritual or social calculus, nor should "good turnes be counted, as a servile bond, / To bind their doers" (II.viii.56).[86] When Redcrosse blithely

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[85] Kearney, *The Incarnate Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 121-5. See also Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 33-42. Harold Weatherby suggests Arthur's gift symbolizes the sacrament of unction in *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, 16-20.

[86] Note in specific reference to Redcrosse the behavior of the first Beadman in Mercie's Holy Hospitall, who offered succor "not vnto such, as could him feast againe, / And double quite, for that he on them spent" (I.x.37).

offers the New Testament to Arthur in a spirit of reciprocity, not merely for the specific act of grace Arthur rendered him but also implicitly for a gift that symbolizes Grace writ large, we should join Una in suspecting that his spiritual muscles have atrophied. He has escaped Orgoglio's dungeon but remains mired in a worldly misunderstanding of love. In other words, the gift exchange (and its classical legacy) is ambivalent and potentially fruitful, but it also poses an interpretive challenge that Redcrosse fails to read correctly.

So, after nine cantos, it is clear Redcrosse is tempted to conceive of love in romantic rather than spiritual terms, in addition to attributing merit to his own participation in a reciprocal exchange of good works. I would like to read Spenser's first full description of Charissa with these specific struggles of Redcrosse in mind:

> She was a woman in her freshest age,
> Of wondrous beauty, and of bountie rare,
> With goodly grace and comely personage,
> That was on earth not easie to compare.   (I.x.30)

It is a curious description. Spenser employs customary praise in the first few lines of this passage, depicting her in a generalized, almost vague manner: we merely know Charissa is young, beautiful, generous, graceful, and comely. The apt superlative 'freshest' manages to imply youth, fertility, purity, and even a sort of gaiety. But many of the other descriptors are troublingly ambiguous. Is her bounty rare in its perfection, or rarely offered? "Goodly grace" possesses similarly variant meanings: is she elegant and attractive in her aristocratic charm, or does she willingly offer favor to those she meets, or is she merely grateful for her many gifts from God? More importantly, does she possess grace or is she a vehicle of grace; does the preposition "with" denote association or instrumentality, giving or receiving? "Comely personage," though it provides clear evidence that Spenser derives his phrasing from the Geneva Bible's translation of 1 Corinthians 13, is even more ambivalent in the

Spenserian lexicon.[87] The reader might easily get the impression that Spenser is struggling to express what he means, reinforced all the more by his curious litotes: "That was on earth not easie to compare." Later, readers discover she is wearing a tiara "Adornd with gemmes and owches wondrous faire, / Whose passing price uneath was to be told" (I, X, 31). The "dearness," the value of Charissa's features, is impossible to describe.

It *is* a struggle to explain the nature of charity. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul defines the virtue more often by negation than he does in positive terms: "Loue enuieth not: loue doeth not boast it selfe: it is not puffed vp: It doeth no vncomely thing: it seeketh not her owne things: it is not prouoked to anger: it thinketh not euill." The long catalogue gathers momentum, acquiring more positive attributes until it culminates in the rhapsodic paean to charity that posed difficulties to Protestant adherents of *sola fide*: "And nowe abideth faith, hope and loue, euen these three: but the chiefest of these is loue." It seems unlikely that Spenser suddenly has lost his powers of description. Instead he is doing something similar to the sermons of so many Church of England preachers, who emphasized the importance of charity but refused to elaborate further on account of the perils involved in questions of justification.[88] Charissa should be read as an allegorical embodiment of the love that transcends mere logic as well as description.

After his experience in the House of Holinesse, the opening stanza of Canto xi signals Redcrosse's recovery of "dear love," as Una confidently declares the redemption of his dearness:

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[87] The phrase is also used to describe the steward Diet in the Castle of Alma (II.ix.27), the Genius of the Bowre of Blisse (II.xii.46), and, perhaps most ominously, the Squire of Dames who bears a "comely personage, / And louely face, made fit for to deceiue / Fraile Ladies hart with loues consuming rage" (III.vii.46). Mention the Geneva relevance by referring to Shaheen.

[88] My favorite example is Nathaniel Shute, who justifies his careful avoidance of the finer points of sanctification by claiming, "Therefore for my part, in my poore way, I shall bee readie to offer still to Gods people the staffe of bread, I meane the weightier things of the Law, and to keepe their braines from burning, with such subtill lightning, as this is." See *Corona charitatis* (London: 1626)*,* 11.

> Deare knight, as deare, as euer knight was deare,
> That all these sorrowes suffer for my sake,
> High heauen behold the tedious toyle, ye for me take.[89]   (I.xi.1)

The chiasmic structure of that first verse, its repetition of "dear," and the intense alliteration and caesurae all raise the poetic register to a high pitch (though it is described as Una's "mild manner"), preparing the reader as well as Redcrosse for his final encounter with the dragon. In many ways this episode recycles the language of "dearness" traced throughout the book, even employing a phrase reminiscent of the false Una's midnight confession, but it transforms typical romantic sentiment into a genuine spiritual experience. With heaven as a witness – a context made all the more poignant after Redcrosse's recent vision of new Hierusalem – Una frames the heroic actions of Redcrosse so as to transcend the logic of mere exchange.[90] The hyperbole is functional here, gesturing at a divine mystery of selfless love. Una's knight is not merely dear but "as deare, as euer knight was deare"; rather than the empty words of Archimago's spright, lamenting physical pain in order to intensify erotic feeling, "for my sake / for me take" reinforces Redcrosse's tribulations without attempting to assert or explain their value, gesturing at heavenly reward without demanding it; and the last line is so pregnant with meaning an alexandrine cannot contain it: readers must elide two syllables (presumably "heaven" and "tedious") in order to keep the verse from swelling into a venerable fourteener.

Canto x: The House of Holinesse

Spenser repeatedly dramatizes Redcrosse's temptation to confuse the reciprocal exchange involved in friendship (romantic or otherwise) for the spiritual economy of an

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[89] Part of this recovery likewise stems from the simple fact that the speaker is Una, who has been associated with a higher kind of "dear love" throughout the narrative. Consider the speaker's description of Una in Canto vii: "Was neuer Ladie loued dearer day, / Then she did loue the knight of the *Redcrosse*; / For whose deare sake so many troubles her did tosse" (I.vii.27).

[90] Redcrosse's fight with the dragon is explicitly framed as a corporal work of mercy, releasing prisoners, as Kaske notes in *"*The *Dragon's* Spark and Sting and the Structure of Red Cross's *Dragon*-fight: T*he Faerie Queene*, I. xi-xii," *Studies in Philology* 66 (1969): 635.

ordered love. By staging Redcrosse's attempts throughout the allegorical narrative to fix a value on charity, Spenser links together charitable works with variously complicated problems of interpretation and its attendant obstacles of pride, envy, and despair. The knight's efforts to assert his righteousness and perform heroic labor produce in succession a dubious engagement with error, an entanglement in erotic desire suggestive of a merit-based works theology, and a harrowing battle with despair. I have framed much of this discussion, moreover, in the context of envious reading and uncharitable misinterpretation, a continuation of preoccupations that Spenser examined earlier in *The Shepheardes Calender*. The changing cultural expectations associated with material charity, which required that givers interpret the status of their object and offer charitable alms or charitable hatred, offered Spenser a powerful figure for the opposition between ecclesial factions wishing to privilege communal reform or harmony, respectively. If the *Maye* eclogue underscores the instability of charitable interpretation within the Church of England by narrating a parable that revolves around the question of charity (with an ostensibly papist and vagrant fox as the prospective object), Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, especially in the House of Holinesse, uses similar occasions of charitable giving to put pressure on doctrinal rather than ecclesial commitments.

Reformed doctrine mitigates the role of charitable works in acquiring salvation, negating their efficacy, but in practical terms Calvinist theology merely displaces the salvific power of charity with a hermeneutical responsibility – charity no longer effects salvation but instead allows individual believers to *read* their elect status. As Thomas Cranmer's "Homily on Faith" in *The Book of Common Prayer* exhorts the individual Christian: "Be sure of your faith, try it by your living, look upon the fruits that cometh of it, mark the increase of love and charity by it towards God and your neighbor, and so shall you

perceive it to be a true lively faith."[91] This understanding of charity can easily slip into a sort of instrumentalism much like works theology, producing a similar threat of despair (explored more fully in my discussion of Browne's *Religio Medici*). Reformed doctrine was not safe from the threat of idolatry; although puritans often accused conformists of papist ritualism, they were often forced to defend themselves against charges of doctrinal papism as a result of their emphasis on practical piety.[92]

This interpretive anxiety was linked to corporate and political identities as well. Questions of doctrine and politics became inextricably linked in England as soon as Henry broke from Rome by an act of state, and the charity performed or imagined by either confession consequently acquired inescapably political resonances. The institutional practice of charity was necessarily involved in these religious debates, because the Reformation had dissolved many of England's (and, in the context of Spenser's life and work, Ireland's) contemporary sources of hospitality and almsgiving, prompting various civic and ecclesial innovations in the practice of relieving the poor. As they instituted a nationalized poor law and implemented a variety of municipal schemes to combat poverty and idleness, English Protestants often caricatured Rome as an anti-England governed by Antichrist. Their own self-congratulatory conceptions of national identity, however, were constantly challenged by a small population of recusants who remained living on British soil, willing rather to endure fines or worse than submit to Elizabethan church practice (which Robert Persons mocked as the "new fownde charitie of a new fownd gospel"[93]), as well as an even greater number of church papists who donned a cloak of occasional or

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[91] *Certain sermons or homilies (1547)*, 100.

[92] See Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans Under Elizabeth I* (London: Blandford Press, 1967).

[93] *An epistle of the persecution of Catholickes in Englande*, 1582.

partial conformity to camouflage their ultimate allegiance to Rome.[94] This was the imagined audience of William Allen's polemical imperative: "Say but then vnto them by the words of *S. Iames.* Maister Protestaunt, let me haue a sight of your onely faith, with out good workes: and here lo, beholde mine and spare not, by my good workes." Arguments of this kind cast doubt on England's communal aspirations to achieve a godly state. It is no surprise, then, that William Fulke's rebuttal of Allen invokes the national poor law as evidence of England's sanctified credentials:

> Shew me *M. Allen* if thou canst for thy gutts, or name me any city in the world, where popery preuayleth, that hath made such prouision for the fatherlesse children and widowes and all other kind of poore, as is in the noble city of London and in diuers other cities and townes of this land, and by publike law appoynted to be throughout all the realme of England.[95]

Whether or not England was a nation of committed and godly Calvinists, it certainly intended to justify itself by charitable works, or at least, as Fulke continues, "to iustifie our profession against the Papistes." These justifications – and the attacks that spawned them – characterized religious polemic between English Protestants and Roman Catholics throughout the succeeding generations, from Andrew Willet's determined efforts to record all of England's charitable gifts in *Synopsis papismi* to the scornful dismissal of England's hospitals, especially in comparison to the Annunziata in Naples or the Hospital of S. Spirito in Rome, by the Jesuit Matthew Wilson (alias Edward Knott) in *Charity Maintayned*.[96] On the ground in Ireland, hospitals and erstwhile monastic properties were further politicized

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[94] The apt phrase is Alexandra Walsham's. See *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (London: Boydell & Brewer, 1993).

[95] William Fulke, *Two treatises written against the papists* (London: 1577).

[96] Knott, *Charity Maintayned* (1634), 284.

on account of England's colonial project and the entrenched opposition among Irish (and Old English) Catholics.[97]

Given the fact that Protestant and Roman Catholic apologists consciously traced the shape of their corporate institutions of charitable giving back to a doctrinal source, these institutions possessed their own allegorical significance, representing for contemporaries a clear sign of civic reform and providential favor. This lends even more charged symbolism to Spenser's tenth canto, which depicts its own version of a hospital and provides an extended account of charity's place in the larger scheme of holiness. After highlighting the problematic aspects of charitable giving throughout much of Book I, Spenser might have taken advantage of the iconographical moment in the House of Holinesse to stabilize the circumstances that otherwise threaten to undermine charity, especially its particular doctrinal challenges. But he refuses to offer a simple illustration of either the moral or material aspects of charity. Rather than clearly delineating the Protestant principles undergirding his allegory, he purposely obscures the confessional differences between Reformed and Roman Catholic approaches to charity. Even if the canto's overall framework remains safely Calvinist, charity seems to possess salvific power within its own allegorical space. As I will explain, Spenser uses the operative functions of Charissa, Mercie, and the Beadmen to demonstrate that a rich and fruitful life of holiness forces even a rigorous Protestant into uncomfortable proximity with Roman Catholicism (and thus makes the charitable giver vulnerable to accusations of papism), creating a dialectic between the predestinate election associated with Protestant faith and the intervening mercy aligned with Roman Catholic charity. Whatever his intentions, Spenser suggests there is something peculiar about the active work of charity that remains unresolved by Calvinist theology.

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[97] For an engaging account of Spenser's own involvement in this phenomenon in Ireland, and how it might have influenced his understanding of monastic properties, see Thomas Herron, *Spenser's Irish Work: Poetry, Plantation and Colonial Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 185-224.

If Spenser refuses to clarify certain doctrinal niceties, however, he does stabilize charitable works in another fashion. For one thing, the House of Holiness (and the holy hospital in particular), despite Redcrosse's apparent spiritual growth as he advances through its domain, offers as much satire as it does triumphalism, levying an implicit critique of failures among various Elizabethan institutions that ought to be regulated by charity. Indeed, Spenser discourages readers of any confessional stripe from a self-congratulatory assessment of their elect status at the individual or corporate level. Secondly, in his portrayal of an active life of charity, Spenser removes the object of charity from the scope of his interest, apparently endorsing an indiscriminate form of giving. He seems unconcerned with the relative merits of the recipients of aid, focusing instead almost wholly on the internal motivations governing charitable action. This approach to charity does not necessarily correspond to the typical anthropologies of either Protestantism or post-Tridentine Catholicism, emulating instead the famous Augustinian maxim, "Love and do what you will," which splits the confessional difference.[98] These two characteristics seem to be interrelated: if your spiritual motivations are disinterested (that is, if you are not aimed at "earning" heaven), charitable works remain safely redeemed, whether they participate in justification or sanctification. This simultaneous emphasis on interior purpose and communal action accommodates Spenser's recognition of the complicated nature of material charity, simplifying the process of charitable reading by focusing on personal intention. Rather than endorsing an inward focus in the manner of Errour and her brood, however, Spenser presents the image of Charissa, who holds a babe to breast first as if to nourish its spiritual purpose and then thrusts it out into the world of exterior action. In this section, I am going to begin by focusing on the first half of Augustine's

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[98] This phrase, from his *Seventh Homily on John*, is often used in the context of secular correction to justify well-intentioned discipline.

imperative (Charissa, or Love) before turning to the holy hospital and its performance of material charity ("do what you will").

Charissa and the Chain of Theological Virtues

Canto x's initial stanza gets off to a good start for Calvinist readers, appearing to trumpet its Reformed credentials – "If any strength we haue, it is to ill, / But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will." Despite this reassurance, however, obvious traces of medieval monasticism quickly accumulate throughout the House of Holinesse, which has been aptly described as "a virtual funhouse of seemingly idolatrous Catholic figures."[99] This phenomenon has stimulated much scholarly consternation concerning the dubious role of charity and its residual hints of Roman Catholicism. Why, for example, does Spenser choose a type of monastic piety as the primary distinguishing characteristic of the house's presiding matron, Cælia:

> Whose onely ioy was to relieue the needs
> Of wretched soules, and helpe the helpelesse pore:
> All night she spent in bidding of her bedes,
> And all the day in doing good and godly deedes.   (I.x.3)

For many readers Cælia bears an uncomfortable likeness to a Roman Catholic abbess, and the description of Redcrosse's progress through her house encourages this sort of reading: he endures ashes and sackcloth from Patience, as well as fiercely corporal discipline from Amendment and Penance, and after he encounters the seven Bead-men of Charissa's hospital, whose personification of the corporal works of mercy gestures at a meritorious works theology, Redcrosse converses with an ascetic hermit. However much readers wish to assign these characteristics merely allegorical status, as C.S. Lewis does in *The Allegory of Love* when he declares that "all allegories whatever are likely to seem Catholic to the general reader," there they are, confronting the reader one way or the other.[100] James

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[99] Kearney, 128.

[100] Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 322.

Kearney offers a more nuanced approach by claiming that Spenser employs an iconoclastic poetics here, reclaiming and repurposing the language and forms of English history, employing "the Catholic associations of these old forms precisely in order to mislead his readers," who need to purify their devotional habits.[101] In Kearney's reading, which is particularly helpful in explaining the canto's paradoxes, the House of Holinesse becomes less a spiritual oasis than an additional temptation for Redcrosse and the reader.

This problem is compounded (for readers if not Redcrosse) by Charissa's absence early in the canto. Indeed, readers are likely to ask the same question that Una poses early on in the House of Holinesse: where is Charissa? One would expect, of course, to encounter all three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity together, but Spenser severs charity from the triumvirate. Instead, Redcrosse, escorted by an attentive Una to and through the House, meets Fidelia and Speranza, whose initial entry is marked by a shared purpose and commonality:

> Loe two most goodly virgins came in place,
> Ylinked arme in arme in louely wise,
> With countenance demure, and modest grace,
> They numbred euen steps and equall pace.   (I.x.12)

The virgins, walking in perfect harmony with their arms linked together, suggest that a comprehensive unity exists between the two Christian virtues, recalling the opening stanza of Canto ix and its "goodly golden chayne, wherewith yfere / The vertues linked are in lovely wize."[102] Note that charity links the two together "in louely wise" – that is, in a loving manner, or even in loving wisely – but when Una asks after their sister Charissa (Is she unwell? Is she busy?) they reply in unison: "Ah no, said they, but forth she may not come." This is a startling departure from contemporary Protestant depictions of the three theological virtues, and worth considering in some detail. From a doctrinal perspective, a

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[101] Kearney, 134.

[102] In his *Institutes* 3.2.42, Calvin observes that "wherever this living faith exists, it must have the hope of eternal life as its inseparable companion."

Church of England adherent would naturally promote the precedence of faith, retaining the Reformers' imperative that stemmed from Romans 3:19-20 or Ephesians 2:8-9, as John King notes in his succinct explanation for Spenser's odd formulation: "Fidelia's seniority as the eldest sister exemplifies the subordination of charity to faith in line with the dictum in the *Book of Homilies* that 'true faith doth give life to the works.'"[103] But this could easily have been handled in a manner that placed Charissa among the sisters, or at least one that called less attention to her detachment from the entire scene.

In fact, separating the theological virtues was a typical Roman tactic in contemporary religious debates about justification theologies, whereas Protestants emphasized their inseparability, which consequently allowed faith to prompt and govern all virtuous Christian action. Patrick Hamilton, so Foxe tells us in *Actes and Monuments*, was martyred by Roman authorities in Scotland for (among other things) the following heresy: "That fayth, hope, and charitie, are so knit, that hee that hath the one, hath the rest, and hee that wanteth the one of them, wanteth the rest."[104] In the published disputation between the imprisoned Jesuit Edmund Campion and various Church of England divines, a debate over justification *sola fide* hinges on the Protestant insistence that all three theological virtues are inseparable, or as John Walker claims, "that fayth, hope, and charitie are coupled and lincked together."[105] Campion, on the other hand, assents to justification by faith, but claims that hope and charity are equal and "distinct giftes" of divine grace, and consequently causes of justification as well. This is the sort of theological opportunism associated with Jesuit casuistry that the archdeacon George Withers vilifies in

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[103] King, 62.

[104] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: 1583), 975.

[105] *A true report of the disputation or rather priuate conference had in the Tower of London, with Ed. Campion Iesuite, the last of August* (London: 1583), D.d.iii. Consider also Heinrich Bullinger, in his *Questions of Religion* (London: 1572), 48: "So lykewise these three vertues, faythe, hope, and charitie are so knytte togither, that by no meanes they may bee separated, and yet are they seuerally distincted."

A view of the marginal notes of the popish Testament when he responds to a note from

Galatians 3:7: "So when it may serue your turne, things inseparable as true faith, hope, and

charitie must be separated."[106] Far from ensuring an orthodox Protestant reading, then,

Spenser's separation of Charissa from her sister virtues actually implies that charity's

operative sphere remains distinct from the justifying work of faith, providing an

opportunity to validate merit-based works (which partially explains why several scholars

have argued that Spenser gestures at a works theology in the latter half of Canto x). As

most of Spenser's contemporaries would have observed, it is easier to subordinate charity

to faith if the two virtues exist in close proximity.

So, why *does* Spenser detach Charissa from the episode, postponing Redcrosse's

encounter with charity in its fleshed-out allegorical form? Despite King's reassurance of

Spenser's Protestant credentials, the narrative appears to invite theological speculation of

this kind. Does Spenser wish to emphasize the crucial importance of waiting for the

appropriate opportunity to perform charity, underscoring the providential aspect of any

charitable act? Given Redcrosse's well-documented fleshly temptations, does he require

further discipline before an intimate encounter with such a fertile female? That is, at the

allegorical level, would he be more likely to mistake charitable love for erotic love? These

questions remain unresolved. Charissa has just "encreast the world with one sonne more,"

justifying some concern for her literal wellbeing, but the iconographic moment here is

exceptionally charged, hardly the time for Spenser to prioritize verisimilitude.[107] Nor does

it seem right to read this merely as a convenient narrative device to accommodate more

expansive descriptions of faith and hope. Concerning Charissa's absence, it seems best to

take Fidelia and Speranza at their (unified) word: "That her to see should be but

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[106] Withers (London: 1588), 203.

[107] McManus endorses the notion that Charissa has just given birth to Redcrosse himself, which
would invite a host of complicated but relevant theological questions.

troublesome." This provides little explanation but does focus and frame the problem, and in doing so makes one thing clear: even at the risk of associating his doctrinal exposition of the theological virtues with Roman Catholicism, Spenser ostensibly breaks the adamantine Protestant chain linking charity to faith and hope.

Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say he merely loosens the chain, generating space for charity to function outside the aegis of Fidelia or an elect and predestinate faith. Spenser's complicated syntax allows for the possibility that faith remains the ultimate actor in the sequence devoted to charity. Consider the stanza that describes Redcrosse's introduction to Charissa:

> … [Redcrosse] they to *Vna* brought:
> Who ioyous of his cured conscience,
> Him dearely kist, and fairely eke besought
> Himselfe to chearish, and consuming thought
> To put away out of his carefull brest.
> By this *Charissa*, late in child-bed brought,
> Was waxen strong, and left her fruitfull nest.   (I.x.29)

When readers encounter that simple prepositional phrase that Spenser casually inserts as a transitional device – "By this Charissa" – they are implicitly encouraged to fill out the phrase by inserting the word "time," since most readers, I think, assume it possesses a temporal function: "By this *time* Charissa … was waxen strong."[108] The previous stanzas, which detail the long and painful penitential regimen Redcrosse endures, encourage this interpretation, especially at the level of straightforward narrative. But the explicit meaning suggests that the preposition refers to agency or means, that Charissa "was waxen strong" (as opposed to waxing cold) literally *by* Una's dear kisses and her fair remarks, which persuade her knight "himselfe to chearish," and more generally by Redcrosse's "cured conscience."[109] The passage could indicate that a causal connection exists between Fidelia's

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[108] The Longman *Faerie Queene* glosses the line as such: "By this: i.e. by this time."

[109] Darryl Gless's discussion of Recrosse's need for self-love is particularly helpful in illuminating this episode. See *Interpretation and Theology*, 153.

teaching or Speranza's consolation and Charissa's eventual appearance, especially given

the prominence of the Reformed doctrine of *sola fide*, but Spenser strikes a balance: the

vast temporal and physical space has opened a new dimension in the House of Holinesse, a

new reign perhaps, with Charissa's authority signified by her gleaming tiara.

But I suspect Spenser intends for Redcrosse and readers to remember the requisite

care needed when engaging charity so as to avoid being "but troublesome." It is worth

returning to the stanza that introduces Charissa; there is one more curious word in

addition to that preposition "by," and it appears especially relevant to Spenser's description

of charity: "carefull." The adjective seems at odds with the immediate context – namely,

that Redcrosse should learn to chearish himself and put away consuming thoughts from his

"carefull brest" – and readers are tempted to imagine the knight, having salved his

anguished conscience, subsequently living free of care. Spenser discourages this kind of

interpretation throughout *The Faerie Queene*, however. The lewd dream that interrupts

Redcrosse's "carelesse sleepe" at the end of Canto I is instructive here, as is his lascivious

encounter with Duessa at the start of Canto vii, "Both carelesse of his health, and of his

fame" (I.vii.6). There is a sense that Redcrosse needs to acquire more care before

encountering the comely personage of Charissa. Meanwhile a variety of positive characters

in Book I are described as "carefull," among them the faithful dwarf, Una, Satyrane, Arthur,

and, tellingly, both Charissa and Mercie.

The distinction between "carelesse" and "carefull" behavior plays a similarly

important role in a later episode of *The Faerie Queene*, one that involves another maternal

figure who represents love (divine or human). Although Agape, who figures in the early

narrative of Book IV, remains one of the poem's most confounding characters, in part

because her loving behavior receives a stern rebuke from the narrator, there are significant

overlaps between Agape's actions and the posture of Charissa and her "carefull Nourse"

Mercie. Agape's triad of sons embody dear love – "These three did loue each other dearely

well" (IV.ii.43) – but they are the product of a violent rape that occurs when Agape "sate carelesse by a cristall flood" (IV.ii.45). This is fascinating enough as an allegory of productive strife, but Spenser modifies Agape's description after she adopts a maternal posture, and when she intervenes with the Fates, who might represent either necessity or predestination, pleading for an extended life for her sons, she wins a kind of compromise: "and then that carefull Fay / Departed thence with full contented mynd" (IV.ii.53). Like Agape, "carefull" Mercie is presented as advocate who appears "before the maiestie diuine, / And his auenging wrath to clemencie incline" (I.x.51), although her intervention receives the unqualified approbation of Contemplation. In both cases, "care" seems necessary to the enterprise of loving responsibly, a complicated endeavor that involves a host of complications.

Even if Fidelia and Speranza, who are "ylinked arme in arme," stretch over many stanzas to include Charissa in an orthodox Protestant embrace, she participates in another chain from which they remain excluded. As a youthful figure of motherhood, she possesses strengths and complications concomitant to her role as a fruitful spouse. Indeed, the first mention of Charissa near the beginning of Canto x provides Book I's safest description of "dear love," when the phrase means *both* spiritual love and sexual union: "But faire Charissa to a lovely fere / Was lincked, and by him had many pledges dere" (I.x.4). This verse bears its own fascinating gesture at a chiasmus within that first line, the near homophones of faire/fere enclosing both Charissa and the modifier "lovely," which mean the same thing at the literal level. Spenser's sophisticated poetics here might be attempting to conflate God's love, the love of God, and love of neighbor. More important, however, are the "many pledges dere" (which provide a suggestive echo of the *Maye* eclogue). After spending much of the previous nine cantos describing the perils of mistaking one kind of love for another, or loving the wrong object entirely (Duessa instead of Una, martial prowess instead of holiness, etcetera), Spenser not only engages the erotic implications of

charity but makes them a central feature of his allegory. Unlike the ethereal Caelia or safely virginal sisters Fidelia and Speranza, Charissa is a fertile procreative woman presumably married to Christ (though this is never mentioned explicitly), and there is an openness about her, a physical frankness: "Her necke and breasts were ever open bare" (I.x.31).[110]

Spenser is obviously aware of the dangers in characterizing charity in this manner, even if the iconographic representation of charity as mother was traditional. When he declares that Charissa is "full of great love," for example, he immediately worries over improper associations, carefully reminding the reader between caesurae that "Cupid's wanton snare / as hell she hated." Cupid is mentioned in positive terms a mere canto before as Arthur relates to Una and Redcrosse his vaguely unrequited love of Gloriana, but Spenser nevertheless seems concerned here with eliminating any carnal implications, ensuring that Charissa remains "chast in worke and will." Setting to the side for a moment the slippery issue of volition, Spenser's anxiety over Charissa's relative chastity belies the legacies he has chosen to deploy. Indeed, as Robert Reid points out in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, the House of Holinesse possesses more than a superficial likeness to medieval courts of love, and Charissa's antipathy for Cupid merely reinforces the comparison.[111] Likewise Spenser's description actually seems to narrow the allegorical space between Charissa and her female counterparts Duessa and Errour. Although Charissa's erotic potential is bound within the protected sanction of marriage (a typical Protestant impulse), she nevertheless bears a resemblance to Duessa – note even the superficial similarity of their names – and both are described as wearing sumptuous

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[110] Not all readers will agree with this assessment. Sheila Cavanagh, for example, claims that Spenser keeps Charissa "distanced from sexuality" in *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in the Faerie Queene* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 31-2. Gail Kern Paster is equivocal, observing that Spenser "allows Charissa's breasts to be beautiful, and maternal, and perhaps even erotic," in *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 206. Note the distinction between Charissa and Duessa, whose nakedness lays bare her duplicity in I.ii.40-1.

[111] Reid, *Spenser Encyclopedia*, 373.

apparel and possessing a "comely personage." Meanwhile, numerous scholars have examined Charissa's role as mother, especially in contradistinction to the maternal monster of Book I, Errour. The general similarity reminds the reader to look for the crucial difference: Errour's interiority leads to an enclosed system, a binding constraint between mother and child that becomes mutually self-destructive, whereas Charissa's pattern of movement continues to develop the paradoxical logic of "dear love": "A multitude of babes about her hung / … / Whom still she fed whilst they were weak and young / But thrust them forth still as they waxed old" (I.x.31).[112] Here again Spenser employs the verb "wax," and I suspect Spenser intends for that last line to suggest its scriptural and proverbial counterpart (charity waxing "old" instead of "cold").

Freed from the role of theological complement to Faith and Hope, Spenser's representation of charity thus acknowledges the dangerous complications associated with the concept. Identified as both a spouse and a mother, Charissa's character acquires inescapable scriptural and political resonances that far surpass a simple iconographic or doctrinal treatment of charity, as McManus succinctly summarizes:

> Charissa, for example, can be read politically as another image of Elizabeth I (described by John Jewel as "the only nurse and mother" of the English church), iconographically as an image of *caritas*, and theologically as the Church, wisdom, or word of God (the Church, according to Leonard Wright, "hath nursed you with her breasts, and brought you up in the knowledge of the truth").[113]

Additionally there is Charissa's implicit role as the bride of Christ (the "louely fere"), a role traditionally assigned to the church, which adds an additional political-historical dimension to the allegory that makes any discussion of Spenserian charity difficult to

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[112] See, among others, Maureen Quilligan, *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983); Caroline McManus, "The 'Carefull Nourse': Female Piety in Spenser's Legend of Holiness," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60.4 (1997): 381-406; and Elizabeth A. Spiller, "Poetic Parthenogenesis and Spenser's Idea of Creation in *The Faerie Queene*," *Studies in English Literature* 40.1 (2000): 63-79.

[113] McManus, 219.

confine to mere theological doctrine. Better, I think, to consider charity as a crucial vehicle of accommodation reconciling any number of imperatives: the humanist vision of state-building, the ecclesial knot that binds together a spiritual body, a hermeneutic that harmonizes the scriptural canon, as well as a crucial obligation during a life of holiness. In the canto's narrative structure, charity becomes a nexus between individual and corporate identities, a "readie way" that leads not only to a solitary hermitage of contemplation but also to a vision of the heavenly city.

The Holy Hospital

Since, as I explained, sixteenth-century controversialists fiercely debated the sanction and efficacy of their respective charitable institutions, it is natural that Spenserian scholars have waged a similar combat, albeit with slightly more civility, over the precise doctrinal import of his episode that dramatizes the seven corporal works of mercy. Some of these readings seem one-sided, even polemical: Frederick Padelford confidently declares the holy hospital to be representative of Calvinism (Anthea Hume, writing later, is similarly sure of this position), and on the side of Rome, Father Nelan delivers a heavy-handed discussion of Spenser's reliance on traditional Roman Catholic positions.[114] Virgil Whitaker offers a more evenhanded discussion of the episode, as does John King, but it is difficult to construct a straightforward theological argument. Recently, a number of scholars have adopted a different approach, choosing to accept as incontrovertible (by and large) the holy hospital's *apparently* popish elements, and then explaining the existence of this paradox through a variety of arguments. Schiavoni claims that Spenser, in situating Calvinist doctrine next to Roman Catholic imagery, fuses together conflicting legacies of Augustine, whose complex work had been co-opted in the sixteenth century by both supporters and opponents of free will. Darryl Gless helpfully notes how Spenser's complex poetics

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[114] Padelford, *The Political and Ecclesiastical Allegory of the First Book of* The Faerie Queene (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Press, 1970); Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*; and Nelan, *Catholic Doctrines in Spenser's Poetry.*

accommodate readings of either persuasion, though he suggests that the episode is best read in the context of Protestant sanctification. Carol Kaske adds considerable nuance to the discussion by noting that the self-contestatory nature of this episode is actually biblical in origin, and she identifies numerous medieval and Renaissance commentators who had developed a style of scriptural reading to reconcile such contradictions. More recently, James Kearney has observed in Canto x an iconoclastic poetics that simultaneously rejects and preserves the idolatrous practices of England's Roman Catholic history.[115] Perhaps more than anything, the critical reception of this episode underscores just how various and complicated are Spenser's sources and poetics.[116]

I want to reorient the discussion by returning to one of the primary emphases of this chapter – the problematic nature of material charity – which does not solve the conundrum of Spenser's doctrinal commitments but does, I think, deserve more scholarly attention when reading I.x. Given the equivocal tone of the entire episode, as well as the vein of satire that seems to course throughout, I think Spenser means to suggest that neither Roman Catholics nor Protestants have taken enough care in producing charitable institutions or cultivating charitable behavior in England. Rather than serving an exemplary function, then, the episode acquires a hortatory character; instead of illustrating England's redeemed credentials, or even demonstrating the habits of an elect Protestant, Mercie and her associates offer a powerful reminder of duties that are often ignored or abused. If the reader follows the narrative to its conclusion, when Redcrosse's charitable service opens up "that painfull way" to the hill of Contemplation and his invocation of Saint

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[115] Kaske, *Biblical Poetics*. Kearney, noting that "bede" originally meant "prayer," suggests that Spenser intends to reclaim English history and language for his Reformed purposes, *The Incarnate Text*, 128-35.

[116] See Note 79 in this chapter for a thorough summary of the various scholarly approaches to Spenser's doctrine in this canto.

George, one might sense that Spenser believes a stronger commitment to reforming charity would help England discover its truest identity.[117]

First, however, I want to discuss how the corporal works of mercy fit into the larger religious framework concerned with charity. Several scholars suggest that sixteenth-century Protestants avoided referencing the corporal works of mercy because of their inherently meritorious qualities. Others have qualified the specifically Roman tenor of this episode, observing that Spenser organizes the corporal works of mercy by employing the model of Heinrich Bullinger's *Decades*, which was influenced by Lactantius as opposed to the popular schema proposed by Aquinas.[118] Although the specific program of corporal works was clearly less popular among early English Reformers, they actually found little difficulty in adhering to scriptural commands from Matthew 25 and elsewhere in the gospels (James 1:27 in particular), but they typically set these in opposition to the charitable works associated with purgatory, which had dubious scriptural origins. In the 1530s Hugh Latimer publicly attacked the devotional practices attached to purgatorial doctrine, which he called will-works, precisely because they competed against the corporal works of mercy:

> While they preched, these wylworkes, that comme but of our owne deuotion, althoughe they be not so necessarye, as the workes of mercy, and the preceptes of god, yet they sayd, & in the pulpet, that wylworkes were more principall, more excellent, & (playnly to vtter what they meane) more acceptable to God, then workes of mercy: as thoughe now mans inuentions & fansies, could please God better then gods preceptes, or straunge things better then his owne.[119]

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[117] Even here Spenser is doctrinally equivocal: Mercie claims that Contemplation has been given the keys to salvation "by wise Fidelia" (I.x.50), a nod to *sola fide*, but in the next stanza Contemplation characterizes Mercie in a manner suggestive of justification.

[118] For a discussion of Spenser's sources for the episode, see Charles E. Mounts, "Spenser's Seven Bead-men and the Corporal Works of Mercy," *PMLA* 54 (1939): 974-980. Mounts notes how the corporal works of mercy were neglected by Protestants, an observation used by Schiavoni to assign a Roman character to the episode. See "Predestination and Free Will: The Crux of Canto Ten," 181.

[119] Latimer, *The sermon that the reuerende father in Christ, Hugh Latimer, Byshop of Worcester, made to the clergie, in the conuocation, before the Parlyament began* (London: 1537).

Consciously following Latimer's example, Thomas Becon repeatedly mentions the primacy of the corporal works of mercy, inveighing against purgatorial practices "whereby the glory of God was obscured, and the works of mercy the less regarded."[120] As in so much of the sixteenth-century cultural discourse related to charity, each of these writers makes a similar tacit assumption that these two spheres devoted to charity – will works and merciful works – compete for the same finite resources. This is very much in line with the stated rationale among Reformers for dissolving monastic institutions in England, even if history presents a more complicated picture, and it seems possible that Spenser deploys the corporal works of mercy specifically to combat Roman Catholic doctrines that interfered with the practical aspirations of material charity.[121]

Regardless, Spenser seems to purposely obscure the confessional underpinnings of this episode. In his emphasis on the performance of material charity, Spenser's political focus appears to be social rather than ecclesial. Consider stanza 38, which is often cited as evidence of his support of traditional Catholic notions of grace. A close reading produces little more than doctrinal ambivalence. Spenser's theme becomes much more forceful when read through a lens of social satire:

> The second was as Almner of the place,
> His office was, the hungry for to feed,
> And thristy giue to drinke, a worke of grace:
> He feard not once him selfe to be in need,
> Ne car'd to hoord for those, whom he did breede:
> The grace of God he layd vp still in store,
> Which as a stocke he left vnto his seede;
> He had enough, what need him care for more?
> And had he lesse, yet some he would giue to the pore.

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[120] See *The demaundes of holy scripture*, Ev, for example, as well as *The Jewel of Joy*, Diiiiv-Dvr.

[121] The city of London was glad to acquire the government of those particular hospitals that were aimed at provision "onely for the releffe, comforte and helpyng of the poore and Impotent people not beyng able to helpe theymselffes, and not to the mayntenaunce of Chanons preestes and monkes, to lyve in pleasure" (Stow, I, 105).In 1544 St. Bartholomew's "was reformed rather than repressed" (161), and its clergy reduced from nine members to five, all of whom were charged with performing the seven corporal works of mercy. See *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic*, Henry VIII, xix, part I, 501, and also Orme and Webster, 161.

The stanza's first lines immediately introduce a complicated picture of the second Beadman, whose "office was ... / ... a worke of grace." Governing the second line, the ambivalent word "office" remains suggestive of Roman liturgical and sacramental practices, but it had already been adapted to suit the Book of Common Prayer and also references the institutional, corporate framework of mercy. Spenser offers a flexible term that seems unconstrained by confessional differences. Equally ecumenical is the phrase "work of grace." Although it calls to mind the merit-based theology of post-Tridentine Catholicism, the phrase possessed similar currency among Calvinists under the rubric of sanctification and received emphasis from Puritan authors of practical piety like William Perkins and Richard Rogers. This reference to grace modulates the next use of the word in the stanza, "the grace of God," and gestures at a reciprocal relationship between divine initiative and human response. Both phrases are ambiguous enough to support a Calvinist or voluntarist reading, although the latter is especially tempting. In fact, Kaske claims that this stanza, and its sixth and seventh lines in particular, presents "an unequivocally papistical extreme," and she employs Ecclesiasticus 17:20 (with its medieval annotations) to confirm its works-righteous meaning.[122]

Kaske's argument is convincing, but the stanza's "papistical" content is hardly unequivocal. For one thing, Spenser's focus seems less directed toward doctrinal complications than the everyday, domestic concerns that interfere with charitable obligations: "He feard not once him selfe to be in need, / Ne car'd to hoord for those, whom he did breede." For all his supererogatory potential, the beadman appears more anxious that self-interest does not corrupt the traditional "order of charity," which privileged the needs of kin before strangers, a doctrine associated with Protestants and Roman Catholics alike and often justified by the adage "Charity begins at home." The two lines that Kaske

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[122] Kaske, 114.

cites as works-righteous – "The grace of God he layd vp still in store, / Which as a stocke he left vnto his seede" – are framed by repeated mentions of the beadman's trust that God will provide for him and his family (a trust, one might add, in the "grace of God"). Here Spenser recycles a sentiment uttered by Piers in the *Maye* eclogue, when he associates familial inheritance with a corresponding distrust in divine providence:

> The sonne of his loines why should he regard
> To leaue enriched with that he hath spard?
> Should not thilke God, that gaue him that good,
> Eke cherish his child, if in his wayes he stood?

Or consider the words of James Yates in "A Prayse of Iust Dealing," which uses a phrase Spenser likewise employs: "For doubt we not, our heauenly God / hath mercy still in store: / And hath aboundance to supply, / our want though it were more."[123] This complicates the alms-as-supererogatory-grace conceit. Whether or not Spenser intends for "the grace of God" to be meant in a figurative, salvific sense or in a material sense of divine provision (and I think he is deliberately ambiguous), it seems clear that the beadman is primarily concerned with the responsibilities of his office rather than its rewards.

The word "stocke" generates similar complications. If Spenser employs the word "stocke" in the sense of the previous line's "store," which seems likely, he might mean, as Kaske claims, that grace can be "transferred to others like money, as the Roman Church transfers the supererogatory merits of the saints."[124] To "lay up" grace for one's children is clearly suggestive of supererogation. But it could simply invoke the paternal care of Paul, who uses the phrase to defend his apostolic mission against accusations of mercenary motives, reminding the congregation of Corinth that "the children ought not to laye vp for the fathers, but the fathers for the children" (II Cor 12:14). Other scriptural references

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[123] Yates, *The Castell of Courtesie* (London: 1582), 55r. Spenser might have encountered the phrase in Thomas Churchyard's 1587 poem *The Worthines of Wales*, in which, while praising the merchants of Shropshire, he claims, "The cunning head, and labouring hand had grace / To gayne and kéepe, and lay vp still in store" (K2r).

[124] Kaske, 114.

express a faith in divine provision, as in Psalm 31:19 – "Howe great is thy goodnesse, which thou hast layde vp for them, that feare thee!" – which prompts the Geneva version to include the following marginal comment: "The treasures of Gods mercie are alwaies laied vp in store for his children, albeit at all times thei do not enjoye them." Since "stocke" is used in a figurative rather than literal capacity, moreover, other potential meanings of the word could be relevantly applied to the context. The word derives its etymological origins from the Old English *stoc*, denoting a tree trunk, as in the barren environs of Despair where "all about old stockes and stubs of trees, / Whereon nor fruite, nor leafe was euer seene," (I.ix.34). Although it was often used to signify idolatry of some kind – consider Milton's Sonnet XVIII, which claims "our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones" – several positive meanings become noteworthy in this case. A 'stocke' or tree might be used in a Christological sense on account of the crucifixion, made all the more emphatic by the word's associations with the process of grafting, which invokes the Reformed notion of being grafted into Christ.[125] Charity itself might be described as a stock or tree, as in Langland's memorable portrayal of the tree of charity in *Piers Plowman*. In either of these cases, the beadman would be "laying up" for his children a model of Christian living, much like the father/son relationship of Thomas Becon's catechism.

Despite Kaske's relevant inclusion of Ecclesiasticus, the dominant biblical reference in this passage, as Shaheen notes, remains Matthew 6:19-21, a text Protestants willingly included in most discussions of material giving and occasionally paired with the corporal works of mercy described in Matthew 25.[126] Indeed, far from causing Protestants to stumble, the passage was often cited to directly oppose the ecclesial pomp and circumstance associated with the Roman Mass or purgatorial doctrines, especially among

[125] See Tyndale, *Expos. 1 John*, 54: "As ther is no synne in Christ yᵉ stock, so can ther be none in the quycke membres that lyue & grow in him."

[126] Shaheen, *Biblical References in The Faerie Queene* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1976), 208.

English controversialists of the 1550s and 60s like John Bradford, John Bale, and Thomas Becon. Others, as in the case of Thomas Cooper's *Certaine sermons wherin is contained the defense of the gospel*, found the text useful as a means of framing a middle way between the justifying works of supposed popish hypocrites and the pleasure-seeking idleness of sensual Epicures. Most often, however, Reformed preachers stressed the notion of hoarding treasures in heaven in a pastoral context, as a means of orienting one's behavior toward the divine will.[127] It was a convenient text for Protestants who wished to emphasize Christian ethics without leaning overmuch toward a works-righteous theology. This might seem like splitting doctrinal hairs – performing good works in order to earn heavenly treasure rather than heavenly entry – but Calvinists were satisfied by its theological orthodoxy.

All of this actually lends more support to Kaske's central thesis, which claims that Spenser purposely evades a clear answer regarding the justificatory power of good works, either as an imitation of scriptural equivocation or as an irenic posture toward diverse audiences. That is why I consider Spenser's hospital to be at least as interesting for what is *not* present. If the metaphor of hospital – given renewed emphasis as a *place* in stanza 38's first line – gestures toward a centralized municipal mechanism of giving, such as Elizabeth's Poor Law or the hospitals of London, it nevertheless fails to resemble anything a contemporary audience would have encountered. Nor does it resemble the almshouses and chantries that characterized the charitable institutions of the earlier half of the sixteenth century. This includes Ireland, where monastic properties occupied a kind of limbo space between Roman Catholic and Protestant cultures. If Reformed doctrine managed to safely emphasize the transformative power of performing charitable works

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[127] This was a traditional means of "ordering" charity – love God first, and that will order one's love toward neighbors (see Augustine *De Doctrina Christiana* 1.4.4 and Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 1.20.2) – which was retained by Calvinists like Thomas Playfere in his 1593 spital sermon, *The Pathway to Perfection*.

under the umbrella of sanctification, the practical understanding of charity was devoted to

transforming the recipients of aid.[128] So the Elizabethan hospital was not a stable

repository of beadmen, but a teeming mass of human clay the community intended to mold

into a better image of God. Christ's Hospital was not merely an orphanage, for example,

but also an educational institution aimed at cultivating productive citizens of London, just

as Bridewell put the able-bodied poor to work, supposedly inculcating a positive ethos of

labor among the vagrant population. John Stow offers a glimpse of contemporary attitudes

to hospitals by way of a telling apposition when he describes Bridewell as "now an

Hospitall (or house of correction)."[129] The corrective elements of the House of Holiness

arrive earlier, and they are focused on Redcrosse's own internal moral trajectory. Here

there is little of such activity. In the ten stanzas that elaborate the various pursuits of these

Beadmen, there is no mention of the pesky vagabonds and false beggars who appear in *The*

Shepheardes Calender or *Mother Hubberd's Tale* or *A Viewe of the Present State of*

Ireland – and so many other contemporary literary works, sermons, and policies, for that

matter. He presents an uncomplicated vision of giving. Caelia helps only the "helplesse

poor" and the first beadsman only hosts those who cannot return his hospitality, but the

narrative seems otherwise unconcerned with sturdy beggars or vagrants. There is no

discussion of how one determines if someone has wrongfully asked for charity and what to

do in that scenario.

Nor does Spenser valorize poverty during this episode, which bears mentioning on

account of the repeated discussions of the hospital's monastic trappings. Indeed, he hardly

seems interested in characterizing the recipients of aid at all, devoting more energy to a

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[128] In many ways the Elizabethan hospital is a continuation of Marian policies, and in particular the influence of Cardinal Pole, whose continental experience prompted him to compare London's relative lack of charitable provision to the great hospitals of Rome, Bologna, and Milan. Later, Elizabeth "continued the Marian policy of intervening to improve the operation of individual hospitals," in Orme and Webster, 165.

[129] John Stow, *A Survey of London*, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 145.

critique of the social elite. Nearly every stanza related to a corporal work of mercy receives its own qualification, as a vein of satire courses through the "holy Hospitall." The first Beadman, who bears an initial resemblance to the porter of Robert Copland's *The Hye Way to the Spyttell Hous* (probably describing St. Bartholomew's), offers entertainment to all except those who can reciprocate, and one wonders if this includes the "founderesse" herself, who almost certainly gestures toward Elizabeth, a patroness of many of London's hospitals. The third beadsman offers clothing but manages also to censure those who wear "garments gay, / The plumes of pride, and wings of vanitie" (I.x.39). Prisoners without exception are relieved, with no distinctions based on their respective crimes (so this includes, one presumes, the imprisoned Jesuits who had arrived in England to reconvert the populace), and a discussion of sick people and Christian burial emphasizes the shared mortality of all that bear "Gods owne mould" (I.42), democratizing the experience of sickness and death. The final Beadsman looks after the orphans and widows, but his primary responsibility seems to be defending them from "the power of mighty men" who intend "their rightfull causes downe to tread" (I.x.43), which glances at corruption in the Court of Orphans. This is not quite estates satire or even clerical satire, but it is clearly rooted in a rich English poetic tradition of advocating for the poor. Spenser's holy hospital might not be a dusty relic of the medieval past but instead a vision of reform.

Besides the fact that his holy hospital is institutionalized in a manner that mitigates individual and spontaneous almsgiving, Spenser doggedly avoids supporting prevailing notions of charity. Perhaps that is not so remarkable, but in an age that seemed obsessed with the complicated nature of charitable giving, and especially with the distinction between "deserving poor" and vagrant beggars, it remains a surprise. Spenser himself consistently expresses concern for vagabonds, in *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Mother Hubberds Tale* and even in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, but here he consciously avoids the topic. "Their gates to all were open euermore" (I.x.36): Spenser removes the

object from his charitable dialectic, eschewing the contemporary practice of discriminatory almsgiving, which evaluated the recipient and then swung as if on a hinge, offering either discipline or relief. Discriminatory poor relief can encourage its own wrongful self-congratulation, and it also involves a complicated set of interpretive problems, whereas accommodating intention (and allowing some part to human will) actually simplifies the hermeneutical dilemma. It places enormous emphasis on a "cured conscience" – hence Redcrosse's protracted regime of penitential disciplines – but also reduces the fraught complications associated with discriminatory giving. It seems as if he uses the earlier rigor in the House of Holiness to facilitate a simplified program here.

It is clear Spenser worries over the "intents" of gift-giving. Earlier in the narrative, Spenser provides a similarly realistic treatment of material gifts when he introduces Kirkrapine, who was "Wont to robbe Churches of their ornaments, / And poore mens boxes of their due reliefe, / Which given was to them for good intents" (I.iii.17). Just as in the positive description of charity in Canto x, here the specific object of Spenser's ecclesial satire is difficult to determine. Given the obvious Romanist accoutrements of Kirkrapine's lover, Abessa, the reader might consider this a typical Protestant attack on papist forms of charity, particularly the manner in which monastic institutions supposedly diverted alms from the genuine poor.[130] This has been the conventional manner in which scholars read the episode. But Kirkrapine's Scottish name and iconoclastic behavior – disrobing "The holy Saints of their rich vestiments" (I.iii.17) among other things – might also suggest a critique of Presbyterianism, implying that puritan visions of ecclesial discipline potentially mask a sinister purpose.[131] The role of the lion, ostensibly a figure for royal prerogative,

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[130] This was customary anti-Romanist satire. See Kathryn Walls, "Spenser's Kirkrapine and John Foxe's Attack on Rome," *Notes and Queries* 31 (1984): 173 - 175. Gless notes how the Abessa-Corceca-Kirkrapine trio can be read as a satire on Roman religion through the lens of prevailing Protestant ideologies in *Interpretation and Theology*, 83-91.

[131] In *An almond for a parrat* (London: 1589), the pamphleteer, most likely Thomas Nashe, suggests that Presbyterians will use proceeds from the poor box to fund excursions to Geneva.

clearly represents some kind of secular interference in matters of church governance, a

phenomenon that often frustrated adherents of Genevan discipline as well as supporters of

Rome, especially since Elizabethan poor relief replaced deacons with civil officials in the

task of administering material charity.[132] But this scene has also been read persuasively as a

critique of the establishment, one which would have been endorsed by any puritan.

Kirkrapine's fornication with Ab-essa (absent) could represent the spiritual and material

vacuum in the Church of England among non-resident clergy, much in the way that Piers

condemns absenteeism in the *Maye* eclogue.[133] The text supports each of these readings,

and during the 1570s and 1580s partisans of every ecclesial faction censured their

opponents for engaging in a kind of church-robbery. Spenser thus deploys a purely

conventional satire of anti-charity but divorces his critique from the reductive application

of any one faction. The result is a complex, honest appraisal of sixteenth-century ecclesial

realities in England; there are robbers, Spenser suggests, creeping "by cunning sleights in

at the window" of each of these ecclesial edifices. But note that Spenser's focus is on the

"good intents" that have been disrupted by Kirkrapine, rather than the relative desert of

poor men and what precise relief is "due" them.

     In stanza 45, we reach the culmination of Spenser's description of material charity,

when Redcrosse is instructed "in euery good behest / And godly worke of Almes and

charitee" until he is perfect "from the first vnto the last degree." Here the knight is

described with scriptural language reserved for God or Christ – "from the first vnto the last

degree" – that consistently figures in a biblical scene of divine judgment, offering

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[132] Consider the response to the 1572 Poor Act by Walter Travers, who believed officers of poor relief ought to be called by vocation rather than professional promotion, in *A Full and Plain Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline* (Heidelburg, 1574): "Why had they rather that they should be cyvill then Ecclesiasticall Officers."

[133] Mother Mary Robert Falls, "Spenser's Kirkrapine and the Elizabethans," *Studies in Philology* 50:3 (1953): 457-475. See also Hume, 86-87.

suggestive evidence that Spenser might conceive of charity as justificatory.[134] Schiavoni rightly notes that the language seems hagiographical (apt for St. George, of course), and it offers more support to Harold Weatherby's argument that Spenser's work endorses a belief in *theosis* (the process of human divinization) promulgated by certain patristic thinkers.[135] The phrase could be intended merely as a type of hyperbole that conveys a sense of comprehension, like the Psalmic trope "from the east to the west" (Psalm 103). But even in this rapturous description of holiness, Spenser reserves an ironic hollow space: "His mortall life he learned had to frame / In holy righteousnesse, without rebuke or blame." Perhaps Spenser intends this alexandrine in earnest, but it seems a strangely self-conscious litotes, a grand neutral, as if the height of holy living consisted of the absence of blame. Throughout Book I and elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene*, moreover, we discover that righteous behavior *always* incurs rebuke and blame: we have already seen how the arid skepticism of Envie will accuse almsgivers of wanting faith; a few cantos later Duessa will interrupt Redcrosse's nuptials; Occasion will revile Guyon's temperate restraint; Ate will accuse Britomart of infidelity; Sclaunder will accuse Arthur and Amoret of lascivious behavior; Detraction and Enuy will accuse lawgivers like Artegal of cruelty; and the Blatant Beast will rend "the gentle Poets rime" (VI.xii.40). Indeed, it seems the only protection against such accusations is not the courteous actions of Calidore but the self-knowledge of Artegal: "But I that knew my selfe from perill free, / Did nought regard his malice nor his powre" (VI.i.9).

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[134] Consider Isaiah 41:4; Rev. 1:11; 21:6; 22:13. See the entry for 'alpha and omega' in *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), 32-33. Note also Thomas Churchyard's "Churchyards Charitie" (1595), which describes the virtue in similarly rapturous terms: "This charitie is first that fauour finds / And shall be last, that wins our worlds good will."

[135] Schiavoni, 182-3; In addition to *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, Weatherby expands his argument in "Spenser and the Sacraments," Reformation 6 (2002), 119-124.

Here too, as in the *Maye* eclogue and throughout Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser is thinking about his own poetry even as he discusses the problematic act of material charity. He uses the same verb – "frame" – to describe a righteous life and his own poetic project. In his letter to Raleigh, an epistle he writes specifically "for auoyding of gealous opinions and miscontructions" (714), he claims, "I may be perhaps encouraged, to frame the other part of polliticke vertues" (715). But as Spenser dramatizes so convincingly, in both *The Shepheardes Calender* and *The Faerie Queene*, Envie hates *all* good works, dismissing with equal malice the charitable gifts of alms and verse.

CHAPTER THREE:

"YOU KNOW THE USE OF RICHES": JONSON, CHARITABLE USE, AND LONDON COMMERCE

Satire, Catholicism, and Charity

Just over two decades after Spenser published *The Shepheardes Calender*, Nicholas

Breton recycles a phrase from Piers's own lips in order to articulate a dramatically different

sentiment in *No Whippinge, nor tripping: but a kinde friendly Snipping*:

> Who toucheth pitch and tarre cannot be cleane.
> A wilfull wit doth worke it selfe much woe.
> In euery course tis good to keepe a meane:
> And being well, to liue contented so. [1] (631-4)

Breton uses the same pitch and tar conceit that Piers employs, but he directs his speech

against satirical poets not conservative clerics, and responds to the Bishops' Ban of satire in

1599 instead of the Admonition controversy, expressing the ideal conformist stance: leave

reform to ecclesial officers. Although the context has shifted and in this case the sentiments

have reversed, writers continue to debate the proper method of galvanizing and shaping

communal reform.

I wish to devote the following several pages to a close examination of the Whipper

pamphlets, since the controversy serves as a hinge between the respective focuses of these

two chapters, punctuating my discussion of Spenser and introducing a number of issues

pertinent to Ben Jonson. This is predominantly a secular debate about the relative merits

of a particular mode of poetry, which offers a fascinating perspective into the shifting

literary and ecclesial landscapes of Elizabethan England, but the role and responsibility of

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[1] All references to the Whipper controversy are from *The Whipper Pamphlets*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1951).

satire also remains relevant to larger questions of communal reform and the proper sphere of charitable admonition that Spenser dramatizes in *The Shepheardes Calender* and *The Faerie Queene*. Debora Shuger's excellent summary of the pamphlets has already examined the manner in which "the theological basis of privacy—its felt relation to charity norms—is made explicit," (146-7), but in continuing to treat issues from the previous chapter, I want to consider charity as a public as well as private imperative, and place the Whipper pamphlets in the context of ecclesial and social reform.[2] This aligns satirists rather uncomfortably with various types of religious nonconformists. Elizabethan formal verse satire, though consciously classical in its generic conventions, offers a literary analogue for religious admonition on account of its similar enterprise of reforming an individual or community, and since the Whipper exchange was a response to a ban on satire made by episcopal mandate and known generally as the Bishops' ban, it is predictable that specific vestiges of the Admonition controversy appear throughout the exchange. Numerous religious references suggest that both satirists and their opponents recognized and exploited the similarities between satirical discourse and ecclesial controversies that remained relevant to the Church of England at the turn of the century. Perhaps it should be no surprise that so many satirists later became career clergymen.

Indeed, much like Field and Wilcox and Cartwright, the early modern satirist, despite his cynical posture, can sometimes appear to be an optimistic or even hopelessly naive writer, seemingly assured of his vocation's righteousness and confident of a positive reception. But just as Gregory Kneidel and others have shown those Presbyterian polemicists to be sophisticated rhetoricians, a closer inspection of Elizabethan satire reveals an obsessive awareness of reader response, as writers anxiously anticipate the

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[2] Debora Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 146-7.

prospect of a malicious reception and attribute the potential misreading to envy.[3] Early

modern satirists repeatedly perform a variety of rhetorical gymnastics in order to defend

their work against accusations of malice. Some choose to frame their admonition as a

medicinal purgative or disciplinary reform – think of Thomas Drant's *Medicinable Morall*

curing immorality or John Marston's *Scourge of Villainy* whipping vice from the body of

the commonweal – and others invoke the genre of *speculum* literature, presenting a textual

"glass" to readers who might recognize their own sinful misbehavior and thereby accuse

themselves,. By virtue of these and other defenses constructed by satirists, a supposedly

malicious interpretation simultaneously authenticated the satire (by reinforcing the

viciousness of the age) and invalidated the critique of satire (by suggesting that envy

prompted the accuser).

There are any number of possible explanations why satirists felt compelled to adopt

these strategies, not least of which is the fear of political censorship, since there was no

officially sanctioned role for the satirist, whose relationship to political and religious

authorities was obviously fraught with various complications. But the work of Shuger and

Cyndia Susan Clegg should remind us that such anxieties were not necessarily generated by

the fear of censorship or punitive retribution by state authorities.[4] Indeed, Clegg

underscores the contingency of political circumstance and primacy of self-interest (rather

than ideology) that contributed to the period's inconsistent theories of licensing and rare

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[3] It became a satirical set piece to defy Envy. See Joseph Hall's introductory poem to
Virgedemiarum, "His Defiance to Enuie," and a poem by the same name prefixed to T.M.'s *Micro-Cynicon*, or Ben Jonson's prologue to *Poetaster*, which is delivered by Envy.

[4] A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to the topic of censorship in Tudor and Stuart
England. For a work that emphasizes the state's ideological censorship, see Christopher Hill,
"Censorship and English Literature," *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill: Writing and
Revolution in 17th-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 32-72;
Annabel Patterson focuses on the artistic ingenuity such strictures prompted among contemporary
writers in *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern
England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan
England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural
Sensibility*; Richard McCabe provides an excellent summary of the Bishop Ban's relation to
contemporary satire in "Elizabethan Satire and the Bishops' Ban of 1599," *YES* 11 (1981): 188-93.

occasions of censorship, and Shuger observes that early modern authorities appeared less disturbed by the seditious or subversive potential of libel than the manner in which such transgressive language often incited violence, encouraging comparably aggressive responses from the accused and his relatives or friends. Consequently, approaches to censorship during the period that focus entirely on political ideology ignore the complex intersection between public and private social values that produced so much tension for both writers and readers. Literary imperatives further complicate the picture. Lawrence Manley, who observes a similar urgency in the postscripts and proems of verse satire and the prologues and epilogues of comical satire in the theatre, suggests that the satirist was attempting (and failing) to shape a complicated cultural aesthetic, noting "a genuine inability to define a stable style or to substantiate the satirist's judgment by appeal to a sustaining social terrain."[5] Satirists, then, were not merely concerned with navigating their work past pre-press censors in order to insinuate seditious political values (though they did this too, no doubt), but rather consciously fashioned their work for individual readers with the problem of charitable interpretation as one of its central preoccupations. The satirical mode in late Elizabethan England was not merely fascinated by reader reception – it relied on it.

In addition to providing an intriguing set of contemporary opinions about the role of satire, the Whipper pamphlets also place Ben Jonson's early dramatic work in a more specific context. Jonson's debt to formal satire is clear, as he appropriates a number of the thematic subjects and rhetorical strategies employed by Elizabethan satirists. Although Jonson had recently converted to Roman Catholicism while in prison in 1598, his work stubbornly resists any reading that maps his religious faith onto his work, in part because

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[5] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 378. A fuller quote from Manley seems pertinent: "The rhetoric of shared ethos is undermined by a rhetoric of isolation – by the tendency of apostrophes to moral abstractions to replace social address, by the degeneration of second-person confreres into third-person targets, by the decline of intimate wit into declamation."

he is so rigorously classical. It is a surprise, then, that the most explicitly theological section of the initial Whipper pamphlet by John Weever directly addresses Jonson, instructing the "humourist" with a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13 and a lecture on the true nature of good works. This suggestive detail should remind us that Jonson's notions of charity might have differed significantly from the majority of his literary peers on account of his confessional allegiance. The central accusation Weever levies against Jonson – that he was profiteering from supposed efforts at reform and exploiting the overlap between charity and self-interest – will serve as the main focus of this chapter, as Jonson was obviously fascinated by the problematic intercourse between charity and commerce.

In some ways this chapter, which examines charity in the context of commercial exchange, returns to a central problem of the previous discussion of religious polemic: can charity stabilize and govern the vagaries of exchange. As Spenser dramatizes so memorably in the *Maye* eclogue, there is a kind of reflexivity inherent to charitable admonition – those who offer admonition are dependent on the recipient's interpretation of the charitable intent – so the discourse acquires more dimensions than a simple spectrum that links charity on one end and malice on the other. Instead, considerations include the respective charity or malice of both admonisher and audience, and the only successful encounter of this kind requires what might be called charity to the second degree, an ideal relationship between writer and reader. If a recognition of charitable intent begets a charitable reading, a different kind of reciprocity was more likely to emerge in satirical discourse: a supposition of malice generally provoked a malicious reading, and often generated real physical violence in return.[6] A comparable phenomenon governs dramatic discourse, one

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[6] John Weever presents a hypothetical scenario, for example, in which the satirist ponders how to reform a friend who persists in his immoral behavior: "At last I pend me all his vices downe, / Lest I should not make reckoning of the least: / And goe and crye them all about the towne, / Setting him out for some strange manlike beast" (535-544). Then "Now say, for Gods sake say, / Whether you think this wil reclayme my friend, / Or may not straight incense him, at that may, / To badder course" (553-556).

that Jonson repeatedly engages in his work, as the delicate negotiation between playwright and audience is further destabilized by the role of performance and the commercial underpinnings of the theatrical enterprise. The Whipper pamphlets offer an untidy but relevant transition between chapters, as each of these writers examine the various opportunities and obstacles – in regard to both public reform and private profit – presented by the publication of satire, although none of these writers were nearly as commercially successful as Jonson or as adamant about maintaining a posture of moral reform.

Each of the Whipper participants responds in a specific manner to the Bishops' Ban, and to satire more generally, apparently motivated by some combination of genuine feeling, professional or political opportunism, and poetic rivalry. Weever's work, which initiated the exchange by attacking the satirist (presumably John Marston), the epigrammatist (possibly Everard Guilpin), and the humourist (certainly Jonson), attempts to carve out a particular space for state-sponsored satire that places fraternal admonition under the aegis of public authority. That is, Weever recognizes the important role satire can perform in effecting moral reform, but he likewise acknowledges its capacity for violence if practiced by the wrong individual. Nicholas Breton's *No Whippinge*, on the other hand, indicts all satirists – and that includes Weever – for usurping the role of religious and political authorities, and he exhorts poets to ignore the topic of vice altogether, which is better left to the priesthood (one might call this a conformist stance). Guilpin's stance is less consistent. At times he seems to concede Weever's position that uncharitable expression is dangerous and immoral, though he asserts, in the rough, obscure style characteristic of Elizabethan satire, that satirists actually perform a crucial type of fraternal or even parental admonition. But Guilpin never maintains this stance for long, always returning to an idealistic position that associates satire with a kind of *furor poeticus*, a vatic privilege based on the satirist's access to Truth, which supersedes any communal obligations related to

charitable conduct. So, the short-lived Whipper controversy yielded three distinct responses by poets to the Bishops' Ban: one that attempted to sanctify and empower the satirist as poet-prophet; another that proscribed satire altogether on account of its antisocial aggression and misappropriation of moral authority; and a third that envisioned a compromise between those extremes, a privileged version of satire practiced only by an artistic elite that received sanction from the political and religious orders.

Breton, who expresses the most adamant disapproval of satire, seems especially concerned by the literary mode's impact on a tenuous social fabric. Perhaps that is why so much of his work feels passive, like an elaborate apology, just the sort of model charitable reproof that might receive its own charitable reading. Desiring a kind of negative reciprocity – you ignore my faults and I will ignore yours – Breton's prefatory epistle carefully distances his work from the fray, even as he wittily refers to Jonson's humours: "Now for my selfe, I proteste that humor of Charitie, that I wish to finde at all their handes that see and will reprooue my folly: for I am none of the seauen wise men, and for the eight, I knowe not where to seeke him" (4). The literary topicality is suave and unforced, and Breton's stylistic sophistication is a real advantage – his rhyme royal stanza, with an initial envelope rhyme that eventually resolves itself in couplets, embodies a progressive move toward harmony – but *No Whippinge* struggles to contend with the strident voices of Weever and Guilpin, who employ matching stanzaic structures in the tradition of flyting contests or answer poems. Breton feels less like a participant in the agonistic exchange than a detached observer. Whereas they attempt to shrink the distance between writer and reader, ultimately concluding their works with a physical skirmish, Breton's decorous verse maintains a cool distance that is ultimately ineffectual. The submissive attitude endorsed by *No Whippinge*, which gestures at a political quietism even Whitgift would hesitate to endorse, illustrates the problematic alternative to satire or admonition. It seems wholly appropriate that the publication of Breton's poem immediately precedes the most heated

phase of the Poet's War, as well as Guilpin's inflammatory response to Weever: he reforms no one.

Nevertheless, Breton's cautious verse admirably captures some of the specific problems plaguing any discourse of reformation:

> It is a course of little charitie,
> To find out faults, and fall vpon them so;
> And tis a wit of singularitie,
> That perfect wisedom doth but little show:
> Which thinks it giues the foole the ouer-throw,
> And might haue bene farre better exercised,
> Then in the folly that it hath suprized.   (281-7)

The careful tone of moderation is announced by the litotes in the stanza's first line, which the fourth verse reinforces, aligning charity and wisdom in a policy of restraint that neither finds out faults nor shows them. Note, by way of contrast, the contestatory spirit inherent to the "wit of singularitie," which, in its opposition to the communal solidarity of charity (and unlike Thomas Browne's preferred singularity), falls on folly in an ambush and overthrows it. Even this assertion, however, is diluted by the diplomatic conditionals of the final couplet, and here Breton probably is responding tactfully to Weever's own aggressive writing, which exercises the same folly – satire – it intends to overthrow. Breton offers little argument about the presence of vice in England and the need for reform, but he claims the process needs to occur within the scope and sanction of established communal norms. The poem refuses to allege whether or not church authorities will be able to effect reform, but it states unequivocally that no other entity should make the attempt:

> The Preachers charge is but to chide for sinne,
> While Poets steppes are short of such a state:
> And who an others office enters in,
> May hope of loue, but shalbe sure of hate.
> 'Tis not a time offences to relate.   (43-7)

Breton notes the important distinction between correction meted out by public authorities and fraternal or private admonition, but he is also responding to the Bishops' ban – "'tis not a time offences to relate" – recognizing the political contingency of the moment. This is

a pragmatic statement acknowledging the futility of the entire satirical enterprise, which alienates the audience it intends to reform.

If Breton resists the idea of using violence to end violence, the anonymous writer of a commendatory poem prefacing Weever's *Whippinge* explicitly celebrates that same conundrum, ignoring Weever's apparent hypocrisy: "Then view him well, that with impartiall eye, / Dares scourge the Scourger of base villany." The poem applauds the forceful critique of satire and libel in *The Whippinge*, apparently considering Weever's testimony uncomplicated by his own participation in the literary mode he purports to condemn. That is, the poet recognizes that Weever employs satire to attack the satirist for doing exactly what Weever intends to do, whip "base villany." Placing to the side biographical concerns, since Weever – if he is the Whipper – wrote his own share of satirical literature (as well as epigrams), the inherent irony of Weever's enterprise neither illegitimates his project nor obscures his message. Instead, the paradox of using satire to attack satire underscores the currency of charitable admonition in early modern England (a phenomenon Shuger discusses brilliantly), and demonstrates how much the Elizabethan satiric mode borrows from religious discourse. Indeed, Weever places the concept of charitable admonition at the center of his allegorical narrative, as Church exhorts her sister Commonwealth to punish the satirist, who threatens the communal stability: "Dutie enioyn's me to ioyne in with you; / For they are blest, that labour to represse / the course of sinne, and curse of sinfulnesse" (112-4). Even here, however, amid the sophisticated parison, internal rhyme, and puns, the first line of this particular stanza – "Dutie enioyn's me to ioyne in with you" – might as well be Weever's implicit confession that he joins in the satirist's dubious company. As he frames his work in terms of dutiful conformity to state policy and religion, Weever gestures at the same charitable imperative expressed by Roman Catholic polemicists and Presbyterian elders alike throughout the sixteenth-century, which obliges an individual to respond to sinful behavior with loving discipline.

In fact, Weever uses essentially the same argument as satirists like Guilpin to legitimize his own project, carefully styling his critique as fraternal admonition. Weever, for example, draws the epigrammatist and humourist to him, creates an atmosphere of intimate friendship, and reminds them to receive his speech in the same loving terms with which it was supposedly fashioned:

> Come hither now, friend Epigrammatist,
> And doe not wring my words to wrong my speech,
> Harken thou likewise, captious Humourist,
> And heare that mildly, what I friendly teach:
> For those that speake in loue and charitie,
> Should both beleeued and beloued be.   (619-624)

This, just before the speaker lays on with his rod "not for hate, but loue" (993). How different then is Weever's satirist, speaking in love and charity, from Guilpin's defense in *The Whipper Whipped*, which claims that the "friendly Satyrist" merely provides parental correction:

> Doth one amisse, or doth the Child offend?
> Shall not the Fathers care correct that Child,
> First by perswasions kindly to amende,
> And gentle speeches, wordes with fauour milde?
>   Will not this do, and shall he spare the body
>   Of that faire Stripling? Go to, you are a noddy.   (61-66)

Both poets suggest they are following common sense, performing an accepted method of discipline inherited from social custom. Guilpin, who underscores the rationality of his enterprise, articulates the very process of admonition that Travers envisions for congregational elders, who initiate the process of reform with private persuasion and, if the misbehavior continues, amplify the punishment.

Anticipating the satirist's claim to be writing for the public good, Weever notes that such fraternal correction should remain in the private sphere. He invokes paraphrases 1 Corinthians 13, and then declares:

> Want ye not loue, that with malignant spight,
> Vncouer'd all the fraile infirmities
> Of your weake brethren, to the wide worlds sight?

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> Want ye not loue, that all men do despise,
> And would extort from others open shame,
> Your famous glorie and your glorious fame? (805-810).

During the Admonition controversy and other debates over adiaphora, puritan arguments often appropriated this scriptural text, claiming that ceremonial aspects of church discipline threaten communal harmony by unduly testing the consciences of "weake brethren," but in a secular context the passage comes perilously close to accommodating moral delinquency. The rationale has flipped, and rather than supporting stringent moral criteria charity is enlisted to suppress any moral voice at all. Weever does not want to stifle all moral claims, just those that are not state-sponsored.

The real distinction between Weever's verse and the satire it critiques, then, is less a matter of method than it is political authority. He suggests as much when, at the heart of his poem, he appeals to the statutory laws and royal prerogative as evidence of satire's misappropriation of power:

> Our noble Princesse (Lord preserue her Grace)
> Made godly laws to guide this Common-weale,
> And hath appointed Officers in place,
> By those her Lawes with each offence to deale:
> Well look the rowles, no office ouerskippe,
> And see if you can find the Satyrshippe.   (577-82)

The stanza's final word could easily be misread as eldership, which would fit the meter, and it seems relevant, as Weever's political reference gestures at the controversy over elders and admonition. He tacitly suggests that satirists threaten the alliance between church and state knit together by "our noble Princesse," whose royal prerogative underwrites the episcopal superstructure and ought to stifle complaint (there is no mention of Parliament here). Of course, Weever has already obtained the Satyrship for himself. Earlier in the poem he asserts the primacy of state authority but only as a vehicle to legitimize his own satiric function, which he claims for himself by way of ambivalent syntax, when Church and Commonwealth "both assign'd, and bade me streight prouide, / To take vp Satyre, and take

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down his pride" (149-50). Does the Whipper apprehend (and take up) Satyre and humble him, or does the Whipper assume (and take up) the role of Satyre in order to humble him? It is difficult to tell. The fantasy of serving as state-licensed satirist may seem farfetched in the wake of the Marprelate controversy, but perhaps no contemporary artist other than Jonson is so audacious in associating his own satirical reform with court sanction. Indeed, Weever goes further than Jonson by suggesting that he speaks for the Church as well. Weever supposedly possessed Puritan sympathies, so it is fascinating to think of him as a conservative ecclesial voice, but it makes more sense if Weever intended to position himself within the Church as an advocate for reform, as Honigmann tentatively suggests.[7]

Weever's ambition is not lost on Guilpin, who accuses his opponent of careerism, employing arguments similar to those levied at Jonson by Marston and Dekker near the end of The Poet's War. What is fascinating, however, is the manner in which that assumed careerism manifests itself, as Guilpin portrays Weever in the ceremonial accoutrement of the episcopacy: "And thus I argue, holding argument / Against the proud aspiring insolent / Apparreld in an imbry vestament, / As if within obliuions continent (38-41). Guilpin casts doubt on the integrity of Weever's enterprise, portraying the Whipper as an ambitious, avaricious establishment figure whose own political credentials are suspect, as his previous political offenses (presumably Weever's own satires and epigrams) require "oblivion" or legal amnesty. Not only is he dressed in a vestment, invoking one of Elizabethan England's most incendiary topics of the previous half-century, but the phonetic misuse of almory, imbry, suggests that Weever is misappropriating funds that should be distributed more

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[7] E.A.J. Honigmann, *John Weever: A Biography of a Literary Associate of Shakespeare and Jonson* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1987), 17-20. A recent article by William Jones, which suggests that Weever's epigrams and Whipper pamphlet were at least partially motivated by Puritan anti-theatrical sentiment, presents an even more complicated picture of Weever. See "'Say They Are Saints Although That Saints They Show Not': John Weever's 1599 Epigrams to Marston, Jonson, and Shakespeare," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73:1 (2010): 83-98.

generally.[8] This, of course, was a typical Presbyterian strategy in polemic, though Guilpin seems less interested in the precise claims made by Cartwright and Travers on behalf of a reformed deaconry. Instead, using a metaphor that evokes the problems of almsgiving and ecclesial discipline, he insinuates that Weever is manipulating charitable reading from within the church establishment to further his own private glory.[9] The charge is not an arbitrary one. In *The Whippinge*, Weever disparages the satirist's method as "the naked beggary of a thred-bare wit, / To get an almes of commendations by: / For each should earne the price of praise indeed, / And doing so, not one should need to need" (789-92). Weever states that satire should not rely on charity for its success, but rather earn the reader's respect in the literary marketplace, a fairly disingenuous claim since he seems peculiarly intent on receiving commendation for his own "charitable" endeavor. So Guilpin responds in kind, interpreting Weever's corrective discipline as a type of currency for which he must offer a reciprocal exchange: "What so you chaunce to lend without request, / I will repay't with double interest" (239-40). Elsewhere Guilpin castigates Weever's role as a beadle, a menial parish official associated with the disciplinary features of poor relief:

> If this will then force a reformation,
> Why shall I feare to say a knaue's a knaue?
> What shall I stand in dread of coniuration,
> Because Vntrusse hath from his duskie Caue
>   Sent a leane writhen Beadle all in haste,
>   To lay the mantion of the Satyres waste.   (217-222)

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[8] Davenport notes the "odd image" of an ambry in *The Whipper Pamphlets: Part II*, suggesting that it must possess special significance, though he does not offer a specific explanation. An ambry might refer to an almory, or repository of alms, since the two words had merged by the 1590s, but its proper term refers to a church closet for housing sacramental vessels, vestments, books, and other features of ecclesial ceremony. See the *OED* for "ambry," second and third definitions.

[9] As the previous chapter discusses, the potential hypocrisy of charitable expression was a topic of interest in religious polemic. Contemporary satirists were similarly frustrated by the phenomenon. See, for example, Samuel Rowlands, *The letting of humours blood in the head-vaine* (London: 1600), *Satyre 5*, in which he lambastes those who claim to "Haue charitie, auoyde contentious strife, / Oft he speakes thus, that nere did good in's life."

Here is that incredible optimism of the satirist, who can "force a reformation"; here too is the inherent violence of his method, which does not hesitate to hurl insults if they are truthful. "This" presumably refers to satire, since Guilpin has just dramatized a scene in which an erstwhile malefactor experiences a moral alteration after encountering the satirist. But Guilpin's message is clear: when it comes to reformation, the ends justify the means.

So, in this discourse about the proper method of charitable admonition, Breton argues that *who* articulates the need for reform – namely, the clergy – matters more than how it is expressed, and Guilpin, after a nominal gesture toward charitable norms, ultimately ignores any moral imperative and focuses solely on whether or not reformation occurs as a consequence. Neither writer fully engages the most forceful claims of Weever, who, despite his self-aggrandizing project, seems to recognize the complex issues at stake even if cogent expression escapes him. Weever critiques the satirist's intention (which he claims is glory rather than reform), attacks the satirist's method (which he claims is maliciously violent), and censures the satirist's inefficacy (since he claims that sin still exists). But all of these claims are simultaneously undercut by a pervasive irony. Weever's own intention is almost unapologetically ambitious, his method of reform violently exposes private individuals to public shame, and, given the prompt replies from Breton and Guilpin, his successful reform remains dubious. Whether or not the irony is conscious seems inconsequential to the larger point: by participating in the phenomenon he critiques, Weever dramatizes the difficulty of balancing professional literary aspirations with entrenched social and political imperatives, as his satire simultaneously asserts and attempts to constrain the cultural impact of popular literature. He tries to fashion a paradigm in which the inventive self-promotion inherent to Elizabethan satire might coexist comfortably within a communal framework, even if he must portray the imagined "Satyreship" as a dream. Consequently, the state authorities Weever purports to protect function more as an imposition, a constant reminder of the complicated realities of the

literary marketplace. The plurality of religious sympathies only contributes to the confusion of these pamphlets. In this relatively minor exchange that was prompted by ecclesial censorship, a writer with puritan sympathies, Weever, is accused of being a prelate's lackey; a recusant playwright, Jonson, is ostensibly accused of Jesuit chicanery; one satirist, Guilpin, proudly declares his private access to revelation; and another, Marston, ultimately ends up a quiet cleric in the Church of England.

A number of these tangled ideologies and imperatives are relevant to Jonson on account of the various accusations Weever levies at the dramatist. These allegations overlap at times, and they are never marshaled into a coherent indictment, but they all gesture at problems of charitable reform. In particular, Weever focuses on Jonson's self-interest, censuring him for, among other things, Roman Catholicism (and merit-based works), brazen commercialism (and profitable theatrical works), and his presumption (which works by self-promotion).

The religious aspect of this critique is perhaps the most interesting. When Weever finally focuses on "Monsieur Humorist," he adopts a concentrated theological emphasis that is absent elsewhere in his work. Whereas Weever combats Marston and Guilpin predominantly with political and social values, Weever's dispute with Jonson centers on religious discourse.[10] Near the end of his poem, Weever warns:

> Ye may be taken, and I feare ye will,
> For Seminaries of seditious strife,
> Who through deuotion seeke diuision still,
> And the subuersion of our quiet life.
> Fie, doe not thinke the Pope can pardon this.
> Man cannot license men to doe amisse.

Ostensibly Weever directs this stanza to all three writers, but the accusation was especially pertinent to Jonson, a recent convert to Roman Catholicism for whom the name of a spy

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[10] In *The pathway to perfection*, Thomas Playfere describes puritans as "humorists," a rich irony considering Jonson's future critiques of puritanism.

like Pooly would remain a byword for intrusive state authority. As Donne's *Satire IV* dramatizes, there were no idle threats of being "taken," literally or metaphorically, as one among other Jesuit priests who through "deuotion seeke diuision still" (one of Weever's more sophisticated phrases, with its alliterative and syllabic balance embodying the division fostered by seminaries). Indeed, the final couplet's direct address and flippant disregard for papal authority seems like a cheap shot aimed right at Jonson, and it suggests that contemporaries perceived signs of Roman Catholicism present in Jonson's early drama. It also underscores the obstacles inherent to contemporary public discourse, particularly for Jonson, since any critical remarks could be interpreted as supposed signals of religious nonconformity and political sedition.

Earlier in the epistle dedicatory "to the vayne-glorious," Weever ignores this dangerous topic for other personal matters, emphasizing the pecuniary motives that undermine Jonson's supposed moral reform: "*Opus & vsus* put you to such a pinch, that you made sale of your Humours to the Theater, and there plaid Pee boh with the people in your humour, then out of your humour." Here Weever is having a great deal of condescending fun, recycling a favorite phrase of Robert Greene's that was memorably employed by Nashe in *Pierce Penilesse*, and suggesting that the supposed malice of Jonson's intentions is mitigated by the poverty that induced him to write for the professional stage.[11] In addition to the latent classism, which casts the theatre as a professional recourse for impoverished wits, Weever accuses Jonson of exploiting communal problems for purposes of entertainment – "plaid Pee Boh with the people" – and characterizes his comedy of humors as so much merchandise to sell. The unrelentingly

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[11] See, for example, *Greenes, Groats-worth of Witte* (London: William Wright, 1592), as well as Nashe's oft-mentioned line: "I would be ashamde of it, if *Opus* and *Vsus* were not knocking at my doore twentie times a weeke when I am not within." See *The Unfortunate Traveler and Other Works*, ed. J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 56.

personal assault continues, as Weever refers to Jonson's variety of legal troubles, "guilty of many other things" from *The Isle of Dogs* fiasco to his duel with Gabriel Spencer:

> For though you were guilty of many other things, yet I dare say, you were altogether without guilt at that time, notwithstanding I suppose you would haue written for loue, and not for money: but I see you are one of those that if a man can finde in his purse to giue them presently, they can finde in their hearts to loue him euerlastingly.

Note how Weever makes a distinction between professional literature and patronage, as he posits a mutually exclusive dichotomy between writing for love and writing for money. Although his understanding of the phenomenon is more sophisticated, Jonson is clearly fascinated by this dichotomy as well, and his dramatic work examines various ways in which the cooperative relationship between love and money can be abused. Nevertheless, it is fascinating to think of Jonson as a slave to fashion or a pen for hire, which seems to be Weever's implication: "I know but few but are corriuals with you in the loue of siluer."

These material motives are dropped in the actual poem, although at times Weever seems to conflate Jonson's commercialized dramatic works with theological notions of salvific merit, as in his fascinating lecture on good works: "Shew your good deeds; but they are not to show: / And, though they were, they would not profit ye; / For doing good, is not sufficient now" (879-881). Weever repeatedly emphasizes the unprofitable essence of good intentions – elsewhere he claims, "your good meaning little profites now, / Vnlesse that ye in action do it show" – and his repeated command to "shew" gestures at the theatrical context of Jonson's works. But Weever's focus remains decidedly theological. He seems to admit, provisionally at least, a volitional aspect to charitable works, and, for an antagonist of Rome, he places enormous value on external forms of piety, although this is similarly characteristic of Puritan leanings. Although Weever employs a suggestively Calvinist idiom to discuss good works, using phrases like "not sufficient" and "first deprau'd," the evidence that detracts from Jonson's merit ultimately appears to be poor performance: "Consider now what first deprau'd your mind; / It anger seemes, mixt with vaine-gloriousnesse, / If

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trees by fruit, and fruit by taste we finde: / The bitter nature of your speech is such, / And then the glory taken in't as much" (892-94). This entire episode sounds like a garbled version of the scriptural passage Weever channels most here, the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus paradoxically lambastes good actions performed for the wrong intentions in Matthew 6 but also claims to know intentions by good works in Matthew 7.[12] Complicating matters, Weever attempts to insert classical notions of heroism with a theology of good works, "Sith euer the most Heroike purposes / Are easly thought, but are not done with ease." The long passage begins by addressing Jonson's shortcomings but culminates in a bizarre stanza or "proofe" on the general nature of good works:

> In doing good, a man may badly do;
> Because good deeds ill done do turne to nought;
> For doing good, it must be well done to;
> Good done, doth no good, not done as it ought:
> One may do good, and yet do euill still;
> For good must be well done, or else it's ill.   (883-88)

What, precisely, does Weever's incredibly labored, tautological disquisition of the relation between good intentions, good methods, and good results serve? Is he striking an ironic blow at Jonson's Roman Catholicism and its emphasis on external deeds? Or is this a strange manifestation of Calvinist pessimism? Perhaps he is gesturing at a kind of consequentialism here? Or a clumsy attempt at paradox? Whether or not Weever intends to explain Christian ethics in rational or mysterious terms, it results in confusion. Neither classical notions of heroic virtue nor conventional Christian theology is sufficient to articulate the problem. Shortly thereafter Weever attempts to provide a positive instance of moral reformation, but ultimately is forced to abandon his attempt, frustrated by its

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[12] Consider also Thomas Cranmer's *Homily on Good Works*, which attempts to evaluate good works by a similar emphasis on intention and consequence (and likewise cites Matthew 6-7): "For good deedes bee not measured by the factes theimselfes, and so disseuered from vices, but by the endes and intentes for the whiche thei bee doen." See *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547)*, ed. Ronald Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 104.

impossibility, choosing disciplinary violence instead, to "Correct ye sharpely, not for hate, but loue" (993).

Drama, Commerce, and Charity

> My noble Lord, they deale not charitably, Who are too witty in another mans Workes, and vtter, some times, theyre owne malicious Meanings, vnder our Wordes. I protest to your Honor, and call God to Testemony ... I haue so attempred my stile, that I haue giuen no cause to any good Man of Greife; and, if to any ill, by touching at any generall vice, it hath alwayes bene wth a regaurd, and sparing of perticular persons.

<div align="right">Jonson's letter to Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, 1605[13]</div>

Weever's "whipping" would not be the last time Jonson was accused of malicious practices related to satire. But whereas Jonson never responded explicitly to Weever's allegations, he did articulate an elaborate and meticulous defense of the moral principles underpinning his artistic project less than four years later, imprisoned and in danger of mutilation for his part in the production of *Eastward, Ho!*. Here, as elsewhere in Jonson's life and work, we encounter the fascinating and complex intersection between the worlds of prince and public and poet, as Jonson attempts to negotiate and reshape the respective authorities vested in the poet and his readership. Like Weever and Guilpin, he reserves some power for the poet, but he also claims to have followed charitable norms Breton would endorse. Even in dire circumstances, Jonson summons to his aid literary precedents in Martial and Erasmus, pronouncing his own sophisticated notion of literary decorum, one that protects his claims to innocence even as it fashions a strong independence for the author.[14] Essentially, he contends that accusations of slander redound on any audience which has willfully misinterpreted his work's meaning, a convenient excuse for any writer whose work might potentially offend individual readers or state authorities.

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[13] Ben Jonson, *Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford and Simpson, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 194-5.

[14] Jonson imitates the rhetorical defenses Martial and Erasmus employ in the respective prefaces to their *Epigrams* and *Praise of Folly*.

It is a conventional defense of the satirist, who claims to attack "a generall vice" while sparing vicious individuals, but Jonson marshals a few fascinating additions to his defense. First, he subtly gestures at a type of literary ownership – they're *his* works, *his* words (and Chapman's, presumably), *his* style, but *their* malicious meanings – as if he could separate the concrete substance of language from its other figurative associations. Jonson adds a further defense, couched in a parenthetical aside that has titillated generations of scholars, explaining, "The cause ... is (the words irk me that our fortune hath necessitated us to so despised a course) a play, my lord." It is a calculated admission that carries much weightier implications than mere snobbery: by indicating his own reluctance to participate in a professional trade "so despised" for exploiting incendiary politics and personal libel for commercial gain, among other things, Jonson attempts to distance himself from the whole business. The neutral abstract "cause," in either its legal or its Aristotelian sense, removes Jonson and Chapman in this matter from the specter of agency, suggesting that their only fault was becoming involved in a suspect profession. He repeats the word later, claiming that he has "given no cause to any good man of Griefe," reminding Salisbury that he has "attempred" his style to accommodate the theatre, moderating any potential excesses and exerting regulatory control over his work.

For all his high-minded literary ethics, Jonson occupies a tenuous sort of middle ground, and he recognizes the implicit vulnerability of his position. Writing and reading is a kind of exchange, as he notes, a delicate negotiation that can go awry if either writer or reader refuses to "deale charitably."[15] The phrase is a perfect blend of commercial and moral imperatives, at once conjuring up associations with "doling" out material charity even as it acknowledges the importance of charity as a condition for "dealing" in the

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[15] For a recent study that examines Jonson's relationship with his audience, which he often imagined in terms of an implicit contract, see Luke Wilson, *Theaters of Intention* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 68-113.

literary marketplace.[16] Note how Jonson's imagined process of misinterpretation takes advantage of this inherent reciprocity, as the uncharitable reader slips malicious meanings back into a text, or rather *under* it, performing a process of simultaneous utterance, as if both writer and reader were speaking. A malicious audience is not merely a passive recipient but able to invade the text. In an unexpected move, Jonson associates this phenomenon with wit, a mental faculty most often mentioned during the period in a positive context, as a synonym for rational intelligence.[17] Wit was as difficult to define in the early modern period as it is now, but most definitions agree with C.S. Lewis that wit serves "to distinguish; to point at this, and therefore not at that."[18] The perceptive faculty deployed by Jonson's supposed accusers does just the opposite, however, purposefully conflating terms to produce a kind of malicious obfuscation. As elsewhere in Jonson, it seems to be a problem of excess: too much wit is dangerous; reading "too wittily" is uncharitable. Perhaps this is a nod to the growing sophistication of the London literary market, which, as a result of its demand for satire and libel, employed an overactive wit in faultily associating certain characters of his play with actual personages. Of course, Jonson's own literary productions trafficked in satirical wit, often declaiming "same times" against the supposedly witless spectacles purveyed by rival dramatists. Here he is not explicitly engaging a consumer culture or any other specific aspect of business, but Jonson does gesture at an awkward partnership between charity and market economics that he feels has been violated.

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[16] For the importance of "good credit" and reputation in the London economy, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998) and Richard Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 297-301. As to the flexibility of "dealing," in either a charitable or commercial sense, see the *OED* definition for "deal, verb," esp. I.4.

[17] Jonson often uses the term in a neutral capacity, as a crucial gift or skill that can also be abused, as the characters Truewit or Littlewit or Lovewit attest.

[18] See C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 110.

So Jonson appeals to a higher power as a more reliable seat of interpretive authority, in this case both God and Salisbury: "God himselfe is not auerted at iust mens Cries; And you, that approach that diuine goodnesse, and supply it here on Earth." Threatened by a witty, uncharitable audience that accuses him of wittily violating charity, Jonson exclaims to Salisbury, "But let Mee be examind, both by all my workes past, and this present." A recusant at the time he wrote his letter to Salisbury, and potentially living in residence with the Earl D'Aubigny in order to protect himself from pursuivants, Jonson's deployment of words like "charitably" and "workes" (not to mention his suggestion that Salisbury approaches divinity) seems like a provocative gesture toward meritorious works theology.[19] Jonson depends on Salisbury's "charitable" recognition of his play (however much the word irked him) as a "good work." In other words, Jonson, envisioning a salvific economy that includes political, devotional, and aesthetic concerns, wishes to be saved by his works. The observation is trite, perhaps, but also points to the interplay between artistic composition, religious devotion, and the state authority which regulated both, since Jonson, vulnerable as he was, nevertheless employs a religious idiom to persuade the Secretary of State of his blameless intentions when composing *Eastward, Ho!*. Moreover, for any contemporary predisposed to religious toleration, charity was considered a crucial accommodating principle in tense confessional negotiations. A year later, in the wake of the Gunpowder plot and the ensuing debates over the Oath of Allegiance, Salisbury himself notes the importance of charity in resolving otherwise intractable differences in the commonwealth: "But those Kings also which … would faine reserue a charitable opinion of their subiectes, might know how farre to repose themselues in their fidelity in ciuill obedience, howsoeuer they see them deuided from them in point of conscience."[20]

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[19] Ian Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 47-65.

[20] *An answere to certaine scandalous papers, scattered abroad vnder colour of a Catholicke admonition* (1606).

In more secular terms, Jonson, whose charity or malice has been called into question, desires Salisbury and the Privy Council to settle the question by means of legislative oversight. This places Jonson's epistle squarely in the context of Jacobean censorship, a topic which has already received able attention from a number of perceptive scholars.[21] Although Richard Dutton's excellent research suggests that *Eastward, Ho!* received censure in part because it was not properly licensed, Jonson's epistle seems most concerned by the question of libel, which, as Shuger's work has shown, was considered a violation of cultural norms related to charitable privacy.[22] Jonson suggests that these norms should extend both ways: the accusations of defamation or sedition levied against the poet by members of his audience – especially Sir James Murray, who seems to have been the specific individual in question – are equally malicious in fabricating a grievance. In any case, both Jonson and Chapman tacitly suggested that John Marston, the third collaborator in the project, was guilty of inserting the offending remarks without their knowledge. But more importantly, Jonson acknowledges here that traditional principles of interpretation and sociability – charity in particular – provide inadequate means of stabilizing theatrical discourse. This is one reason Jonson playfully appropriates the language of contract to bar "any state-decipherer, or politic picklock of the scene" from the audience of *Bartholomew Fair*.

A similar sentiment surfaces in his prefatory epistle to *Volpone*, written not long after his imprisonment, which begins by castigating members of the audience who claim

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[21] Several critics have examined Jonson's own problematic relationship with censorship: see Barbara De Luna, *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of Catiline and its Historical Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); Annabel Patterson observes in Jonson's work a pragmatic and sophisticated method of oblique expression in *Censorship and Interpretation*, 57-66; Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: the Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991); Richard Burt notes Jonson's ambivalent attitude toward censorship, which could offer a positive as well as negative influence in regulating discourse, in *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Ian Donaldson explores Jonson's subtle political commentary in *Jonson's Magic Houses*, esp. 125-42.

[22] Debora Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility*.

that all playwrights are blasphemous, libelous, and licentious, which "is a most uncharitable Thought, and, utter'd, a more malicious Slander" (38-9). Yet the epistle likewise acknowledges the existence of professional writers who purposefully violate charity for notoriety and commercial gain, "those that will (by Faults which Charity hath rak'd up, or common Honesty conceal'd) make themselves a Name with the Multitude" (64-6). None of the principal participants in the theatrical enterprise are reliable, neither playwright nor spectator, and especially "the Learned and Charitable Critick," as Jonson puts it with ironic emphasis. As several scholars have observed, Jonson sounds awfully conservative in the prefatory epistle to *Volpone*, ceding his artistic independence to the authority of the Master of the Revels, and much of his epistle to Salisbury adumbrates this subsequent, much fuller expression of his anxieties about the theatre. In fact, both epistles articulate a profound skepticism about the entire process of literary production. If Jonson insists on "the impossibility of any man's being the good poet without first being the good man," he also grudgingly recognizes the susceptibility of his position as dramatist, the possibility that his work will be misconstrued as the bad poetry of a bad man. Jonson portrays the theatrical marketplace as an open interpretive space, a site of uncomfortable exchange between dramatist and audience (with actors playing the role of unreliable intermediary), one that is ideally governed by charity but remains vulnerable to unruly agents of malice and disorder. For Jonson this was always an uneasy relationship, and in these epistles he tacitly suggests that it is complicated further by the commercial realities of the profession and the unreliability of traditional principles intended to stabilize the field.

If a bit artificial, this connection between charity, commercialism, and theatre is not entirely arbitrary. From their onset theatres were considered a threat to poor relief, since plays encouraged "vnthriftye waste of the moneye of the poore" and because wealthier playgoers, in the commonwealth's zero sum game, chose to spend money on supposedly idle recreation rather than offering charitable gifts: "It is a woeful sight to see two hundred

proud players get in their silks, where five hundred poor people starve in the streets."[23] It was general policy by 1600 for local municipalities to impose taxes on the playhouses specifically devoted to charitable uses – hospitals in particular – and some form of weekly contribution to poor relief was often stipulated in the playhouse's license.[24] Thus, in *The Alchemist*, when Face plans to divert charitable funds intended for Bedlam, Jonson was importing contemporary accusations against the theatre into the performance at Blackfriar's, transforming forceful complaint into comedy. Jonson's letters, meanwhile, provide a literary analogue for a cultural process that was occurring at the turn of the century, when charity and its participation in the marketplace became a volatile site of contestation and a subject for close scrutiny. Several specific developments in the political and economic landscapes during the early years of the Stuart reign contributed to an increased attention to the material life of property that was ultimately devoted to charity. The social and political values attached to gift-giving were undergoing changes as well, as Alison Scott's recent work has shown. [25] Meanwhile, the problematic relationship between charity and commerce – in addition to the performative aspect of any charitable work – became a thematic fixation of sorts for Jacobean theatre, itself a major catalyst in the uneasy transition from a literary system of courtly patronage and manuscript exchange to one that centered on commercialism and printed works. Jonson's drama in particular provides an opportunity to examine a culture struggling to reconcile apparently

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[23] The first quotation, from an anonymous army officer to Francis Walsingham in 1587, which proceeds to suggest levying a weekly tax on all playhouses, is printed in Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 273-6. The latter quote is from *An Act of Common Council in London*, 1574, from MS Lansdowne 20, printed in *Malone Society Collections*, 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911),175-8.

[24] Consider the certificate sent to the Privy Council endorsing the license of the Fortune in 1600, which lists as the second reason for tolerating the playhouse's business, "Because the Erectors of the said house are contented to give a very liberal portion of the money weekly towards the relief of our Poor." See *Elizabethan Stage*, IV, 327-8.

[25] Scott, *Selfish Gifts* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2006).

contradictory imperatives that emphasized mutual concord and mercantile contract, giving and selling, receiving and buying. The first decade of the Stuart reign provides a fascinating and varied epoch in Jonson's literary career, from his emergence as the principal authority in the masque genre, to his satiric examinations of London in dramatic comedy, as well as his participation in city pageant.

Jonson's claim that a good poet must first be a good man has, of course, received a great deal of ironic commentary concerning his own behavior, but whether or not the statement is the product of complacent fantasy or base self-promotion, it articulates a firm belief in the integrity of thought and action, a desire to trace goodness from its source in the man to its ultimate expression on the page. This chapter examines a similar phenomenon in the general landscape of early Jacobean culture, as increased emphasis was placed on the charitable use of wealth. I will place Jonson's work of this era in the context of several contemporary events and trends that indicate, at least anecdotally, an increased skepticism concerning the means by which philanthropists acquired the wealth they promised to donate to charitable causes, and, at the other end of the process, how executors distributed the wealth put in their trust. In addition to examining *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, which obviously engage both of these cultural anxieties, I will discuss city pageant and the annual Lord Mayor's Show, which attempted to place London's consumer culture safely within the moral universe governed by charity, as well as legislative attempts to regulate the arena of charitable giving, which initiated an unprecedented degree of litigious inquiry related to charitable donations.

Eastward, Ho!

Eastward, Ho!, the collaborative effort that occasioned Jonson's imprisonment in 1605 and subsequent letter to Salisbury, directly engages this complex matrix of contemporary issues related to charity, as Jonson seems conscious of a curious paradox associated with Jacobean theatre: that literary critiques of London commercialism were

actually participating in and benefiting from the city's commercial enterprise.[26] *Eastward, Ho!* offers an incisive critique of London mercantile life and the dramatists who celebrate it, and the play probes the authenticity of performative displays of penitence, placing enormous pressure on the precise hermeneutic of charity which Jonson later hoped to receive from Salisbury. And yet, as a collaborative piece and commercial venture, the play also embodies much of the fraternal spirit involved in the London marketplace, and the communal spectacle that concludes the drama ultimately suggests that charity participates in – indeed, is crucial to – the entire experience. The play's moral is only as flimsy as it is received. And the charitable verdict enjoyed at the end of the play by the three prisoners – a prodigal, a wastrel knight, and a usurious cuckold – as they are forgiven their debts and reintegrated into the urban community, is implicitly mirrored by the three collaborators, who request a similarly charitable reception from the audience and expect to profit by it.

The play almost dramatizes a very different moral than the one brazenly advertised at the play's conclusion as "the prodigal child reclaim'd." Arrested for fraud and arraigned at Guildhall, Quicksilver, the erstwhile apprentice of a goldsmith named Touchstone, sues his former master for mercy, but Touchstone refuses to listen: "Offer not to speake, Crocodile, I will not heare a sound come from thee. Thou hast learnt to whine at the play yonder." (IV.2.309-11). Note the implicit correspondence between speech and spectacle in the goldsmith's command, as well as the local topographical reference to the theatre, presumably Blackfriars. Touchstone employs a standard trope to voice his anxiety over potential deception, as the false tears of crocodiles were the stuff of legend, suggesting that any speech of Quicksilver's – indeed, any sound – should be treated with similar ambivalence. Moreover, through the use of a clever pun ("thou hast learnt to whine"), he manages to conflate Quicksilver's bibulous habits with the rhetorical dissimulation

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[26] For a sensitive discussion of this phenomenon, see David Baker, *On Demand: Writing for the Market in Early Modern England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), esp. 18-34.

inherent to theatrical performance, again characterizing speech as something liquid and unstable. Essentially the goldsmith desires a law that remains impervious to any performative display that might melt away its rigor – later, after refusing letters of supplication from Quicksilver, he declares his intention to be as "blind Justice" and to sail past any suitors "like the wise Ulysses." Despite his epic precedent this leaves no room for legal defense, suppressing the contestation inherent to English legal procedure and violating the ethic of sociability undergirding the London marketplace.[27] Jonson and his collaborators offer a glimpse of a potential world governed entirely by law and contract rather than the charitable relations crucial to the commercial networks of early modern England. Indeed, this kind of behavior was typically associated with usurious creditors, according to Leinwand, and generally regarded as a threat to the London community.[28] Simply put, Touchstone hardly presents a positive model of citizen ethics.

Although the play suggests that civil law, followed to its ultimate end, does not offer an adequate conclusion of justice, or at least not a comedic one in which the community has been restored, the legal process does play a crucial role by initiating the penitential performance of Quicksilver.[29] For his part, Quicksilver rebuffs the machinations of Bramble, a corrupt lawyer who has designed a predatory counter-suit for false imprisonment, choosing instead (so he claims) to rely on divine providence. This is crucial, because it signifies Quicksilver's temporary willingness to subordinate his own prerogative to communal imperatives, and he reinforces this gesture by fully integrating himself within

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[27] Jonson might have also been undermining the legitimacy of Touchstone's implacable stance with Spenserian imagery, evoking Britomart's dream encounter in the Temple of Isis with a crocodile, which blends together figures of sexual predator, divine Osiris, and an embodied form of clemency.

[28] Leinwand envisions this scenario, played out in the Counter, the debtor's prison, as an elaborate, lengthy commentary on debt. See *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[29] The episode provides a fanciful dramatization of precisely what Craig Muldrew observes to be the preferred method of litigation. See Muldrew, 199-271.

the prison community. Meanwhile, Golding, the virtuous but boring apprentice-turned-alderman, attempts to persuade his father-in-law to choose social rather than legal recourse. As Jill Phillips Ingram has observed, Golding's decision, which seems otherwise inexplicable based on his character and previous conduct, makes sense in the context of a local economy dependent on obligation and trust, since his charitable works would earn him social esteem and important credit in the marketplace: "The play's economy of obligation is upheld both by Golding's emulation of the scheming adventurers and by the adventurers' agreement to reciprocate his charitable actions and measures of generosity. The role of self-interest in both sets of behaviors reinforces communal interests."[30] I will have more to say about London's economic culture, but Phillips Ingram's summary, that self-interest and charity were mutually beneficial and operative in the world of *Eastward, Ho!*, suffices to explain the surprising narrative of the fifth act.

Perhaps most unexpected, however, is the theatrical element involved in Golding's charity, and the comparably charitable interpretation required by the audience for it to succeed. After simple negotiations prove ineffective, Golding contrives a successful reconciliation by feigning his own imprisonment and calling Touchstone to prison, where the goldsmith arrives just in time to hear Quicksilver deliver a self-composed penitential ballad. The scene's staging is elaborate, with Golding playing the role of chief dramatist, and his asides during the encounter suggest that he has even arranged the presence of two anonymous prisoners and their friend, whose apparently extemporaneous commentary serves as a kind of chorus for the entire interlude.[31] The prison scene is clearly aimed to induce a pathetic response from Touchstone, as Golding mentions earlier: "There is no

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[30] Jill Phillips Ingram, *Idioms of Self-Interest: Credit, Identity, and Property in English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29.

[31] Jean Howard emphasizes Quicksilver's role in converting the Counter into a type of stage in *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 99-105.

means to make my father relent so likely as to bring him to be a spectator of their miseries" (V.iii.108-10). It works. Touchstone, apparently satisfied by the performance, remarks, "Quicksilver, thou hast eat into my heart, Quicksilver, with the drops of thy sorrow" (V.iv.117-8). If anything, the ballad's corrosive effect authenticates the goldsmith's earlier worry over crocodile tears, as the self-assured goldsmith finds himself in a startling reversal of roles: "Listen. I am ravished with his repentance, and could stand here a whole prenticeship to hear him" (V.iv.99-100). The inversion of power Touchstone describes, with its potent blend of sexual violence and subordinate labor, might have troubled some contemporary spectators, but it was more likely to provoke laughter at his credulity and poor taste – after all, his own fraudulent ex-apprentice is merely reciting a knock-off of Mannington's ballad. More importantly, the episode demonstrates the instability of any penitential act and the opportunity for exploitation by hypocrisy.

The fifth act of *Eastward Ho!* might be mere parody – it seems certain it was at least partially intended as such – and several scholars have marshaled convincing evidence to demonstrate exactly who and what were the intended targets of Marston, Chapman, and Jonson.[32] Quicksilver's ballad is wickedly funny if read through that lens. His declaration that he will cut off the "horse-head of Sin," for example, is charged with irony, since he has been attached to his "punk" Sindefy for the entire play and has ostensibly severed her maidenhead, thoroughly puncturing the piece's repentant dignity. But I want to think about how Jonson and his collaborators place everything under the purview of charitable reading, throwing all of the interpretive weight back on the audience, essentially daring them to be "witty in another mans workes, and utter, some times, their own malicious

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[32] In particular, see Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 243-57. Kenneth Jackson, meanwhile, reads the spectacle as a sustained critique of city comedies composed by Dekker, Middleton, and others, in *Separate Theaters* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 137-142. It is worth noting, however, that Jonson once performed a similar exhibition of piety in prison (albeit with less self-interest at stake), when he converted to Roman Catholicism in 1598.

meanings." The satire is wholly reliant on a particular interpretation. There are obvious tonal gestures that invite skepticism, such as the heavily stylized rhetoric or Quicksilver's fantastic transformation, but there is really no evidence available to authenticate Quicksilver's passionate exclamations or to justify Touchstone's credulous response. The penitential ballad's artfully poised tetrameter couplets, always a favorite with Jonson, reinforce the scene's thematic ambivalence. "Farewell, Cheapside; farewell, sweet trade / Of goldsmiths all, that never shall fade; / Farewell, dear fellow prentices all, / And be you warned by my fall": here is both burlesque and good verse. At times the persistent anaphora, heavy alliteration, and interjections (Alas!) threaten to push the ballad into bathos, but other moments display a sophisticated poetics – excellent pacing, well-placed isocolon, a subtle texturing of sound – that belie any simple parodic intention. Touchstone's hyperbolic language, meanwhile, appears clumsy and misguided, but also gestures at the kind of radical humility inherent to forgiveness and devotion.[33] *Eastward Ho!* offers an ending that relies on poetry and performance to embody and enact its charity, and invites the audience to participate in the spectacle. Shall the audience indict the charitable deceit of Golding, accuse him of facilitating the release of a known fraud, and implicate Touchstone's affective response in the process? Or will it submit to the drab, conventional wisdom of a London pageant: "Behold the careful father, thrifty son, / The solemn deeds, which each of us have done; / The usurer punish'd, and from fall so steep / The prodigal child reclaim'd, and the lost sheep." In either case, the London audience sees, much as Touchstone's lame moral remarks, its own mirror image, forced to recognize that any particular interpretation is the spectator's own projection. This is the work poetry can accomplish, Jonson and his collaborators suggest, and the public theatre offers a space in which meaning – is it a satisfying London drama or a satire of popular theatre or both? – is

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[33] See Katrin Ettenhuber's excellent essay on hyperbole in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 197-213.

as fluid and unstable as Quicksilver's tears. *Eastward Ho!* challenges readers and audience alike to participate in that charitable exchange.

Touchstone, at the very least, is untroubled by the ruse, telling Golding, "The deceit is welcome, especially from thee, whose charitable soul in this hath shown a high point of wisdom and honesty." Touchstone is obviously acquainted with his own weakness for pitiful rhetoric, given his earlier determination to stop his ears to Quicksilver's lamentations, and his paradoxical utterance suggests a sensitive ear for irony. He hardly seems like a typical gull. That is, he seems conscious of the theatrical context in which he witnesses Quicksilver's confessional but ultimately remains unbothered by it. Note the paradox at work, that deceit somehow shows wisdom and honesty. This is the peculiar early modern phenomenon this chapter explores: how charity and deceit often went hand in hand, how the spectacle of good works tied together private gain and public good. Indeed, after the fifth act's happy resolution, the play continues to underwrite the existence and importance of fictive spectacle, as Quicksilver persists in his role as penitent prodigal, requesting that he might, still dressed in prison garb, "go home, through the streets in these, as a spectacle, or rather an example, to the children of Cheapside" (V.iv.190-1). His spectacle invites skepticism – deserves it, even – but the performance is nevertheless crucial to the survival of London's community, and contemporaries would have recognized a similar role played by the annual Lord Mayor's Show, which Touchstone references in the play's final lines, a pageant that explicitly linked successful business acumen with charitable deeds:

> Oh, may you find in this our pageant here,
> The same contentment which you came to seek;
> And, as that show but draws you once a year,
> May this attract you hither once a week.

Although Jonson, Chapman, and Marston clearly intend to distinguish their sophisticated poetics from insipid city encomia, they acknowledge their own reliance on citizen charity.

Charity, City Comedy, and City Pageant

A number of Jonson's conservative contemporaries claimed that merchant profits were socially destructive, statements that partially prompted a scholarly thesis, much promulgated by an earlier generation of economic and social historians, which located the origin of dissolving communal bonds in the rise of an acquisitive mercantile culture.[34] These assumptions have been revised by scholars like Craig Muldrew, who suggests that early modern England's economy relied on cooperative notions of credit and obligation, mutual reciprocity, and, of course, charitable dealings. A merchant's primary currency or commodity was credit, which was largely based on abstract notions of reputation, honor, and trust. That is, the language of the marketplace, far from promoting or even conceiving of an individualistic and acquisitive economic model, clearly overlapped with traditional religious and social principles, despite awkward tensions between the imperatives of profit-making and profit-sharing. A number of fascinating studies have mapped this economic discourse onto early modern literature, and Jacobean theatre, immersed as it was in the commercial fabric of London, seems particularly fertile ground for research of this kind.[35] Some of the following discussion will recycle material already offered by these previous studies, but this chapter's focus on charity offers a unique perspective in charting contemporary reactions to the economic growth, especially since the concept of charity, at

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[34] The landmark studies promoting this argument are Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: 1930); R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: 1936); Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: 1969); Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: 1978); and, perhaps most relevant to this study because it explicitly and intelligently engages London theater, Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[35] See Theodore Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England*; Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of Credit: Merchants in Early Modern Writing* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002); Jill Phillips Ingram, *Idioms of Self-Interest*; Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); G*lobal Traffic: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture from 1550 to 1700*, eds. Barbara Sebek and Stephen Deng (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Aaron Kitch, *Political Economy and the States of Literature in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

once powerful but malleable, was reacting to, benefiting from, and even participating in the mercantile behavior of early modern London.

One can detect an ambivalence towards those in the profession of making money (and the manner in which they professed to give money) in John Stow's *Survey of London*, with its curiously nostalgic celebration of civic virtue in London and resolute silence toward a number of important urban developments. Commenting on Stow's dismay at chronicling the gradual dissolution of civic bonds and communal values, a phenomenon supposedly effected by the city's rising commercialism, Ian Archer offers an important reminder of Stow's unreliability regarding these concerns: if certain rituals like the Midsummer watch were discontinued, "the corollary of this fragmentation of sociability was the increasing articulation of the social bond through the exercise of charity."[36] Archer's more thorough examination of Elizabethan London's social relations demonstrates that the city's burgeoning mercantile professions were not engaged in a zero-sum competition with the city's charitable institutions for material resources or other "capital," but actually galvanized a number of crucial developments in poor relief and other charitable works.[37] Nevertheless, even if Stow's historical presentation of London lacks holistic accuracy, his work does register a crucial moment in the perceived role and function of merchants in the city. He is clearly more content in recognizing communal expressions of charity, and his work articulates a reserved skepticism of charitable works performed by individuals who amassed private wealth. Anthony Munday's revision of Stow's *Survey* in 1618 provides a useful counterpoint in the manner it "corrects" some of

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[36] As Archer notes, "The continual harping on the hospitality of yesteryear and the laments about the 'get-rich-quick mentality' of his own time convey the impression that charity had waxed cold." See "The Nostalgia of John Stow," *The Theatrical City*, eds. David Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27.

[37] Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* • *Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Stow's implicit accusations – especially those which pertain to the lack of evidence of new monuments to charity – and how it reflects the evolving role of the Lord Mayor's Show and other civic pageants that participated in the city's mythmaking. Whereas Stow's 1603 *Survey* ends with a list of churches and hospitals, Helen Moore observes, Munday's replaces it with the order of the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Sherrifs: "One form of communal endeavour – charity for the poor and sick – is thereby replaced with the mercantile and ritual performances of the London companies."[38] Moore carefully notes that Munday's writing does not replace charity with trade – indeed, references to charitable works performed by Londoners actually increase in his text – but the difference in corporate emphasis underscores the changing attitudes toward charity, as well as London's changing machinery in distributing gifts to the poor.

It was an uncomfortable transition for numerous contemporaries, and many depictions of early modern English merchants split the difference by combining Stow's cynicism and Munday's optimism. Thomas Gainsford, who observes how private commodity augments the public good, and presents an otherwise positive depiction of the merchant in *The Rich Cabinet*, nevertheless expresses reservation about the means by which the profession acquires its profit:

> Merchant is onely traduced in this, that the hope of wealth is his principall obiect whereby profite may arise, which is not vsually attained without corruption of heart, deceitfull protestations, vaine promises, idle oathes, paltry lyes, pedling deceit, simple denials, palpable leauing his friend, and in famous abuse of charitie.[39]

This is not anomalous. Even among merchants themselves, as Laura Caroline Stevenson observes, there was resentment toward elite merchant adventurers, although "the wealth

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[38] Moore, "Succeeding Stow: Anthony Munday and the 1618 *Survey of London*," *John Stow (1525-1605) and the Making of the English Past*, eds. Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (London: British Library, 2004), 101-2.

[39] *The Rich Cabinet* (London: 1616, STC1024:08), 89.

and charity of the great tycoons in city government were also sources of civic pride."[40]
What I want to suggest is that early modern England's merchants might "abuse" charity,
and they certainly might refuse to offer it, but they were still operating in a social paradigm
that understood itself as a construct of charity. Merchants could not isolate themselves
from the communal ethos that governed early modern relations. That is, gaining money
was not a separate imperative from giving charity, not yet anyway. Instead the two were
joined together in a mutual endeavor that involved exchange, gain, and loss.

These two distinct attitudes toward London's mercantile life, and the charity it
supposedly fostered or obstructed, are reflected in the apparent contradictions between
rival forms of contemporary theatre, city comedy and city pageant. Given the fascinating
dialogue between the two types of dramatic spectacle, it is no surprise that a number of
scholars have paired them together with constructive and intelligent results.[41] The
dichotomy is not a neat and tidy one, however, as several studies have shown – London
merchants were a heterogeneous population, for one – and I will use the terms loosely and
only insofar as a distinction is helpful. Certain pageants, while insisting on the charitable
deeds of various guild-members and city officials, nevertheless register an implicit concern
with the use of mercantile profit. Jonson's comedies, as evidenced by *Eastward Ho!*, echo
this ambivalence. Although skeptical of the charitable work performed by merchants and

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[40] Laura Caroline Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 26.

[41] Several earlier studies deserve mention, like Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 124-149, and Theodore Leinwand, *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy, 1603-13* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), esp. 21-80. Recent studies include, among others, Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Angela Stock, "'Something done in honour of the city': Ritual, Theatre and Satire in Jacobean Civic Pageantry," in *Plotting Early Modern London, eds. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 125-44; Ian Munro engages the notion of civic ritual in *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), esp. 51-73; Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642*; Kitch, 155-184.

other acquisitive individuals, the playwright recognizes his own participation in the commercial enterprise.

Lord Mayor's Shows almost inevitably reference the charitable works of previous city officials as an incentive or spur, essentially challenging the newly sceptered mayor to ensure that he receive his own future blazon recording the various good deeds performed during his reign. Anthony Munday's 1611 Lord Mayor's Show, for example, ostensibly intended to honor Sir James Pemberton, a goldsmith, culminates in a set of instructions from one Nicholas Faringdon, who was four times Lord Mayor:

> You are a Gold-Smith, Golden be
> Your daily deedes of Charitie.
> Golden your hearing poore mens cases,
> Free from partiall bribes embraces.
> And let no rich or mighty man
> Injure the poore, if helpe you can.[42]

Gail Kern Paster notes that city pageants borrowed elements from court masques, but whereas masques circumscribed themselves by concluding with the fulfillment of virtue and heroism, embodied by the monarch in particular, "The pageant on the other hand insists on the open-endedness of its traditions in order to suggest to the Lord Mayor that his significance at the investiture is mostly potential."[43] Thomas Dekker's 1612 pageant, *Trioa-Nova Triumphans*, employs an elaborate morality structure, reaching a climax in Virtue's triumph over Envy by way of good deeds, and concluding with Justice addressing the Lord Mayor, reminding him, "the Rich and Poore must lye / In one euen Scale," "Let not Oppression wash his hands ith' Teares

Of Widowes, or of Orphans," and, finally, "That Collar (which about thy Necke is worne) /

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[42] Bergeron, 150.

[43] Paster, 145. John Webster's 1624 London pageant does, however, use a Jonsonian image to figure forth the ideal city, in which "Faith kept the center, Charity walkt the round, / Untill a true circumference was found."

Of Golden Esses, bids thee so to knit / Men hearts in Loue."[44] The typical pageant, then,

was not merely a celebration but a reminder of the ideal principles by which the city

operated, a dramatic production that will only conclude after the Lord Mayor's annual

reign has ended, and all of London will be watching his performance.

But who was actually watching the pageant? Probably just the merchants, and

maybe only the Lord Mayor's own company, which solely financed the annual pageant. Or,

as Leinwand observes, "Lord Mayors' shows represent an attempt to confirm the honor and

probity of "the merchant," but the merchant elite's message was relayed almost exclusively

to its own kind."[45] In some ways, though, this seems to be precisely the point – the

merchants themselves were celebrating their own importance in the life of the city and

commonwealth. Consider Middleton's elaborate 1613 pageant, *The Triumphs of Truth*, in

which London rises from a triumphal mount, surrounded by a number of virtues that

support her:

> On her left side sits *Perfect Loue,* his proper Seate being neerest the Heart,
> wearing vpon his Head a wreath of white and red Roses mingled together,
> the Antient Witnesse of *Peace, Loue* and *Vnion,* wherein consists the
> Happinesse of this Land, his Right hand holding a Sphaere, where in a
> Circle of Gold, is contained all the 12 Companies Armes; and therefore cal'd
> the *Spaere of true Brother-hood,* or *Annulus Amoris,* the *Ring of Loue:*
> vpon his left hand stand two Billing Turtles, expressing thereby the happy
> Condition of mutuall Loue and Society: on either side of this Mount are
> displaid the Charitable and Religious workes of *London* (especially the
> worthy Company of *Grocers*) in giuing maintenance to Schollers, Souldiers,
> Widdowes, Orphans, and the like, where are plac'd one of each number.

The audience intended for this display is clear, but what exactly should the Lord Mayor and

his colleagues glean from the allegorical drama? A cynic might suggest that London's

impoverished citizens are categorized and reduced to single, emblematic entities, thrust

into iconographic representation by the merchant companies and justifying, as it were, the

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[44] *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 245-6. See Bergeron, 163-170.

[45] Leinwand, *The City Staged*, 26.

"floud of gold" that flowed earlier from London's allegorized Liberality (carefully distinguished from Prodigality), the sister spirit of Perfect Love. Perhaps in part. But as Leinwand notes, the only people watching did not need to be convinced of the merchant's integrity. More likely, I think, Middleton intends the pageant to show – to merchants and for merchants – their proper role in the commonwealth, how private gain can only be understood in the context of public good, that commercial enterprise and charity should walk hand in hand.

A similar scenario, in which prominent city officials are presented with an iconic display of charity, is dramatized in Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, Part II*, when Bishop Nowell exhorts Sir Thomas Gresham and others to stare in admiration at the "pictures" of charitable deeds performed by various Lord Mayors throughout history. Heywood likely takes his cue from Stow's *Survey of London* here, and the scene seems intended to provide an antidote against fears that economic transactions involve a winner and loser, to defuse the contestatory spirit inherent to the mercantile profession, to offer a powerful reminder that people should be privileged before abstract measurements attached to money, and, ultimately, to direct the flowing monies to their proper charitable uses. Is it merely a ludicrous display attempting to justify an otherwise mercenary profession and glorify one's own name in the process? Does the lavish charity springing from high-profit and high-risk business accomplish more for the public good? Or does Heywood intend his audience to question whether or not the London populace has received its proper return? Ceri Sullivan suggests that the charity is enough to alleviate tensions introduced elsewhere in the narrative, but Jean Howard, referring specifically to William Rowley's *A New Wonder: A Woman Never Vext*, offers an incisive commentary that applies to the nostalgic depictions of charity in any of the sentimental city comedies of the period, a statement that deserves to be provided in full:

> Registering alarm at the risks involved in a long-distance trade and other market ventures, the play can only articulate a sentimental faith in charity as a redress to those risks. Yet the overinsistence on charity flags a problem, a lack, in the social structure. If charity will not miraculously cure prodigality, incite reformation, and protect against economic ruin, it nonetheless marks the longing for social structures that could perform such work. Charity, in short, points to a lack generated by new kinds of market risk and market seduction even though the discourse of charity is an inherited and historically inadequate response to changed conditions.[46]

It is an astute observation. Contemporaries, however, were not simply insisting on or fantasizing about charity's power to resolve changed economic conditions (nor is Howard suggesting only so much). Far from a stable discourse inherited from previous generations, charity itself was flexible, dynamic, participating in and adapting to the current cultural climate. England had long conceived of work as an important disciplinary feature of charitable poor relief, but soon the concept was invoked in terms of a potential commercial enterprise, as Thomas Mun does, for example, when he essentially equates jobs with charity in his response to critics of the East India Company: "So that when all the other doores of charitie are shut, the East India gates stand wide open to receiue the needy and the poore, giuing them good entertainment with two Moneths wages before hand to make their neeedfull prouisions for the voyage."[47] In the introduction to his monumental history of trade and circumnavigation, Samuel Purchas imagines global trade as an expression of charity: "The chiefest charitie is that which is most common; nor is there any more common then this of Nauigation, where one man is not good to another man, but so many Nations as so many persons hold commerce and intercourse of amitie withal."[48] Whatever the intentions of Rabelais in penning Panurge's encomium to debt, which

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[46] Howard, "Afterword: Accommodating Change," in *Global Traffic*, 269. See Sullivan, 178.

[47] *A discourse of trade, from England vnto the East-Indies answering to diuerse obiections which are vsually made against the same* (London: 1621).

[48] *Purchas his Pilgrimage* I (London: 1625), 20. Middleton's 1617 pageant, *The Triumphs of Honour and Industry*, rehearses a similar notion of commerce linking nations together in love when "*Trafficke* or *Merchandize,* who holds a Globe in her hand, knits loue and peace amongst all Nations."

culminates in a vision of a new golden age where everyone lends, everyone owes, and "Charity alone reigns, governs, dominates, triumphs," it was not merely a fictional (or French) fantasy: an anonymous London pamphlet from 1622, decrying imprisonment for debt, envisions a utopian market in which lending transactions would be encouraged by reducing the bodily punishment imposed on debtors, declaring, "Free borrowing and lending would cause and encrease charity and Christian amity amongst men, and knit them together in stronger bonds of love, society, and friendship."[49] Perhaps most remarkable is a comment by Thomas Milles, who suggests that money itself, rather than the charity that might find expression by way of that money, is the "medium between Subjects and their Kings, and Exchange the very Cement that glues them both together."[50] The marketplace did not exist in an isolated ethical sphere. Merchants made money and performed charity in the same communal framework.

Charitable Uses

That is not to say the displays of charity performed and publicized by London merchants avoided any degree of skepticism. Far from it. Indeed, one reason why there was skepticism, it seems, is precisely because contemporaries understood how intimately related were the processes of acquiring wealth and devoting it to charitable causes, as opposed to thinking of charity as a separate imperative performed after the fact of gaining money. Charity was immersed in commercial enterprise, a fact that was recognized, often affirmed, but also suspected. One of the most important events of the early seventeenth century related to charity occurred several years before James assumed the throne. The Statute of Charitable Uses of 1601, an improved version of a similar statute passed in 1597-8, was a pragmatic law aimed chiefly at oversight, intended above all to encourage

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[49] *A petition to the Kings most excellent Maiestie* (London: 1622), F3v. See Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance and Society*, 42-80. Francois Rabelais, *The Complete Works*, trans. Donald Frame (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 271.

[50] Thomas Milles, *An Out-Port-Customer's Accompt* (1612), sig. L1v, found in Kitch, 4.

potential donors to contribute property to charitable causes without fear of fraud or legal complications disrupting the flow of monies. The phrase "charitable uses," which acquired unmistakable currency at the beginning of the seventeenth century, embodies many of the tensions this study intends to examine.[51] Primarily a legal designation, "use" refers to "a trust reposed by any person in the terre-tenant that he may suffer him to take the profits and that he will perform his intent," to employ the definition of Francis Bacon, ambiguous pronoun usage and all.[52] So, charitable uses involved (and still involve) a special kind of deed entrusted to feoffees, who were obliged to manage the property of the benefactor, typically in such a way that produced profits which would be regularly distributed according to the charitable intentions of the donor. The concept of "use" already possessed a clear theological significance that was bound up in questions of charity, ever since Augustine distinguished between *uti* and *frui* in the *magna quæstio* of *De doctrina Christiana*, whether one should use or enjoy one's neighbor, or do both.[53] Exerting its own semantic influence is a lexical cousin if not a legal one, another definition of "use" that described the process of lending money at interest, better known as usury, which was roundly condemned though widely practiced by contemporaries.[54] The two concepts were actually quite close at the operative level, using property to generate more property, but "charitable uses" distributed the funds to pious causes. Nevertheless, contemporaries worried about whether executors chosen by donors were indeed trustworthy or if they employed the property for their own commercial uses.

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[51] A quick EEBO search, admittedly an imprecise heuristic tool, shows eight uses of the terms "charitable uses" or "pious uses" from 1473 to 1597, the year of the first statute regulating charitable uses, and nearly eighty uses of either term from 1598 to 1625, when James died.

[52] Francis Bacon, *Reading of the Statute of Uses* (New York: Garland, 1979), 400-1.

[53] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), I.22.20.

[54] Thus "use," which also possessed a strong sexual connotation, became a lexical intersection of sorts, where antithetical practices met on neutral ground.

Traditionally, the legal process of enforcing a charitable gift was consigned to the Court of Chancery, but the procedure was tedious, costly, and unreliable, which was apparently enough of an impediment to discourage potential petitioners from seeking legal redress. In order to remedy the complications inherent to Chancery procedure, and to encourage and protect charitable giving more generally, the Statutes of 1597-8 and 1601 emphasized speed and simplicity in supervising the application of charitable uses. These new laws empowered the Lord Chancellor to establish a commission, consisting of the Bishop of the diocese, his chancellor, and other persons "of good and sounde behavior," to inquire whether or not a charitable use had suffered from "Abuses Breaches of Trustes Negligences Mysimploimentes, not imployinge concealinge defraudinge misconvertinge or misgovernemente," and to rectify any problem.[55] Gifts made to support superstitious uses were not privileged and fell outside the purview of the statute (indeed, they were void by common law), and the Commission was not empowered to investigate the charitable uses of towns and cities, colleges at Oxford or Cambridge, or uses under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical ordinaries or the Crown.[56] But a significant amount of power was given to the Commission to ensure that applicable uses were performed to the intent of the donor: a feoffee could be made to repay money wrongfully withheld from charitable uses, and was often charged at a high rate of interest; leases or conveyances of property designated to charitable uses that were not *bona fide* purchases could be ruled void; land could be transferred from a dishonest feoffee to someone better suited for maintaining the charitable use; defective wills, which might otherwise compromise the charitable use, could

[55] 43 Eliz. I c. 4, *Statutes of the Realm*, 969. For a cogent and thorough examination of the statutes, see Gareth Jones, *The History of the Law of Charity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 16-58.

[56] Nevertheless, James issued a royal proclamation in 1605 which, in addition to celebrating the success of 43 Eliz. I c. 6, offers a stern reminder to any charitable uses that fall outside the statute's jurisdiction – those governed by colleges, towns, and the like – that neglect or misemployment will incur his royal displeasure. See *A proclamation to redresse the mis-imployment of lands, goods, and other things giuen for charitable vses* (London: 1605).

be cured; and other powers were generally "as extensive as the evil demanded."[57] Perhaps

the most pronounced impact of the statute was its startling efficiency. From the first

statute of 1597-8 to the death of James, over 1,000 rulings related to charitable uses were

made, nearly twenty times the rate of inquiry during the two centuries previous, when only

two rulings of this kind were made each year on average.[58]

     As Jones notes, however, the successful efficiency of the commission was not a

product of the legal procedure but rather the culture in which it functioned:

> The commission was a potentially ponderous instrument of investigation
> and supervision: commissioners and jurors had to be found to serve and
> give freely of their time; parish administration had to remain efficient and
> parishioners enthusiastic … As long as society appreciated the urgency of
> the charity commissioners' task, the statutory procedure would flourish.[59]

Indeed, though procedural obstacles associated with Chancery undoubtedly contributed to

the scarcity of petitions in the earlier century, the volatile increase of inquiries into

charitable uses after the new statutes illustrates a pervasive interest – one might even say

skepticism – among contemporaries regarding the distribution of monies to the needy. As

with most efforts to enact communal reform, idealistic efforts to increase governmental

efficacy mix uncomfortably with a cynical expectation of widespread abuse. The 1597-8

Statute expressly acknowledges this phenomenon in its preamble, which appears just after

Parliament's overhaul of poor relief, observing that charitable monies "have bene and are

still like to be most unlawfully and uncharitably converted to the lucre and gayne of some

fewe greedy and covetous persons, contrary to the true intente and meaning of the givers

and disposers thereof."[60] These were hardly new concerns, of course. Early sixteenth-

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[57] Jones, 47-51.

[58] Ibid, 52.

[59] Ibid, 53.

[60] 39 Eliz. I c. 6, *Statutes of the Realm*, 903.

century critiques of charitable giving generally fulminated against the corrupt practices of fraternal orders, and executors and lawyers inherited the secular focus of that suspicion.

Similar sentiment can be found in a wide range of contemporary literature. In his satire "On Vanity," for example, George Wither excoriates the manner in which private individuals hijack charitable uses:

> For publike Guifts are turn'd to priuate vses,
> Faire Colledges are ful of foule Abuses.
> And their Reuenues I account as vaine,
> Because they lazy *Dunces* do maintaine.
> …
> Good *Founders* dreaming not of these Abuses,
> Gaue them at first to charitable vses;
> But we find now all alter'd, and the dues,
> The which by right vpon desert ensues,
> Like *Offices in Court,* are bought and sould,
> And places may be had, but how? for *gold.*[61]

Twice linking the rhyme "use" with "abuse," Wither depicts a process of charity intercepted by self-interest, as pious uses transform into mere profiteering. He appears particularly exercised by the corruption of schools intended to support orphans or disadvantaged students, although the description remains general enough to apply to any number of charitable uses that become warped by abusive executors. Such vituperation, however, seems appropriate for satire. But Lewis Bayly's contemporaneous manual of godly living, *The Practice of Pietie*, expresses a similar skepticism, urging potential donors to exercise a pragmatic independence when endowing gifts to charitable uses, and suggesting they refrain from placing these gifts in the trust of others:

> If thou hast no children, and the *Lord* haue blessed thee with a great portion
> of the goods of this world; and if thou meane to bestow them vpon any
> *charitable* or *pious* vses: put not ouer that *good worke* to the trust of others;

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[61] George Wither, *Abuses stript, and whipt*, Book 2, "Satyre 1" (London: 1613).

seeing thou seest how *most* of other mens *Executors*, prooue *almost Executioners*.[62]

Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, sums up the general attitude toward charitable uses, claiming, "most part there is *simulatum quid* a deale of hypocrisie in this kinde, much default and defect."[63]

All three of these comments appear *after* the statutes had designated a rigorous process of oversight, which suggests that the new statute was either considered ineffective or, more likely, a product of a culture that was sensitive to various privatized threats against the public good. Making a partial contribution to this prejudice, undoubtedly, were contemporary anecdotes in Stow and elsewhere that demonstrate the untrustworthy behavior of executors. But there was also a cultural emphasis on performing good works while living, one that clearly informs Bayly's advice. And Burton's skepticism in charitable deeds was probably promoted by Reformed theology, which emphasized the ineluctable sin that accompanies every charitable action. Consider the remarkable analogy John Donne uses in *Pseudo-Martyr* to emphasize the distinction between Reformed and Roman justification theologies: "And lastly, we can do no perfit good work; for originall sin hath poisoned the fountaines, our hearts: and those degrees and approaches, which we seeme to make towards good workes, are as if a condemned man would make a large will, to charitable vses."[64]

Nor should the culture's pervasive skepticism of charitable uses, and the legal machinery instituted to enforce them, indicate that contemporaries lost faith in charity or downplayed its influence. The actual landscape of charitable giving was just the opposite,

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[62] Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Pietie* (London: 1612).

[63] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1955), 640.

[64] Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 88.

as several scholars have demonstrated.[65] On first glance the phenomenon seems counterintuitive, but Craig Muldrew's observation that litigation for debt increased during eras of relative economic prosperity in early modern England demonstrates a similar pattern. In Muldrew's research, sudden economic growth resulted in quickly expanding systems of credit that overstretched households and complicated the relationships essential to trade networks, ultimately requiring the external pressures of civil law to resolve credit disputes.[66] In analogous fashion, the steep rise of cases enforcing charitable uses does not necessarily suggest that there was more or less corruption than before, but it does indicate that contemporaries were probably unprepared for the drastic increase of private endowments and relied on statutory law to regulate the charitable donations. The statute itself points to an increased fascination in – and obvious support of –charitable uses themselves. Indeed, the 1601 statute reads like a catalogue of potential charities:

> Some for Releife of aged impotent and poore people, some for Maintenance of sicke and maimed Souldiers and Marriners, Schooles of Learninge, Free Schooles and Schollers in Universities, some for Repaire of Bridges Portes Havens Causwaies Churches Seabankes and Highewaies, some for Educacion and preferment of Orphans, some for or towards Reliefe Stocke or Maintenance for Howses of Correccion, some for Mariages of poore Maides, some for Supportacion Ayde and Helpe of younge Tradesmen, Handiecraftesmen and persons decayed, and others for reliefe or redemption of Prisoners or Captives, and for aide or ease of any poore Inhabitants concerninge paymente of Fifteenes, settinge out of Souldiers and other Taxes.[67]

A decade later, Andrew Willet *did* make a catalogue of charitable works performed during the reigns of Edward, Elizabeth, and James.[68] It is obviously an anti-Roman polemical

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[65] See W.K. Jordan, *The Charities of London, 1480-1660: The Aspirations and the Achievements of the Urban Society* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1960); Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 163-82.

[66] Muldrew, 199-271.

[67] *Statutes of the Realm*, 968-9.

[68] The catalogue is appended to *Synopsis papismi, that is, A generall view of papistrie* (London: 1613, STC 1051:01), 1220-43.

work, "to stop their slanderous mouthes," and demonstrates the opportunity charity presented to the monarch, church authorities, and city officials for positive publicity and personal mythmaking, but Willet's exhaustive record of good works ultimately gives the impression that charitable deeds, regardless of their intention, were essential to the social fabric of London and England. Research suggests that endowed charities had become a crucial source of poor relief, which was merely supplemented by the recently instituted national poor rate.[69] Charitable uses were heavily regulated and accompanied by suspicion because they were so important.

Because charity was intimately involved in contemporary commercial enterprises, it was vulnerable to appropriation by various private interests. That phenomenon endures in our own era, of course, but the cultural and legal paradigms in which we operate, the manner in which we regulate charities by way of special tax categorization and specific non-profit law, for example, or conceive of the marketplace as a sentient world regulated by the logic of profit and capital, means we are less apt to recognize the overlap between charity and commerce, then or now. Marxist scholarship has further obscured the cultural context. Neither *Volpone* nor *The Alchemist*, to which I will turn shortly, suggest that a commercial ethos has replaced a culture of charity, nor do they direct their satire specifically at mercantile exchange – each involves a fairly sophisticated type of estates satire that encompasses a more complex social commonwealth. Instead they both provide intimate portrayals of a world in which the imperatives of charity and commercialism are thoroughly intertwined, and proceed to dramatize the problems that can ensue on account of that relationship.

In *Volpone*, for example, Jonson does not merely satirize the dissolution of fraternal bonds effected by acquisitive individuals seeking private gain, although he

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[69] Slack suggests that private donations provided an estimated two-thirds of the funding devoted to poor relief at the beginning of the seventeenth century. See *Poverty and Policy*, 169-73.

certainly targets the sort of destructive greed that transforms various Venetian citizens into mere caricatures of beast fable. The play satirizes avarice, and luxury too, but Jonson also spends considerable energy attacking other abuses of charity, a term and concept which Volpone, Mosca, and others exploit throughout the narrative. That is, I do not want to suggest that Jonson opposes the acquisitive tendencies of Volpone, Mosca, and the various suitors they delude with the virtues of charity and beneficence embodied by Celia and Bonario. Such a dichotomy inevitably burdens these two righteous characters with too much thematic importance and likewise circumscribes the role of charity in anachronistic fashion. This is not a grandiose argument, although it is, I hope, a careful one. What I have labored to demonstrate by way of context, and what I intend to show in the subsequent close readings, is not a simple matter of opposition between commerce and charity but instead an intimate partnership that can be exploited by a particular type of entrepreneur. If we consider early modern England a world in which contemporaries recognized charity as an important condition for the marketplace, as well as its own currency of a kind that participated in the phenomenon of exchange, and ultimately as a final product in the process of mercantile profit-making that was marked out by its "use," I think we receive a clearer picture of Jonson's commentary. And as *Volpone*'s Don Scoto vignette and *The Alchemist*'s epilogue demonstrate, Jonson also recognized his own involvement in that fragile dynamic, as any successful theatrical performance required a degree of charity from its audience, even as the drama stretched or violated those charitable principles.

Volpone

That Jonson does not intend to simply critique the mercantile world is clear in *Volpone's* first scene, immediately after the title character addresses his gold in a famously inspired travesty of prayer. He and Mosca explicitly distance their enterprise from the supposedly sordid realities of commercialism, emphasizing instead a method of acquisition that appears benign:

> Yet I glory
> More in the cunning Purchase of my Wealth,
> Than in the glad Possession, since I gain
> No common way; I use no Trade, no Venture;
> I wound no Earth with Plow-shares, I fat no Beasts
> To feed the Shambles; have no Mills for Iron,
> Oyl, Corn, or Men, to grind 'em into Powder:
> I blow no subtil Glass, expose no Ships
> To Threatnings of the furrow-faced Sea;
> I turn no Monies in the Publick Bank,
> Nor Usure Private.   (I.i.30-51)

Volpone provides a catalogue of human vocations, which proceeds from a primitive

agrarian subsistence (thereby subtly revoking the apocalyptic vision of Peace, when swords

are to be beaten into plowshares) to various mercantile endeavors that slowly acquire more

sophistication, as simple merchandise gives way to more exotic products like glass, and on

to monetary exchange in public banks, culminating in the practice of usury. By contrasting

traditional methods of gain with his own "no common way," a description that blends

aristocratic privilege with innovative experimentation, Volpone taps into a prevalent

anxiety about the potentially uncharitable practices of any kind of commercial exchange

intended to generate profit. John Marston dramatized the same apprehension a year before

in *The Dutch Courtesan*, and with similar irony, when Cocledemoy delivers an encomium

to the charitable vocation of prostitutes:

> Whereas no trade or vocation profiteth but by the loss and displeasure of
> another – as the merchant thrives not but by the licentiousness of giddy and
> unsettled youth, the lawyer but by the vexation of his client, the physician
> but by the maladies of his patient – only my smooth-gumm'd bawd lives by
> others' pleasure, and only grows rich by others' rising. O merciful gain! O
> righteous income!   (I.ii.53-62)[70]

One imagines that Volpone would consider his own vocation superior, doing the bawd one

better, by circumventing the problem of trade altogether. He deliberately avoids the

manufacturing process that grinds men as well as commodities, refuses to profit from the

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[70] *The Selected Plays of John Marston*, eds. MacDonald Jackson and Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 305.

human vanity that fuels the glass-blowing industry, and resists the possible return on

global trade because it risks human capital and currency.

This is made clearer when Mosca picks up where Volpone leaves off, categorizing

the various methods of acquisition that directly impinge on traditional notions of charity,

and observing their careful avoidance of such malicious behavior:

> No, Sir, nor devour
> Soft Prodigals. You shall ha' some will swallow
> A melting Heir as glibly as your *Dutch*
> Will Pills of Butter, and ne'er purge for't;
> Tear forth the Fathers of poor Families
> Out of their Beds, and Coffin them alive
> In some kind clasping Prison, where their Bones
> May be forth-coming, when the Flesh is rotten:
> But your sweet Nature doth abhor these Courses;
> You loath the Widows or the Orphans Tears
> Should wash your Pavements, or their piteous Cries
> Ring in your Roofs, and beat the Air for Vengeance.

Mosca's monologue seems to glance ironically at Matthew 25, managing to reference by

implication nearly all of the corporal works of mercy. But note how this is all framed in the

negative, by the actions he and Volpone do *not* perform, as if the two tricksters could

distance themselves from humanity altogether. There is a double edge to this critique:

Mosca obviously glances at the various professions profiting from activities that should be

circumscribed by charity, but the passage also satirizes any misguided attempt to perform

the substance of mercantile exchange without its commercial shadow (one thinks of

Salisbury's imminent New Exchange, which proudly claims that "All other places give for

money, here all is given for love"). If Volpone's "purchase" of wealth manages to avoid the

potential harm effected by traditional commercial practices, he does not contribute to

society in any fashion either. He literally will not get his hands dirty by wounding the earth,

and, consequently, his sterile world will not feed anyone or anything but his own gaping

vault. Volpone avoids the stigma of usury precisely because he does not loan money out,

choosing only to receive money at no interest. But even usury was understood to be

essential to commercial life, if prone to mismanagement, as Bacon notes in his essay on the topic, observing, "If the *Usurer*, either call in, or keepe backe his Money, there will ensue presently a great Stand of Trade."[71] Volpone's occupation betrays a refusal to participate in the fraternal bonds that knit together a community.

Or perhaps that is not the best way to put it, since Volpone traffics in and capitalizes from precisely these communal bonds. His interlude as the mountebank Scoto, for example, demonstrates a subtle understanding of the affective powers underpinning the marketplace. He understands how to manipulate an exchange by not fixing a price on the commodity he is selling. There is an obvious element of gamesmanship in his performance as Scoto, and his progressive devaluation of the medicine on offer is clearly an expected aspect of the ritual, but the scene also registers a contempt for traditional practices of exchange. Instead, Volpone seems to prefer something less material: "I am in a humour, at this time, to make a present of the small quantity my coffer contains, to the rich in courtesy, and to the poor for God's sake … I will have, only, a pledge of your loves, to carry something from amongst you" (II.ii.209-19). Volpone sells his medicine, itself the product of alchemical fantasy and a metaphor representing any kind of self-delusion, for something that seems immaterial: a pledge of love.[72] But his vault is filled with such pledges, illustrating the lucrative potency of his merchandise and the genius of his style of exchange. He has found a different kind of market, so to speak. More to the point, the foundation of his entire policy is facilitated by the desires of various men and women about town who hope to inherit his wealth, and thus "counter-work the one unto the other, / Contend in Gifts, as they would seem in Love."[73]

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[71] Bacon, "Of Usurie," *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 126.

[72] Jonathan Gil Harris, in *Sick Economies*, reads *Volpone* as an intersection between the discourses of early modern English mercantilism and the language of pathology and disease (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 108-135.

[73] The quote recalls a fascinating phrase from Robert Allen's celebration of charitable gift-giving, *The Oderifferous Garden of Charitie*: "The one striving after a sort to overcome the other with

Everyone *seems* to be making pledges of love, especially Volpone and his "beloved Mosca," who both rely on the pretense of charity in order to maintain their common purpose. When they finally engage in commercial partnership by way of informal contract ("I cannot now / Afford it you so cheap") the negotiations ultimately break down and result in their mutual ruin.[74]

Until the eventual dissolution of their partnership, he and Mosca turn people into gold – think of the description of Celia as "Bright as your gold! And lovely as your gold!" – and they turn charity into gold like the alchemical fantasies of Jonson's subsequent drama. Using the lure of his money to exploit otherwise sacrosanct relationships, Volpone transforms his house into an "anti-hospital," to use Robert Wiltenburg's phrase, infecting the proper relationships between Voltore and the public good, Corbaccio and his obedient son, Corvino and a faithful wife.[75] By framing himself as a worthwhile recipient of charity, old and ill and bereft of family, Volpone's theatrical acumen – and Mosca's subtle psychology – provides just enough justification for less sophisticated mercenaries to cloak their investments as charity. Indeed, this is precisely how Corvino explains his pandering to Celia, encouraging her to think of her imminent prostitution as "a pious Work, meer Charity for Physick, / And honest Policy, to assure mine own" (III.vii.65-6).[76] Note that the phrase's appositive link between pious works and mere charity is joined by a coordinating conjunction that brings policy into the description: this is, Corvino claims, charitable work

kindnesse and benefites: according to the common saying which goeth concerning such: *There is no love lost betwixt them*. The which kind of strife hath bene alwayes honourable, even among the nations of the heathen." (London: 1603), 13.

[74] See Gregory Chaplin, "'Divided Amongst Themselves': Collaboration and Anxiety in Jonson's *Volpone*," *ELH* 69.1 (2002): 57-81.

[75] Wiltenburg, *Ben Jonson and Self-Love* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 30.

[76] Charles Hallett, in "Jonson's Celia: A Reinterpretation of *Volpone*," *Studies in Philology* 68.1 (1971): 50-69, spends a great deal of time on this equivalence, and reinterprets the function of Celia in the play, according her more symbolic (and narrative) importance than most scholars.

and good policy. His assertion, though obviously ridiculous in context, demonstrates the partnership between both concepts. The two options were not mutually exclusive in early modern England. There is delicious irony, then, when Mosca refuses to return Corvino's gifts after Volpone's feigned death, linking his items of material charity with the deliberate prostitution of his wife:

> That you are
> A declared cuckold, on good terms? This Pearl,
> You'll say, was yours? Right: This Diamond?
> I'll not deny't, but thank you. Much here else?
> It may be so. Why, think that these good Works
> May help to hide your bad: I'll not betray you;
> Although you be but extraordinary
> And have it only in Title, it sufficeth.   (V.iii.53-59)

Mosca treats Corvino's gifts just as the merchant had described them, as honest policy, but Mosca alters the policy's directive, construing them in the context of preserving social reputation, as a means of hiding bad works with good rather than turning a mercantile profit. Mosca, moreover, can keep the gifts precisely because they were charitable rather than contractual, which allows him to determine their purpose and manipulate the exchange. Apparently he considers the various presents to be worth his silence where Corvino's cuckoldry is concerned, a lucrative gift in itself, since Mosca was poised to ruin the reputation of honor and credit on which an early modern merchant relied.

Because Volpone and Mosca manipulate the awkward relationship between charity and commerce, exploiting in particular the undetermined use of Volpone's riches as a means of generating more riches, the period's recent developments regarding charitable uses seems especially relevant. Jonson draws attention to the importance and misapplication of the term "use" throughout the play, and in the very first scene he highlights Volpone's abuse of the concept by way of spectacular parody: Mosca asserts to his patron, "You know the use of riches, and dare give, now, / From that bright heap, to me, your poor observer," who acknowledges the parasite's veracity by offering a reward, saying,

"Take, of my hand; thou strik'st on truth, in all" (I.i.62-67). Alison Scott has examined the word "use" here as a vehicle for investigating the problems of luxurious extravagance in *Volpone*, but Jonson is clearly gesturing at a misapplication of charitable uses as well, directly referencing Volpone's maintenance of various figures who remain in a subordinate capacity, from Mosca to his dwarf and eunuch, and also providing a burlesque scene in which the rich give to the poor.[77]

Elsewhere Jonson emphasizes the conflation of sex and use during an otherwise innocuous scene involving Mosca and Lady Politic-would-be, who attempts to recover a charitable rapport with the parasite by suggestively offering her body as a gesture of goodwill:

> *Lad.*   If you stay
> In *Venice* here, please you to use me, Sir —
> *Mos.* Will you go, Madam?
> *Lad.* 'Pray you, Sir, use me: In faith.
> The more you see me, the more I shall conceive
> You have forgot our Quarrel.   (IV.iii.14-19)[78]

Jonson plays with similar erotic implications during the scene of attempted rape, when Celia is ordered to "use thy fortune well, / With secrecy and pleasure" (III.vii.186-7). The imperative seems poorly calculated rhetorically, at least in terms of its audience, which suggests that Jonson's primary focus here is on Volpone, whose rapturous monologue places his own philosophy of private hedonism in sharper relief. Indeed, one wonders if Celia's reputation among posterity might have improved if Jonson had included a bit more dramatic tension, if she had to wrestle with a more complicated ethical proposition, such as the one Shakespeare poses in *Measure for Measure*, when Angelo offers to spare Isabella's life if she will sleep with him: "Might there not be a charity in sin / To save this brother's

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[77] In particular, Scott examines an alternative connotation of the word "use" as a vehicle for investigating the problems of luxurious extravagance, in "Censuring Indulgence: Volpone's 'use of riches' and the Problem of Luxury," *AUMLA* 110 (2008): 1-15.

[78] The quarto version of this scene employs an additional "use," in replace of "see me" in line 18, which makes the implication all the more evident.

life?" (II.iv.63-4). Instead the use of wealth Volpone offers is purely private fantasy, a secret means of facilitating luxurious pleasure. In similar fashion Sir Politic-would-be stores up observations and general notions, "For mine own private use" (II.i.104), that he plans to employ as capital for various moneymaking schemes, and in the courtroom Voltore conspires to "use his vehement Figures ... Out of pure Love, no hope of Gain" (V.ii.51-3).When Volpone initiates his plan to mock the various suitors by naming Mosca his heir, he urges his parasite to "use them scurvily" (V.ii.75). With apologies to Falstaff, Volpone is not only perverse in the uses of his own wealth, but he is the cause that perverts the uses of other men's gifts. So much for the manner in which Volpone and Mosca "use" wealth.

Of course, as I have explained, the cultural expectation, underwritten by statutory law and celebrated by city pageant, would have assumed the majority of Volpone's riches were designated for charitable uses, and in fact Volpone encourages this pretense, crying out in his supposed death throes to Mosca and Corvino:

> Marry, my state is hopeless!
> Will him to pray for me; and t'use his Fortune,
> With reverence when he comes to't.   (III.vii.87-9)

Consequently, this story of avaricious legacy hunters, which otherwise seems a likely product of Jonson's conscious classicism, acquires a contemporary resonance, as various potential executors threaten to appropriate enormous sums of wealth for private use. Jacobean culture was interested in this precise dilemma, as they negotiated the tensions involved in the accumulation and distribution of vast sums of money. Robert Evans has examined the curious resemblance Volpone bears to Thomas Sutton, the renowned moneylender and eventual founder of Charterhouse School, a detail that did not escape the notice of several contemporaries. Evans notes that the long prefatory letter to *Volpone*, which centers on the problem of defamation, suggests that Jonson must have realized his audience would look to apply his work to specific individuals like Sutton: "Any implied

criticism could have been read as having been designed, like Bishop Hall's letter, to spur the old man to use his wealth well, to finalize and implement the charitable designs he had long ago set down."[79] Whether or not Jonson intended the play as personal libel, the contemporary perception demonstrates that *Volpone* was partially understood as a commentary on the charitable uses of wealth, and offers a fascinating example of a culture that considered the private wealth of individuals to be a communal concern. (Sir John Harington, for example, attempted to coerce Sutton into naming Prince Henry his heir.) A manuscript defending the memory of Sutton does nothing to contradict the assumption that Sutton's wealth was of public interest, but instead states that Jonson merely targeted the wrong man: "Johnson lived to correct his mistake of [Sutton] out of a passage in Cicero twice translated by him … it appeared that [he] sought not soe much a prey for his covetousness to enjoy, as instrument for his goodnesse to bestow; who knew that of great riches there is noe reall use but distribution."[80] That was a cultural commonplace of the period, to use riches by distributing them, but Volpone perverts a custom that was accepted and practiced by the wealthiest entrepreneurs of the era, deferring distribution indefinitely and enjoying the pleasures of money in private.

Ultimately Volpone's wealth is not designated for an institution like Charterhouse School, as Sutton's was, but rather confiscated by state authorities and directed to a hospital of incurable fools:

> *Avoc.*   but our Judgment on thee
> Is, That thy Substance all be streight confiscate
> To the Hospital of the *Incurabili:*
> And since the most was gotten by Imposture,
> By feigning Lame, Gout, Palsie, and such Diseases,
> Thou art to lie in Prison, crampt with Irons,
> Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed. Remove him.

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[79] Evans, *Jonson and the Contexts of His Time* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994), 61.

[80] Ibid, 54.

Volp. This is call'd mortifying of a Fox.   (V.xii.118-125)

It probably would be a mistake to consider the recent Statute of Charitable Uses of more

topical significance than Edward Blount's 1600 translation of Tomaso Garzoni's *Hospital*

of Incurable Fools, given the obvious allegorical texture of Jonson's satire, as well as

Volpone's own declaration that "to be a fool born is a disease incurable" (II.ii.163).[81] But

the Avocatori's legal prerogative here gestures at the recent statute's power to shape and

redirect charitable bequests, in addition to dramatizing the general desire among

contemporaries to set right any potential misappropriation of funds that should be

delegated to charitable causes, and to ensure the continued relationship between private

profit and public good. Moreover, the reference to a hospital, however figurative in

description, evokes the specific landscape of London poor relief, and Bedlam in particular,

which attracted Jonson's attention before and after he composed *Volpone*.[82] This would

lend more texture to Volpone's final, provocative phrase, since the term "mortification"

possesses a relatively obscure meaning derived from Scottish law that describes the

distribution of property for charitable uses.[83]

The Alchemist

Unlike *Volpone*, the illicit wealth amassed by tricksters in *The Alchemist* never

reaches the public sphere, diverted instead to the private use of Lovewit, the master of the

house, who, discovering the fraudulent activities of his servant Face and cronies Subtle and

Doll Common, demonstrates a shrewd opportunism in capitalizing on their schemes at the

play's conclusion. It is at this juncture that Lovewit and Jonson both seem to stop and

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[81] Harriett Hawkins, "Folly, Incurable Disease, and *Volpone*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 8.2 (1968): 335-348.

[82] See Ken Jackson, *Separate Theatres*. Unfortunately, Jackson makes no specific references to *Volpone*.

[83] John Creaser, "*Volpone*: The Mortifying of the Fox," *Essays in Criticism* 25.3 (1975): 352.

assess the dramatic narrative from retrospect. Apparently conscious of the potential hazards of his "servant's wit," as well as his own complicity, Lovewit addresses the audience at the play's conclusion, attempting to mitigate censure by emphasizing the accommodating power of both love and wit: gratitude demands that he remain "a little indulgent" to the machinations of Face, he explains, although it forces him to speak "with some small strain / Of his own candour," and as to the decorum of an old man marrying a young wife, he remarks that a good brain (or wit) and romance will "stretch age's truth sometimes" (V.v.150-6). Note how Lovewit employs understatement to moderate the passage, keeping his behavior within the bounds of respectability. So he has "stretched" and "strained" conventional morals a "little," as much to charitably protect his servant as to acquire a wife and wealth. The name Lovewit, which "might, of course, be decoded as an alliance of wit and love, intelligence and charity," recalls Jonson's impassioned plea to Salisbury – "They are not charitable who are too witty in another mans works" – and serves as a reminder of the dangers of excess in wit and the problems it poses to love, how it can threaten to destabilize relationships and violate communal norms.[84] That is, the character embodies one of the central dilemmas of the narrative, which explores how to accommodate potentially conflicting moral and commercial imperatives.

Jonson never fully endorses Lovewit's triumph or his explanation, and Face, perhaps the true mastermind of the play, gets the last word. His address to the audience both reinforces and undermines Lovewit's rhetoric of moderation. If Lovewit has stretched decorum, Face submits to it, although he engages the audience in a type of exchange supposedly based on goodwill but actually equivalent to judicial bribery: "this pelf / Which I have got, if you do quit me, rests / To feast you often, and invite new guests" (V.v.163-5). Face marks a subtle correspondence between the audience and the rest of his gulls, since

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[84] Peter Bement, *The Alchemist* (London: Methuen, 1987), 174.

their admission money has ended up in his pockets as well, but he attempts to reassure

spectators they will receive ample recreation in future acts of hospitality – that is, more

performances. It is a metatheatrical culmination of the play's entire plot, which repeatedly

asks for charitable capital (in the form of consumer material and consumer behavior)

intended to be alchemized into charitable uses, but which ultimately ends up as private

profit.[85] In this case each guest in the audience has contributed to the commercial endeavor

of Blackfriars, a theatre which Jonson suggests treads its own fine line between abusive

and good business. Indeed, the ambivalent comments of both Lovewit and Face register

Jonson's potential discomfort with the theatrical phenomenon he has staged and in which

he has participated. Jonson has already reminded readers in the prefatory epistle of the

play's quarto edition to "beware at what hands thou receives thy commodity; for thou wert

never more fair in the way to be cozened than (in this age) in poetry, especially in plays" (3-

5). He ostensibly directs his critique at rival dramatists who traffic in hyperbole and

popular romance, but the phrase seems awfully self-referential for an introduction to a play

that puts cozening center stage. The prologue suggests an alternative experience that can

result in mutual success – "When the wholesome remedies are sweet, / And, in their

working, gain and profit meet" (15-6) – and assuming that Jonson does not intend "gain"

and "profit" here as synonyms but rather as jointly beneficial outcomes, it seems the right

combination of love and wit – and money – can please both playwright and audience. But

the relationship is fraught with tension, and the play itself, dramatizing the sheer fun of

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[85] Several scholars have observed this aspect of Jonson's play, and many have registered differing opinions of the phenomenon. Riggs, quite rightly, finds it evidence of Jonson's equivocal attitude toward the theatre, 170-3; Peter Womack is scandalized by the manner in which it aligns theatre with illicit crime and explodes "the aesthetic ideology of classical comedy" in *Ben Jonson* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 118-20, and Leggatt is merely disconcerted in *Ben Jonson, His Vision and Art* (New York: Methuen, 1981), 35.

fraudulent exchange, threatens to undermine Jonson's moral center, potentially casting the

playwright as just another haughty Lovewit or cunning Face.[86]

The play is obsessed with language and commodities, especially with language as a

commodity, since the company of tricksters traffic in theatrical illusion, from Drugger's

ship "That shall yield him, such a commodity / Of drugs" (II.i.14) to Kastril's desire for the

fictional epicenter of London, "the very Street, and Sign / Where the Commodity dwells"

(III.iv.94-5). All of this is directed by the ringleader of this commercial drama: "*Don Face!*

Why, h' is the most authentick Dealer / I' these commodities!" (II.iii.301-2). And yet the

play seems just as concerned with charity.[87] Face, Subtle, Sir Epicure Mammon, and

Ananias explicitly mention various forms of charitable giving. Indeed, whereas the

predominant contemporary ethos suggests that individual commercial success should be

redistributed in the form of charitable uses as a means of celebrating the communal order,

in the world of *The Alchemist* material charity serves as the capital that drives private

commercial schemes, the proper starting point rather than end. Throughout the play

Jonson does not portray private business (if it is appropriate to classify the "venter

tripartite" as such) as a rival to charity but rather as an intimate participant in its

activities.[88] This relationship facilitates corruption, when self-interest masquerades as

charity or monopolizes its material, but Jonson seems more intent on critiquing abusive

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[86] If Andrew Gurr's supposition is correct, that Lovewit is intended to represent Shakespeare, a housekeeper or shareholder of Blackfriars, the situation expresses an even deeper ambivalence with commercial theatre for Jonson. See "Who is Lovewit? What is he?" *Ben Jonson and Theatre*, eds. Richard Allan Cave and Brian Woolland (London: Routledge, 1999), 5-19.

[87] This is my single qualification of the argument Susan Wells pursues in her discussion of the festive marketplace and its corrective influence on commercial ideology, in "Jacobean City Comedy and the Ideology of the City" *ELH* 48:1 (1981): 54. Whereas Wells claims of *The Alchemist*, "The conventional answers – charity and contentment – press upon our attention less than the play's image of the lavish and carefree material life of the festive marketplace," I believe the play repeatedly points to charity as both a problem and a solution.

[88] Leinwand provides a fascinating examination of the venter tripartite as an early modern business venture in *Theatre, Finance and Society*, 130-5.

individuals than the larger system in which they operate, dramatizing problems of exchange as much as acquisition.[89] Even the initial argument between Subtle and Face during the play's first scene seems to be a matter of charitable credit. Each claims to have transformed the other into a superior social animal, from ragtag rogue to alchemist or menial servant to suburb-captain, which demonstrates in its own perverse fashion how altruism and power participate together in this urban environment.[90] Jonson might present quasi-utopian social alternatives in poems like *To Penshurst*, but his dramas rarely offer anything but a broken world in which mischief and magnanimity coexist in uncomfortable proximity. Perhaps one of the more striking aspects of *The Alchemist* is its insistence on critiquing Surly's cynicism as fully as it does Mammon's deluded optimism. Just as *Bartholomew Fair* concludes with a reminder to forgive because "you are but *Adam, Flesh and Blood*" (V.vi.93-4), *The Alchemist* begins with mutual concession: Jonson always seems more interested in dramatizing reconciliation than reform.

Reconciliation is necessary because the world of *The Alchemist* is defined by scarcity, limited in its space, time, and commodities. The neighbors hear everything. Even Mammon's plenistic catalogues advertise a lack in the material world of London. But this social claustrophobia, which can accentuate the mercenary intentions of every character, also illustrates the necessity of charitable dealings, which is particularly evident in the "venter tripartite."[91] Doll Common, as her name befits her, makes several compelling

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[89] Christopher Burlinson writes, in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 287: "Jonson's critique of money, or at least of certain uses of it, had as much to do with exchange and transactional ethics as with acquisitiveness and the hoarding of wealth."

[90] At least two recent scholars view the altercation between Face and Subtle in terms of a credit dispute. See Jill Phillips Ingram, *Idioms of Self-Interest*, 103-4, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, "Shipwrecks in the City: Commercial Risk as Romance in Early Modern City Comedy," *Plotting Early Modern London*, eds. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein (Ashgate: Aldershot, England, 2004), 88.

[91] Whether or not this accentuates or mollifies Jonson's satire is debatable. For the former perspective, see John Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age* (Lincoln:

arguments in behalf of communal purpose, exhorting both her partners to subordinate private interest to the collective good: "The venture tripartite? All things in common? / Without priority? 'Sdeath, you perpetual curs, / Fall to your couples again, and cozen kindly / And heartily and lovingly as you should" (I.i.135-8). Jonson probably means to parody the introductory offering of Erasmus's *Adagia*, *amicorum communia omnia*, and since the exhortation is spoken by a prostitute, it possesses an ironic sexual resonance as well. The tone does not fully undercut the classical and Christian notions of shared society which Jonson uses to introduce his tricksters, however, and in fact the episode appears to gesture at ecclesial controversy when Doll commands Subtle, "Leave your faction, sir. / And labour kindly in the common work" (I.i.155-6).[92] Appropriately, after promising to "conform" himself, Subtle invokes a conventional image of charitable society, claiming, "The knot / Shall grow the stronger for this breach" (I.i.152-62). The notion of "labouring kindly in the common work" was likewise emphasized among shared business enterprises in contemporary London. The partnership between Subtle, Face, and Doll is partly burlesque and obviously strained – no honor among thieves, perhaps –but Jonson nevertheless takes pains to portray the play's least reputable characters as a community reforming itself through controversy. This sort of collaboration is always vulnerable to the problems of rivalry and privatized interest, and often temporary in existence, but it remained necessary to functioning Jacobean society and especially to successful Jacobean theatre. As Sanders observes, "The real communal act of *The Alchemist* is an imaginative one," as the actors and audience have participated together in making a drama out of "empty walls ... / A few cracked pots, and glasses, and a furnace" (V.v.39-40).[93]

University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 145-6. For the latter, see Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 1998), 68-88.

[92] Julie Sanders teases out the political inflections of this episode in *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics*, 73-4.

[93] Ibid, 71.

If *The Alchemist* aims to marry gain and profit for the playwright and audience, imagining an exchange that proves mutually beneficial, Sir Epicure Mammon, one of the work's primary satirical targets, envisions that idealized scenario played out in absurd proportions. An alchemical devotee, Mammon desires the philosopher's stone for simultaneously private and public purposes, intending to distribute riches that are almost as immeasurable as the wealth he acquires. In both the case of gain or profit, Mammon seems immoderate and almost unnatural, and in fact he is introduced to the audience at the conclusion of the first act, in Subtle's mock dream vision, as a reformer of Nature itself:

> Me thinks I see him entring Ordinaries,
> Dispensing for the Pox, and Plaguy-houses,
> Reaching his Dose, walking *Moore-fields* for Lepers,
> And offering Citizens-wives Pomander-braclets,
> As his preservative, made of the *Elixir;*
> Searching the Spittle, to make old Bawds young;
> And the High-ways, for Beggars, to make rich:
> I see no end of his Labours. He will make
> Nature asham'd, of her long sleep: when Art,
> Who's but a Step-dame, shall do more than she,
> In her best to love to Mankind, ever could.
> If his Dream last, he'll turn the Age to Gold.   (I.iv.18-29)

This is, of course, Subtle's version of Mammon, a warped picture of the knight as painted by his own provocateur, and Subtle emphasizes the characteristics that make Mammon peculiarly vulnerable to the alchemist's machinations. It does not seem quite right to claim that Mammon is merely covering his lechery with the cloak of charity, as some scholars are tempted to do, since the knight's desires appear genuine enough to attract Subtle's predatory instinct.[94] He is clearly generous, wishing to cure leprosy and plague; he is also clearly lascivious, wishing to cure the pox (conveyed perhaps by certain "Citizens-wives"). He desires urban renewal, reforming the hospitals and highways; so too he desires sexual

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[94] See Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), esp. 75-6; Sanders claims he is only interested in possession (which I accept, with the qualification that he enjoys the power of distributing gifts too), 83-5, as does Mebane, who claims that he "masquerades as a prophet of humanitarian reform," 151-2.

renewal, and "to make old bawds young." But it is a worthwhile question to consider why

Jonson chooses to dramatize these two traits as complements – a "voluptuous mind," as

Mammon later grieves, and a charitable instinct – *eros* and *agape* together in their most

ludicrous dimensions.

There is something seductive about both transcendent signifiers, in that each

presents transformative power like alchemy itself, offering Mammon the apparent

opportunity to enact his desire to imitate Godhead.[95] "Be rich," he declares to Surly in a

perverse version of divine fiat, "And unto thee I speak it first, 'Be rich'" (II.i.24). The word

"Nature" is crucial when Subtle describes Mammon's dream of the Golden Age, itself an

archetypal vision of natural bliss, as the knight attempts to rival or surpass nature, to "do

more than she, / In her best to love to Mankind, ever could." Consequently, his charitable

and erotic visions remain unnatural, artificial, even monstrous. Later Subtle will describe

charity to be "Now grown a Prodigy with Men" (II.iii.18), and he means, presumably, that

brotherly love is all too rare and marvelous, but Jonson also suggests that the virtue, as

practiced by men like Mammon, acquires a freakish aspect. This prodigious character

replaces the humble expression of daily charity that binds together communities, bleeding

into Mammon's otherwise laudable desire to embody "the citizen-hero code of social

conduct"[96]:

> I shall employ it all in pious uses,
> Founding of Colledges, and *Grammar* Schools,
> Marrying young Virgins, building Hospitals,
> And now, and then, a Church.   (II.iii.48-52)

That last reference to a church, its climactic finality superbly deflated – "and now, and then"

– is merely an end to the beginning of Mammon's fantasy, since he intends to buy the roofs

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[95] Ronald Huebert emphasizes this point in *The Performance of Pleasure in English Renaissance Drama* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 64-5.

[96] Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy,* 76.

off churches to supply his alchemical project. Although his vision marries private monies and public works – Mammon hopes to join the ranks of other great Jacobean philanthropists like Thomas Sutton, endowing colleges and building hospitals and providing dowries – these gifts, ostensibly directed toward charitable purposes, are merely manifestations of power. It remains unclear if Jonson purposefully satirizes the charitable ethos of London's merchant community, or whether he employs the principles advertised in so many Lord Mayor's Shows to emphasize how far Mammon falls short of the mark. I think Jonson probably intends, with careful irony, to demonstrate how charitable gifts are often motivated by erotic desire, how the public good often walks hand in hand with private aspirations to fame and power. Mammon's fantasies certainly blur the distinction between erotic perversion and charitable giving (notice his excited reference to young virgins), and his future pious uses revolve around their own kind of pleasure principle, much like his sexualized vision of Doll Common: "But this Form / Was not intended to so dark a use" (IV.i.96-7).

Jonson uses Mammon's erotic imagination to pull down charity into the material sphere, where it becomes merely another exotic commodity he can acquire and consume. He explains to Surly that his "base affections" will not compromise the alchemical production because his involvement is merely a matter of consumer exchange:

> *Sur.* Why, I have heard, he must be *homo frugi,*
> A Pious, Holy, and Religious Man,
> One free from mortal Sin, a very Virgin.
>   *Mam.* That makes it, Sir, he is so. But I buy it.   (II.ii.97-100)

This could be considered an example of nascent capitalism, and Mammon's distinction between production and consumption, or labor and capital, bears suggestive resemblance to capitalist discourse.[97] But the knight's projection – aside from his plan to distribute

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[97] See in particular Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 99-118, and Rebecca Nivlin, "The Rogues' Paradox: Redefining Work in *The Alchemist," Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama* (Burlington, VT:

elixir "at the rate" (II.i.75) – aims to explode notions of profit by rendering labor and exchange unnecessary (although his utopian vision will remain hierarchical, as I mentioned, with Mammon as the king of his commonwealth, much like Gonzalo in *The Tempest*). Indeed, there is particular irony in Subtle's earlier description of Mammon, "I see no end of his Labours," since the knight attempts to remove labor from both moral and material economies.[98] His aim is not to eradicate labor (or death) in the primitive sense, as in a pre-lapsarian paradise, but rather to obviate the process by virtue of unlimited purchasing power. It seems like a vision of charity and commerce participating in a mutual endeavor, exerting their own capacities, but each in a limited sphere: so, the alchemist's not-for-profit charity produces the philosopher's stone, which is purchased by Mammon and then used in an array of commercial and charitable schemes. Such a conception of charity reduces the virtue from a general social principle to a specific action which can be applied when convenient.

The religious separatists, Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome, express similar conceptions of charity as something to be employed only in select circumstances. Ananias, for example, asks Subtle whether or not the materials they plan to buy and invest in alchemy are owned by orphans whose parents were "sincere professors," in which case they would be obliged to make a fair exchange:

> *Sub.*   Good. I have
> Some Orphans Goods to come here.
>   *Ana.* Of what kind, Sir?
>   *Sub.* Pewter, and Brass, Andirons, and Kitchin-ware,
> Metals, that we must use our Med'cine on:
> Wherein the *Brethren* may have a penn'orth,
> For ready money.   *Ana.* Were the Orphans Parents
> *Sincere Professors?*
>   *Sub.* Why do you ask?   *Ana.* Because

Ashgate, 2011), 115-30. David Hawkes, in *Idols of the Marketplace* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 157-8, focuses on Mammon's warped understanding of the alchemical process.

[98] See Nivlin, who points out the intersection of two incommensurable systems of labor in *The Alchemist*, one feudal and hierarchical, the other capitalist and portable.

> We then are to deal justly, and give (in truth)
> Their utmost value.   *Sub.* 'Slid, you'ld cozen else,
> And if their Parents were not of the *faithful?*
> I will not trust you, now I think on't,
> Till I ha' talk'd with your *Pastor*.   (II.v.51-61)

This is slightly different from the hypocrisy of Zeal-of-the-land Busy and Dame Purecraft,

both of whom will be integrated into Jonson's festive community at the end of

Bartholomew Faire. Instead Ananias articulates a perverse kind of situational ethics that

reserves charitable dealing for specific religious adherents and tacitly condones the

exploitation of others. Note how trust and reputation deteriorates on account of such

behavior. Jonson was probably appropriating (and misrepresenting) specific economic

tenets of various religious sects derived from their marginalized status – especially certain

exclusivist principles espoused by H.N. and other Familists – but the hyperbole serves to

underline real tensions that existed in the local Blackfriars community, and especially

between the theatre (which might represent the performative aspects of religious

conformity) and its neighboring puritan population.[99] Although he presents Ananias as an

Amsterdam separatist and thus avoids engaging London puritans directly, Jonson

dramatizes a characteristically puritan dilemma: how can the morally scrupulous survive

London on their own terms? Even members of the separatist community cannot agree, it

seems, as Tribulation demonstrates in his efforts to convince Ananias of temporizing

(which Jonson explicitly links to Puritan notions of charitable edification). Jonson's

critique of separatism and puritanism centers on hypocrisy, to be sure, but he also attacks

their specific policies. Much like Mammon's secular efforts at reform, the separatists treat

commerce and charity interchangeably, depending on the person involved in the exchange,

rather than using charity as an *a priori* condition for ethical economic conduct. Jonson

adds ironic depth and texture to his treatment of this relevant contemporary issue, since

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[99] See Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 579 ff.

the normative social vision, one in which charity governs the entire process of economic

exchange, finds expression from perhaps the least reliable character in the play, Subtle:

> Has he a competent sum there I' the Bag
> To buy the Goods within? I am made Guardian,
> And must, for Charity and Conscience sake,
> Now see the most be made for my poor Orphan:
> Tho I desire the *Brethren* too, good Gainers.   (III.ii.115-9)

Here again is that notion of marrying gain and profit, with Subtle acting as the

intermediary in this mutually beneficial exchange that is governed by charity and

conscience. This, of course, is the ideal scenario, which Subtle abuses as much as any

religious separatist or extravagant dupe like Mammon.

Throughout the play Face and Subtle exploit the language of charity. They educate

Mammon, for example, and encourage him to consider the alchemical process as

something extra-commercial. That is, he learns that he cannot merely "buy" the alchemical

product of Subtle's so-called charity, and the process whereby he intends to acquire and

distribute wealth requires something more participatory in its ethical demands:

> Face. Ay, and repent at home, sir. It may be
> For some good penance you may ha' it yet:
> A hundred pound to the box at Bedlam –
> Mam.   Yes.
> Face. For the restoring such as ha' their wits.
> Mam.   I'll do it.
> Face. I'll send one to you to receive it.   (IV.v.84-8)

This merely continues Jonson's fascinating portrayal of charity conceived as an investment

aimed at material rather than heavenly rewards, but he casually inserts a theological

dimension to the episode. The play's commercial metaphors remain at the forefront,

complicating Face's depiction of almsgiving as a meritorious exchange, but Jonson offers a

confessional equilibrium between the Protestant "repent" and Roman "penance," between

the active reason and volition involved in Mammon's purification process and the

mysterious, providential results framed in the conditional: the charity of either faith is

good enough to be gulled by, apparently. Face, witty enough to express a double entendre

here of "restoring such as ha' their wits," will no doubt be happy to transport the Bedlam charity to his own vault. As a butler who sells the house's dole beer (I.i.51-59), Face is already comfortable commodifying and then appropriating traditional forms of charitable giving. The particular reference to Bedlam acquires added meaning in its position, for Jonson at least, as a London locale where public performances of charity merge with the private acquisition of social credit and fashion, a stop along the stylish tour "through London, to the Exchange, Bedlam, the china houses" (IV.iv.47).[100] There is an additional suggestion, of course, that Bedlam is the proper home for Mammon himself.

Near the play's conclusion, Face, who possesses an intimate understanding of his victims' respective psychologies, underscores the sensual fantasy that informs Mammon's notion of charity, which remains limited in its utility for all its hyperbole, a perpetual dish of cream for tits and tomboys:

> *Lov.* What a great loss in hope have you sustain'd!
> *Mam.* Not I, the Commonwealth has.
> *Fac.*   Aye, he would ha' built
> The City new; and made a Ditch about it
> Of Silver, should have run with Cream from *Hogsden;*
> That every Sunday in *Moor-fields,* the youngkers,
> And tits, and tom-boys should have fed on, *gratis.* (V.v.75-80)

There is real humor in puncturing the knight's pretensions, but as Alan Dessen notes, the commonwealth *has* been the greatest loser in all of this, and Mammon consequently becomes "a symbolic embodiment of the failure of social obligation and personal responsibility in a world dominated by gold."[101] But the knight still has the opportunity to benefit the commonwealth, even after his dreams have dissolved. Willing to return Mammon's private property, Lovewit merely requires him to accept "public means" of humbling himself in a legal and performative ritual that recalls the spectacle concluding

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[100] Face and Subtle recycle a line from *Epicoene*, when the fashionable women hurry off to "Bedlam, to the chinahouses, and to the Exchange" (IV.iii.23).

[101] Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 118.

Eastward, Ho!. Mammon refuses to participate. By failing to submit his own pride to the public good and serve as a moral to others, Mammon fails the ultimate test of charity and loses his private property in the process. He will only give in a posture of superiority.

Ultimately Mammon is little different from his friend Surly. Mammon is willing to indulge his charitable fantasies if he remains in possession of the philosopher's stone, to administer material goods without ever experiencing loss. But whereas he attempts to circumvent labor and production by engaging in a sophisticated marketplace that can buy or sell virtue, Surly will not participate in any kind of investment whatsoever:

> *Mam.* This Gent'man you must bear withal:
> I told you, he had no Faith. *Sur.* And little Hope, Sir;
> But much less Charity, should I gull my self.   (II.iii.122-4)

Of course, Surly really does lack charity, which in Pauline fashion believes all things, as Jonson makes clear. If the parable of the talents is indeed the governing conceit of *The Alchemist*, as Robert Knoll suggests, Surly provides the perfect embodiment of the third servant who buries his talent, since his singular purpose is avoiding any loss of his own – an obsessive care that lends a genuine pathos to his realization Dame Pliant has wed Lovewit: "How! Have I lost her then?" (V.v.49).[102] He never gains anything, joining the ranks of gulls regardless, not on account of absurd fantasies but a "want of putting forward" (V.v.55), as Lovewit explains. Surly indicts himself in similar terms, although he frames his own hesitancy as the consequence of honor, describing to Dame Pliant how she nearly missed losing her reputation (and gaining, apparently, gonorrhea):

> Your honour was t'have catch'd a certain clap
> (Through your credulity) had I but been
> So punctually forward, as place, time,
> And other circumstances would ha' made a Man.   (IV.vi.3-6)

The passage underscores Surly's constant worry over credulity, either Dame Pliant's or his own, never offering credit to anyone but himself. He asserts his claim to commodity – the

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[102] Knoll, "How to Read *The Alchemist*," *College English* 21:8 (1960): 456-60.

wealthy widow of Jacobean drama – by virtue of what he has *not* done: "And where I might have wronged your honor, and have not, / I claim some interest in your love" (IV.vi.8-9).[103] Surly represents a certain type of London merchant who refuses to participate in the whirligig of early modern business, a system founded on informal exchange and mutual interest.[104] There is something about Surly's parsimonious behavior – as a merchant or as a prospective husband – that Jonson refuses to endorse.

It might be brazen to declare, *pace* William Blake and Milton's Satan, that Jonson is on the side of the tricksters, but the play's constant metatheatrical conversation suggests as much. Jonson repeatedly performs his own type of alchemical illusion for the gulls who frequent the theatre of Blackfriars, and it becomes difficult to separate Jonson's work from the endeavors of Face and Subtle, who present their artful labors to a varied group of spectators:

> I should be sorry
> To see my Labours, now e'en at perfection,
> Got by long watching, and large patience,
> Not prosper, where my love and zeal hath plac'd 'em.
> Which (Heaven I call to witness, with your self,
> To whom I have pour'd my thoughts) in all my ends,
> Have look'd no way, but unto publick Good,
> To pious Uses, and dear Charity,
> Now grown a Prodigy with Men.   (II.iii.10-8)

Subtle's rhetorical legerdemain here, a theatrical performance that claims to be intended for charitable uses, possesses uncanny resemblance to Jonson's various defenses of his art. Just as Jonson appeals to God and Salisbury in the wake of imprisonment, Subtle exclaims, "Heaven I call to witness, with your self." If Subtle's art requires patience and long watching, Jonson describes his efforts at composition in similar terms during the

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[103] Robert Watson notes that Surly's failure is also a theatrical one; he mistakenly expects to triumph as a "morality-play Good Counsel figure." See *Ben Jonson's Parodic Strategy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 127-131.

[104] Richard Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England*, 297-301.

apologetical dialogue of *Poetaster*, stating, "If a free Mind had but the patience," he might damn "his long-watch'd Labours to the Fire." And in his *Discoveries* Jonson constantly endorses the essential role provided by poets in behalf of the commonwealth's "public good." It is tempting to wonder whether Jonson is appropriating charitable readings, like Face does the house's dole beer, in order to sell his own theatrical commodity. Is his advertisement of gain and profit merely an alchemical dream?

The answer, if the assertions of this chapter are correct, is an ambivalent one. Of the various fantasies dramatized in *The Alchemist*, this notion of bringing together public gain and private profit is perhaps the most powerful, and it was replicated (though disputed) at the collective level among Jonson's contemporaries. In *The Alchemist* language is the primary means by which both characters and playwrights negotiate complex social exchanges – legitimate or otherwise – that advertise the possibility of marrying charity and commerce, which requires an interpretive rigor to penetrate the illusions of self-interest and stabilize the fragile dynamic of literary exchange. To "deal charitably," as Jonson declares to Salisbury, involves mutual trust and credit. Jonson highlights this dilemma in his epistle to the readers of *The Alchemist*, whom he separates into two classes: "If thou beest more, thou art an understander, and then I trust thee. If thou art one that takest up, and but a pretender, beware at what hands thou receivest thy commodity." Note how the distinction, which centers on the issue of judgment, becomes felt at the level of social relations; an understander can be trusted, as a friend, as someone "more" than just a consumer of literary goods, whereas a pretender corrupts that relationship, and is in fact told to "beware" the theatrical commodities he purports to buy and judge.[105] In contemporary parlance, someone who "takest up" might buy a commodity or seize it by force, might believe a conversation (or play) on credit, without examination, or

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[105] Joseph Loewenstein describes this phenomenon as "the alienations of purchase, which divide producer and consumer." See *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 161.

(contradictorily) interrupt by expressing disapproval.[106] All of these senses of the term involve an abuse toward Jonson's preferred mode of literary exchange. He makes a similar distinction in the preface to *Catiline* between the "Reader in Ordinarie," for whom the book is a purchased product – "It is your owne" – and the reader extraordinary, to whom Jonson submits his work and life. This is not merely the poet's snobbery at work. Jonson, one of the more successful commercial practitioners of his period, often uses charity as a figure to distinguish between excellence and verse merely discarded from the "almes-basket of wit":

> No doubt some mouldy tale,
> Like *Pericles*; and stale
> As the Shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish—
> Scraps out of every dish
> Throwne forth, and rak't into the common tub,
> May keepe up the *Play-club*:
> There, sweepings doe as well
> As the best order'd meale.
> For, who the relish of these guests will fit,
> Needs set them but the almes-basket of wit.[107]   (21-30)

Whether or not popular dramatists, Shakespeare among them, are receiving or distributing the charity seems beside the point. The paradox of this abuse, which remains consistent throughout his career, is the equivalence accorded to mere commodity and mere charity. Neither is a sufficient literary product on its own, apparently.

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[106] See the various definitions for the phrasal verb "to take up" in the *OED* under "take, v."

[107] R. Goodwin makes a similar claim in *Vindiciae Jonsonianae*, defending Jonson from such readers, pretenders one might say, who possess "Licence to banquet, their Decrepit Witt, / on Offall Poets? on the Comon Store, / and Scraps of witt?"

CHAPTER FOUR:
THOMAS BROWNE'S CHARITABLE "LOGICKE"

If the inclusion of Ben Jonson's drama seems an unexpected addition to an extended study of charity in early modern England, the focus of this fourth chapter, Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, is more predictable. In addition to pragmatic advantages – the *Religio* offers one of the most sustained examinations of charity written in the entire period – there are equally subjective recommendations: Browne's idiosyncratic discourse is at once weird and wonderful, its "soft and flexible sense" inviting comment from the scholar even as it offers pleasure to the reader. But both situations confound expectations. Despite the insistent classicism of his work, Jonson's drama repeatedly examines problems related to charity that are equally important and intractable. Browne, meanwhile, devotes nearly ten thousand words to the subject of charity, but readers could be forgiven if they cannot explain, after the work ends with its rapturous paean to God, exactly what Browne thinks about the subject.

It is helpful, I think, to note that nearly all of Browne's contemporary readers, whether they respond to the *Religio* with admiration or scorn, seem to be aware that they are encountering a strange and unusual work. Neither of the first published critics of the piece, Kenelm Digby and Alexander Ross, knows what to do with Browne's wilder expatiations, and both of their readings suffer for it. Whether it is the result of genuine confusion or an affectation of false humility, Digby persistently frames his observations as rhetorical questions – "Shall I commend or censure our *Author* for beleeving so well of his acquired knowledg" – as if he cannot decide whether Browne is in earnest. Ross simply refuses to play along with Browne, humorlessly declaring, "I have no leasure nor mind here

to expatiate of my selfe." It is difficult to blame them. Browne never provides clear signals that help the reader know precisely how to access his work, as he avoids the conventional pressure points of other religious tracts. This is perhaps best evidenced by the various confessional responses to the work. Browne's treatise could be and sometimes was interpreted in crypto-papist terms, as "the religion of the House of *Medicis*, not of the Church of *England*," just as it could be considered a piece of triumphalist Protestant rhetoric, and consequently anathema to Roman Catholic doctrine.[1] An anonymous treatise of 1647 supporting Presbyterianism and the Parliament even uses the work to justify the twin imperatives of reforming prelacy and suppressing sectarian heresy.[2] Browne's discussion of charity is perhaps even more difficult to interpret than his earlier section on faith: though perplexing in its own right, his discussion of religious belief and devotional practice at least possesses a coherent context, whereas his rambling examination of charity never seems structured by any kind of organizing principle, theological or otherwise.

In the 1630s, when Browne initially wrote his *Religio* in manuscript, charity was often a clear marker of ecclesial identity, and little had changed when he revised and published the work in 1643. Throughout the period charity remained a crucial issue of debate between Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well as among the various religious constituencies grouped together under the Church of England. In 1630 recusant knight Tobie Matthew published an anonymous tract entitled *Charity Mistaken*, which responded to accusations by clergy in the Church of England that Roman Catholicism stood in violation of charity by willfully conferring damnation on all Protestants. Matthew's document is fascinating for a variety of reasons, but perhaps the most relevant feature is its general tone and attitude, which dismisses out of hand the gestures toward toleration

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[1] Alexander Ross, *Medicus Medicatus* (London: 1645), 2. Browne's treatise was also placed on the papal *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1645.

[2] I.H., *England and Scotland vnited. With some pious observations thereupon, shewing our brethrens faithfulnesse in this cause* (London: 1647).

initiated by Charles and Laud, which he claims are incompatible with either confessional allegiance: "It will not be want of Charity in either of us, both to hold, and declare, the others Religion to be incompatible with salvation: nay it will be want of charity if we do it not."[3] This is precisely the type of "charitable hatred" Alexandra Walsham identifies in her work on religious toleration, although here Matthew seems to express fear that charity has lost its doctrinal edge.[4] Matthew's hard line may be a reaction to his suspicion that Caroline toleration was intended to convert recusants to the Church of England, but his vision of charity also seems nostalgic for the good old polemical days of outright religious faction.[5] He got them. The treatise generated at least four published responses, each demonstrating varying degrees of truculent partisanship, from the reputed Arminian Christopher Potter, the college head and later dean of Worcester, and Francis Rous, a strict Calvinist and John Pym's stepbrother, as well as the Jesuit Edward Knott (born Matthew Wilson) and skeptical theologian William Chillingworth.[6] Potter's reply to Matthew, which adopts (and only partially upholds) an irenic stance toward ecumenical charity, articulates a Laudian exasperation with confessional polemic, and he might be referring to Puritans as much as Catholics when he declares, "This angry unmercifull passion they call Zeale to the holy cause, and that which is mere malice must passe for pure Charity."[7] Browne appears to express a similar impatience for religious extremism, noting that the popular adage "charity grows cold" appears to be "most verified in those which most do manifest the fires and flames of zeal" (II.4).

[3] *Charity Mistaken* (Saint-Omer: 1630), 103.

[4] Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[5] See Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60-92.

[6] J. Sears McGee, "A 'Carkass' of 'Mere Dead paper': The Polemical Career of Francis Rous, Puritan MP," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 72.3 (2009): 347.

[7] Potter, *Want of charitie iustly charged* (London: 1633), 8.

At the same time a variety of voices within the Church of England were disputing the role of charity with renewed vigor, disrupting the uneasy consensus that marked the earlier Jacobean church. Historians debate when this shift occurred and attribute a variety of causal factors to the gradual polarization of the Church, assigning significance to the strength of an emerging anti-Calvinist discourse (evident, for example, in Richard Montagu's work *A New Gagg for an Old Goose*), an alteration of ecclesial policy and personality effected by the transition between monarchs, and the appointment of Laud to the archbishopric of Canterbury. These developments were profoundly disorienting for many in the Church of England, especially for Puritans of a more rigidly Calvinist disposition. Consider, for example, how a conventional Calvinist might respond to Robert Shelford's controversial publication in 1635 of his *Five Pious and Learned Discourses*, which brazenly attacks solifidianism and anti-papal rhetoric, standard positions of Calvinist doctrine. And there, appended to Shelford's publication, Richard Crashaw's poem "On a Treatise of Charity" would add a measure of poetical derision to the theological quarrel: "O he is Antichrist: / Doubt this, and doubt (say they) that Christ is Christ. / Why, 'tis a point of Faith. What e're it be, / I'm sure it is no point of Charitie." This sort of charity was doctrinally unfamiliar to many Calvinists, an "innovation," something altogether new and galling, but other church practices represented a general "backsliding" into superstition. Whereas the conventional Puritan stance considered charity to be a crucial factor in separating the godly from the ungodly, and the papist from the Reformed as a matter of course, Laudian practices were shaped by older notions of charity that emphasized social unity and communal ritual. This effort to reinstitute and reinforce native traditions was highlighted by the Book of Sports, which was reissued in 1633 and prompted spirited debates over sabbatarianism, as many Puritans found these practices redolent of England's Roman Catholic past.[8] Perhaps none of these issues was new: one can trace a

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[8] See Peter Lake, "The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in

conciliatory attitude toward Roman Catholicism as far back as Richard Hooker, and

conflict over double and absolute predestination was older still, while sabbatarianism had

been a topic of debate throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century and Jacobean

era.[9] But taken together with the apparent political influence at court of the Catholic queen

Henrietta Maria and the rigorous application of Laudian policy, as well as the consolidation

of ecclesiastical power among anti-Calvinist divines, all of these policies related to charity

compelled a number of moderate Calvinists to accuse Laudian clerics of cryptopapism and

works theology.

    These polarities are evident in the polemical literature of the period, such as one

popular anonymous poem often used to illustrate the papist roots of Laudian policy, which

can be read simultaneously as the respective doctrines of the Church of England and Rome:

I hold as faith	What England's church avows
What Rome's church saith	My conscience disalows
Where the King's head	That church can have noe seame
The flocke's misled	That holds the Pope supreame
Where th'Altar's drest	There's service scarce divine
The People's blest	With table bread and wine
Who shuns the Masse	Hee's Catholique and wise
Hee's but an Asse	That the Communion flyes
Who charity doth teache	Their Church with Errour's fraught
The heavens soon reach	Where onely Faith is taught
On Faith relye	Noe matter for good workes
It's Heresie.	Makes Christians worse than Turks.[10]

Literalizing on the page the equivocal practices assumed to be characteristic of church

papists, the poem makes the theological virtues of charity and faith mutually exclusive. The

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the 1630s," *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 161-185.

[9] The degree to which the Caroline church under Charles and Laud altered doctrinal and ecclesial policy is a matter of some debate. For an exceptionally lucid discussion, see Peter Lake, "Introduction: Puritanism, Arminianiam, and Nicholas Tyacke," *Religious politics in Post-Reformation England*, eds. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2006), 1-15.

[10] The application of this poem often depended on the title given by the manuscript, which might attack Jesuits, church-papists, or conformist clerics. The poem was included in *Wits Recreations* (London: 1640), 218.

complex theological legacies associated with both Roman Catholicism and Reform had become reduced to separate monolithic discourses: Papists teach charity, Protestants teach faith, and any attempt to fuse the two virtues was a disingenuous kind of casuistry. Anti-Calvinist responses attacked puritanism by employing a similar tactic, appropriating and twisting a popular poem by Alexander Leighton, transforming the puritan from a hero into a strange sort of reformer who has been warped by opposition: "A puritan is hee, is never known / To thinke on others good beside his owne / And all his doctrine is of hope and faith / For charitie 'tis poperie hee saith."[11]

Charity had become a kind of polemical loadstone, then, but Browne's cautious skepticism somehow resists its inexorable tug. In contrast to the heated exchanges characterizing religious literature of the period, Browne's approach to charity, which places enormous emphasis on reason and restraint, seems relatively passionless. In fact Digby attacks Browne's charity on this point – oddly, given Digby's Roman Catholic faith – for its apparent legalism, among other things, and because Browne "will have that good done as by obedience, and to accomplish Gods will."[12] This is not to say that Digby's resistance to Browne's vision of charity stems from a fear of works theology. Indeed, Digby seems to understand divine love as a secondary cause in the salvific process, merely a response to human initiative, and his understanding of volition and grace is much closer to Pelagianism than Browne's.[13] But he clearly desires a more ecstatic alternative, and he chooses a metaphor often deployed by erotic poetry (as much like a Donne elegy as a Crashaw ode) to describe what he considers to be a superior form of charity, "like the

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[11] MS. Malone 23, 215. For the original poem by Alexander Leighton, which was entitled "A Puritan: (So nicknamed: but indeed the sound Protestant)," see *The Interpreter* (Edinburgh: 1622), 3-7.

[12] *Observations upon* Religio Medici (London: 1643), 92-4.

[13] Digby's stance is equally heterodox for Roman Catholics and Protestants, as Debora Shuger notes in "The Laudian Idiot," *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*, eds. Reid Barbour and Claire Preston (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 53-55.

overflowings of the maine streame, that swelling above its bankes runneth over in a multitude of little Channels." Ross is similarly displeased by Browne's restraint, which he suspects is the result of a tepid investment in the defense of true faith: "To suffer God to be wronged, and not to be moved, is not charity, but luke-warmnesse or stupidity."[14] Even Dean Christopher Wren, a conformist cleric of Windsor and the younger brother of Bishop Matthew Wren, appears equally disappointed that Browne does not identify the pope as Antichrist, littering the margins of his *Religio* with learned authorities who support that claim, and he seems especially troubled by Browne's passionless approach to charitable giving.[15] Wren takes offense at Browne's claim that relieving misery is merely passionate and not reasonable (and so only "moral"): "But our natural affections and Passions Regulate by Divine Commaunds, transcend the highest Pitche and flight of Reason."[16] Each of these contemporary readers wants to carve out a role for affection and passion in their respective visions of charity, whereas Browne's seems altogether bloodless.

Scholars sometimes demonstrate a similar impulse, desiring more passion and controversy from Browne. In his book *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, Stanley Fish famously reprised the role of Ross, delivering a stern 'tsk tsk' to the apparently self-indulgent Browne, who fails to adopt a suitably hortatory or disputative posture when writing his devotional prose.[17] Joan Webber discovers in Browne's style not tolerance but social snobbery, which "deprives people of individuality and human wholeness," and Michael Wilding sees Browne as an ideologically charged opponent to Puritanism in the pamphlet wars of 1642 and 1643, motivated by "university-educated, élitist contempt for the

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[14] *Medicus Medicatus*, 7.

[15] See Reid Barbour, "Dean Wren's *Religio Medici*: Reading in Civil War England," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 73.2 (2010): 263-273.

[16] *Christopher Wren's 'Religio Medici'*, Cardiff MS 1.160.

[17] Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 353-373.

'ignorance' of the clashing sects."[18] Others are less censorious but equally keen to place

Browne's work in the context of religious controversy. Several admirable articles and book

chapters have examined Browne's charity in light of Protestant/Catholic or

Laudian/Puritan dichotomies, demonstrating how much Browne's otherwise idiosyncratic

notions of charity engage relevant issues of ecclesial polity.[19] This is a good impulse. As

Achsah Guibbory quite rightly has noted, Browne cannot avoid the theological scrum of his

period. These studies are extremely helpful in placing Browne's work within its historical

context, and this chapter benefits from the excellent work performed by these scholars.

There is occasion to approach Part II, and really the entire *Religio*, which is apparently

organized around the Christian virtues, through this sort of theological or ecclesial lens,

treating the text as a relatively benign addition to contemporary religious controversy. But

for Browne the usual dichotomies sometimes seem artificial, or at the very least only

partially right. It is likely for this reason that two of the most perceptive studies of Browne's

religion resist conventional categories, characterizing him instead as a "liberal" or "lay"

theologian.[20] While offering keen insight into the charged religious landscape of the

moment, studies that emphasize the controversial aspects of *Religio Medici* rarely capture

the fullness of Browne's work, reducing his notion of charity, for example, to questions of

ceremony and anti-papal rhetoric. Or perhaps the problem is these works imply a fullness

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[18] Joan Webber, *The Eloquent "I": Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 165; Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 93.

[19] See Raymond Waddington, "The Two Tables in *Religio Medici*," *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. C.A. Patrides (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 81-99; Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119-46; Ingo Berensmeyer, "Rhetoric, Religion, and Politics in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 46.1 (2006): 113-34.

[20] For a fascinating study of Browne's participation in a theological discourse informed by rational skepticism, see Victoria Silver, "Liberal Theology and Sir Thomas Browne's 'Soft and Flexible' Discourse," *ELR* 20 (1990): 69-105; Debora Shuger, meanwhile, engages Browne's so-called Laudianism in "The Laudian Idiot," but she notes how the idiosyncrasies of *Religio Medici*, as well as those of its contemporary critics, complicate simple notions of Laudian rigor.

in Browne's work that is actually fractured, since, as Guibbory notes, "Browne's 'singularity' and skepticism distance him from Laudian rigor and threaten to destabilize the Laudian ceremonialist order that Browne would defend."[21] This chapter will argue that singularity is situated at the center of Browne's religious consciousness, and remains bound up in the complicated role of charity in negotiating relationships between solitary and communal imperatives, between God and man and nature, and between the worlds of spirit and physic.

I likewise emphasize the political and religious significance of *Religio Medici*, but I will approach the work from a slightly different point of origin, accessing Browne's charity by engaging issues related to natural philosophy, learned physic, and other relevant intellectual contexts. First, I intend to take the title seriously. That is, I will examine how a doctor practicing in Halifax and Norwich, especially one trained in Padua and Leiden, might treat (in every sense of the word) religion, and how the disciplinary peculiarities of medicine influence "the true Anatomy" of his own faith, hope, and especially charity, in which he imports the learning acquired during rigorous medical preparation in order to dissect and diagnose contemporary religious illnesses as well as his own.[22] Indeed, religious disputes over charity were mirrored in early modern England by debates in the medical community, which was troubled by competing visions of charitable conduct for physicians, and Browne gestures at specific features of this conversation. Rather than committing himself to a particular side, Browne carefully acknowledges the positive legacies of his trusted medical authorities – even late in his life Browne would never discard his Galen or Hippocrates – but he balances this approval of ancient learning with a profound appreciation for experiment and skeptical inquiry, and his hieroglyphic vision of

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[21] Guibbory, 119.

[22] See Mary Ann Lund, "The Christian Physician: Thomas Browne and the Role of Religion in Medical Practice," *"A man very well studied": New Contexts for Thomas Browne*, eds. Kathryn Murphy and Richard Todd (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 229-246.

the natural world suggests an agreement with elements of Paracelsian medicine. Similarly, Browne arrives at a description of his own charitable disposition by incorporating medical diagnostics, which considered a heterogeneous blend of signs both physical and personal, as if he were tracing the lines of his own hand to see how he is "naturally framed." And yet a mastery of semiotics can facilitate the abuse of charity, as Browne explains, by enabling "master mendicants" to target potential donors who exhibit especially compassionate features (II.2). This kind of measured appraisal, censured as merely "lukewarm" by Ross, perfectly embodies Browne's own understanding of the physical, humoral "coldness" of charity.

The *Religio* is a complex work, but it is also the "junior" endeavor of a young physician and philosopher, as Claire Preston notes, offering a useful expedient for scholars confronted with the problem of interpreting the consistently perplexing, charming, and frustrating matter of *Religio Medici*. I want to consider how charity participates in this endeavor, how it is not merely the subject but also the vehicle of this discourse. It is clear that Browne's treatise – both in its original and published form – was at least partially motivated by some aspect of charity (as a devotional meditation, for example, and as a curative for irresponsible publication), and various considerations of charity modulate the style and content of the work throughout, especially in his appreciation for the civil discourse that would enable the communal task of advancing learning.[23] That project was clearly a vexed one for Browne, who uses charity in apparently contradictory fashion, sometimes to justify sharing knowledge in order to confute error and sometimes to encourage a safe silence that protects others from potentially contagious heresy or schism. There is a clear sense in the second part of *Religio Medici* that Browne feels like charity is enabled and enacted both by the acquisition of knowledge and the elimination of error, but

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[23] Claire Preston, *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the first part likewise suggests that Browne's own errors were prompted by "charitable inducements" (I.7). Although Browne's frustration with the multitude might betray deeply conservative and royalist principles, it seems more relevant in this context of the scholarly aim to advance learning, a project he continues and expands in his subsequent publication, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. Few readers would ever suggest Browne was a Puritan, but he himself clearly identified aspects of his personality in those terms – describing his behavior as "full of rigour, sometimes not without morosity" (I.3) – and his efforts to remove and reform error, if severed from religious controversy, are suggestive of a particular brand of mid-century Puritan. Some of Browne's most appreciative readers counted themselves Puritan reformers.[24]

Rather than treating *Religio Medici* as merely one more contribution to the contemporary debate over religious and political notions of charity, I hope to show how specific features of Browne's text allow him to approach these partisan topics as a physician and thus circumvent several obstacles facing polemical writers during the Caroline period. The consequences of this approach, I hope, will be relevant and productive. In many ways the physician's reliance on a blend of conceptual theory and practical experience, *gnosis* and *praxis*, dovetails nicely with Browne's own treatment of the theological virtues, which emphasizes how abstract belief manifests itself in the concrete essence of charity, "without which faith is a mere notion and of no existence" (II.1). I want to think about how Browne's actual experience and education as a doctor might have helped shape the apparent contradictions in his text. Although Stanley Fish's argument has largely been put to rest, the method will turn the moral calculus he employs to indict Browne on its head: rather than classifying Browne as bad physician based on his easy, nonthreatening, and

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[24] Kathryn Murphy, "'The best pillar of the order of Sir Francis': Thomas Browne, Samuel Hartlib and Communities of Learning," *'A man very well studied': New Contexts for Thomas Browne* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 273-292.

sometimes self-congratulatory rhetoric, I want to examine Browne's *Religio* as the

rhetorical product of a good physician, I mean a real one.[25]

Charitable Medicine in Early Modern England

This is a study of the problems associated with or instigated by charity, many of

which are obscure and even surprising, but contemporary doctors of physic faced an

obvious dilemma posed by the charitable imperative: it was irreconcilably bad for business.

On the one hand, ministering to desperately ill patients placed a physician's reputation in

danger if the disease proved incurable; on the other, refraining from dangerous cases

confirmed for many contemporary observers that physicians lacked any Christian charity.

When Browne mentions "the generall scandall of my profession" (I.1), or the reputation for

atheism among learned physicians, he invokes a specific theme that was forcefully

promulgated by Browne's rivals in the medical marketplace.[26] Not merely a matter of

religious faith, the contentious disputes between learned physicians, who relied on the

study of complex Galenic humoral theory at English and continental universities, and the

assortment of alternative healers who employed spiritual or herbal or distilled "chymicall"

remedies, were intimately bound up in the question of charity.[27]

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[25] For a refutation or critical examination of Fish's conclusions regarding Browne, see Frank Warnke, "A Hook for Amphibium: Some Reflections on Fish," *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne*, 49-68; Sharon Cadman Seelig, "Sir Thomas Browne and Stanley Fish: A Case of Malpractice," *Prose Studies* 11 (1988): 72-84; Ronald Huebert, "The Private Opinions of Sir Thomas Browne," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 45.1 (2005): 117-36.

[26] Margaret Pelling rightly takes issue with the manner in which the term "medical marketplace" has been employed anachronistically by historians of medicine (see *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 342-3). When I mention the term I do not mean to suggest a laissez-faire economic model, but I do take it for granted that questions of religion were implicated in the decisions of potential patients when engaging in contractual medicine.

[27] Indeed, this study has probably not stressed enough how closely related were early modern concepts of illness and poverty. See in particular Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations, and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (New York: Longman, 1998), esp. 63-104. See also Andrew Wear, "Caring for the Sick Poor in St Bartholomew Exchange: 1580-1676," in *Living and Dying in London* (London: Wellcome Institute, 1991), 41-60.

Since early modern physicians were often characterized as unchristian in general, and uncharitably greedy in particular, it is interesting to consider how they employed concepts of charity in their respective defenses of the profession. The most prevalent argument among physicians, which derived from their appeal to learned authority, adopted the prescribed order inherent to the rules of charity outlined in medieval canon law, and developed more thoroughly by Protestants and Roman Catholics alike in the sixteenth century. That is, physicians posited a hierarchy of charitable obligations and skills in the sphere of medicine, and placed a primacy on their own authoritative knowledge, to which other practitioners should defer. As numerous theologians and social critics debated the relative impact of material charity on its recipient's soul and social behavior, and the possibly dangerous consequences of unregulated charitable giving to the mystical body of Christian believers, learned doctors of early modern England emphasized the literal hazards attending the administration of charitable physic. Well-meaning but insufficiently educated neighbors or ministers might do violence to the recipient's body, and, one might add, prevent a physician from earning his fee. John Cotta, for example, after giving a slight nod to the benevolent intentions of some lay healers, delivers a scathing rebuke to unlicensed practitioners who dare attempt to displace the physician:

> And for those that herein make mercy and commiseration apologie for their rash violating the rules of wisedome, sobrietie and safe discretion in ignorant intermedling, I wish them consider how dangerous are the harmes and consequences of good intentions, and charitable indeauors, where they runne before knowledge and proprietie in the agent.[28]

Note how Cotta employs the "rules" of wisdom and discretion to contrast the impassioned, rash response of ministerial charity, which runs too quickly ahead of the agent's actual capacities. The physical, pragmatic context of medicine, its constant specter of pain and

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[28] John Cotta, *A short discouerie of the vnobserued dangers of seuerall sorts of ignorant and vnconsiderate practisers of physicke in England* (London: 1612), 24. See, for another famous example, Securis, *A Detection and Querimonie of the Dailie Enormities and Abuses Committed in Physicke* (London: 1566).

mortality, makes the possible harm of "charitable indeauors" all the more relevant and apparent. There is nothing quite so uncharitable, Cotta implies, as irresponsible manslaughter by way of improperly applied physic. Providing several examples of cases in which patients suffered and even died as a result of "ignorant intermeddling," he seems primarily concerned with the intrusion of ministers, who, "making themselues roome in others affaires, vnder pretence of loue and mercie," can sway prospective patients by asserting an authority that rivals the learned doctor.[29]

Nevertheless, there was a clear overlap between the vocation of physician and minister, one that was scripturally sanctioned by the example of Christ, who performed miraculous cures. Consider the subtitle of Timothy Bright's *Treatise of Melancholy*, which promises "physicke cure, and spirituall consolation" to those afflicted by the malady, an especially pertinent example since Bright left a career in physic to become a minister. The divide was especially dissoluble in provincial areas where learned practitioners were scarce, a pragmatic issue that prompts George Herbert's exhortation for country parsons to study physic and surgery (or to marry a wife with skill in these disciplines).[30] Robert Burton describes the phenomenon in less optimistic terms than Herbert, observing that "Many poore Countrey-Vicars, for want of other meanes, are driven to their shifts; to turne Mountebanckes, Quacksalvers, Empiricks."[31] The affinity between the two professions prompted various comical anecdotes, such as the one recounted by Francis Bacon in his *Collection of Apophthegms New and Old*, in which a nonconformist minister claims that if he is deprived of his benefice he will become a danger to the commonwealth, not on

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[29] Cotta, 86.

[30] Herbert, *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F.E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 259-263.

[31] *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds. Thomas Faulkner, Nicolas Kiessling, and Rhonda Blair, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 22. It is worth noting, however, that Burton, despite his defensive remarks aimed at learned physicians, nevertheless apologizes for divulging "*secreta Minervae*" (16).

account of sedition, but "if hee lost his Benefice, hee would practise Physicke; and then hee thought hee should kill an hundred Men, in time."[32] A large number of clerics, most notably William Bullein, contributed to the vast body of vernacular medical literature in the period.[33] Burton, for his defense, asserts a professional ethic of quid pro quo, claiming ministers have their own grievances against physicians: "I doe not otherwise by them, then they doe by us. If it be for their advantage, I know many of their Sect which have taken Orders, in hope of a Benefice."[34] Moreover, cultural attitudes toward medicine during the period were informed by Calvinist notions of providence, which often viewed illness as an occasion for repentance and spiritual maturation, lending additional authority to ministers who could offer spiritual as well as corporal healing.[35] Gabriel Plattes, in his utopian vision *Macaria* (1641), a treatise explicitly derived from Bacon's *New Atlantis*, declares that ministers rather than physicians should provide medical care, with the clear implication that clergy would practice medicine charitably instead of looking for profit. And the Neoplatonism promulgated by Marsilio Ficino was easily imported by Paracelsians who idealized the hermetic wisdom of a priest-physician exercising his piety on the body as well as mind.[36]

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[32] *Collection of Apophthegms New and Old* (London: 1625), 49-50.

[33] See Paul Slack, "Mirrors of health and treasures of poor men: the uses of the vernacular medical literature of Tudor England," *Health, Medicine, and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 237-74. Even the Presbyterian reformer Thomas Cartwright (or is it his prelatical rival Thomas Cooper?) might have contributed to this genre, if he is indeed the T.C. who gathered the various remedies of *An hospitall for the diseased* (London: 1579).

[34] Burton, 21-22.

[35] See David Harley, "Spiritual Physic, Providence and English medicine, 1560-1640," in *Medicine and the Reformation*, eds. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London: Routledge, 1993), 101-117.

[36] Ficino explicitly invokes charity to defend his marriage of divinity and medicine in the *Apologia* to his *Three Books on Life*, trans. Carol Kaske and John Clark (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1989), 397.

The learned physicians in early modern England hardly composed a stable or monolithic community of adherents to Galenism, which was itself extremely flexible in its adaptation to new medical developments. Nevertheless, many physicians, concerned with the professional threat posed by spiritual lay medicine and determined to oppose the heterodox opinions associated with Paracelsianism or folk healing, developed concepts of charity that privileged the specific skills acquired by rigorous education. James Hart's *Klinikē*, for example, suggests that charity needs to be professionalized according to education and ability:

> Charitable workes, I confesse, are to be performed; but every person is not fit for the performance of every worke of charity. The ministers charity is to have a care of his peoples soules, to visit and comfort them when they are sicke; and even to extend their charity to their bodies, according to their ability. As for the curing of their bodies, that exceedeth the compasse of their callings, and in so doing they break down hedges, and intrude upon another mans right.[37]

Hart's ideas of charity owe a great deal to Cotta's earlier writings, and they both choose to apply principles associated with more traditional developments of charitable giving during the early modern period, which separated the recipients of charity into distinct categories of deserving or able-bodied. But rather than focusing on who received aid, and distinguishing between various classes of need, Hart concentrates on charitable givers. He envisions a division of charitable labor based on the giver's aptitudes, "according to their ability," a communal vision resonant of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, which discusses the charisms or gifts distributed to each individual by the Holy Spirit in order to stabilize the religious and social community.[38] The strategy was also a typical Calvinist position, as

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[37] *Klinikē, or The diet of the diseased* (London: 1633), 403.

[38] Juan Huarte employs this scriptural reference in "The second Proeme to the Reader" of *The Examination of mens Wits*, trans. M. Camillo Camili and R.C. (London: 1594), when he suggests that professional distinctions are the result of physical complexion.

Andrew Wear has observed, which denied the potential for miraculous healing and articulated clearly defined vocational boundaries.[39]

But Hart's mention of hedges, which presumably distinguish the borders between various professions, embodies some of the tensions implicit in charity. Hedges were considered an emblem of legal and social order – it is unsurprising that William Laud invokes the hedge to illustrate the role of ecclesial ceremony – and in Hart's case, good hedges not only make good neighbors: they make sure you love your neighbor as yourself.[40] The breaking down of hedges was conventionally associated with lawbreakers and popular uprisings, a notion that was scripturally inscribed in Ecclesiastes 10:8: "He that diggeth a pit, shall fal into it, and he that breaketh the hedge, a serpent shall bite him."[41] But hedges were also dubious metaphors to many contemporaries, symbolizing the enclosures and privatization of land which had become a familiar illustration of uncharitable greed and a satirical commonplace of agrarian complaint.[42] In order to articulate his own notion of a charity that respects professional difference, Hart invokes a traditional opponent of communal charity. Browne's *Religio* examines similar tensions and contradictions. At times Browne appears to explode conventional boundaries on account of "charitable

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[39] Wear, "Medical Ethics in Early Modern England," *Doctors and Ethics: The Earlier Historical Setting of Professional Ethics*, eds. Andrew Wear, Johanna Geyer-Kordesch, and Roger French (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 113-4.

[40] Laud, *A relation of the conference betweene William Lawd, then, Lrd. Bishop of St. Davids; now, Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury: and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite* (London: 1639), sig.*3v.

[41] See for example John Rastell's description of a "rout": "The inhabitaunts of a Towne wyll gather them selues together, to breake hedges, wales, ditches, pales, or such like to haue common there, or to beate an other that hath done to them a common displeasure or such like, that is a Rout and agaynst the lawe." *An exposition of certaine difficult and obscure words* (1579), 178-179.

[42] Consider the famous and influential passage from More's *Utopia* decrying enclosure: "Therfore that one couetous and vnsatiable cormaraunte and verye plage of his natyue contrey may compasse abowte and inclose many thousand acres of grounde to gether within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust owte of their owne." See More, facsimile edn (Amsterdam 1969) and Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

inducements" (68), but these moments are offset by a quiet desire to "difference" himself and "draw into a lesser circle" (64), echoes of the charity expressed by Hart and Cotta, and he often expresses a similar preference for decorum and order.

The worst violators of decorum, according to contemporary physicians, and the worst violators of charity as well, were the empirics, quacksalvers, astrologers, and wise women who employed charity as a plausible justification for mercenary motives. Here, too, there was an easy analogue to religious polemic, which often accused sectarian opponents of abusing the cloak of charity, or as James Hart declares of physician-clerics:

> But I have heard some of them pretend a charity and love to their neighbours to helpe them in their need. This reason, as it first makes a glorious shew, so if we shall narrowly view this pretended reason, we shall find it like those faire apples of *Sodom,* which being once touched, turned into ashes; and like those painted sepulchers being within full of rotten bones. But this is no new practice to cover vice with the mantle of vertue; which as it is most common, so it is most accursed: *Simulata sanctitas duplex iniquitas*.[43]

Hart lends added dramatic intensity to his rebuke by including powerful images of death, ashes and bones, as well as a popular aphorism used to denigrate religious hypocrisy. Richard Whitlock employs the same principle (though he tones down the rhetoric) to attack the supposed charity of cunning women: "It is generally believed they do use their little or no skill in meere *Charity* … Whereas on stricter Scrutiny, this Benevolent Practise will appear to be begun in *vain glory,* and to end in *injuriousnesse,* and that to more than the *Patient*."[44] Much of this defensive posture is the result of insecurity among physicians, jealous of their privileged position in a varied landscape of medical practitioners that ranged from the traditional tri-partite association of physicians, apothecaries, and barber-surgeons to an assortment of laymen, from midwives and charitable gentlewomen to

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[43] Hart, 403.

[44] *Zootomia* (London: 1654), 54.

cunning men and, supposedly, witches.[45] John Cotta, for example, could have counted among his professional rivals Richard Napier, a famous cleric and astrologer-physician in neighboring Buckinghamshire. There was widespread skepticism concerning the efficacy of learned physic – as Bacon claims, "We see [the] weakenesse and credulitie of men, is such, as they will often preferre a Montabanke or Witch, before a learned Phisitian" – which was placed in sharper relief by the recurring plagues during the early modern period, since Galenic medicine struggled to treat or theorize contagion.[46] And the reputation of physicians likewise suffered from their own conscious disavowal of the artisanal aspects of the profession, which were left to apothecaries and surgeons, as well as their absence during epidemics.[47] Nor was the learned physician's reputation helped by his apparently aloof attitude toward patients, which contrasted the behavior of empirics, who participated more intimately in therapy, and whose remedies were less expensive and sometimes more effective.[48]

More importantly, and in direct opposition to the charitable decorum expressed by Cotta and Hart, these competitors were often associated with charity. Many of them explicitly advertised their physic's elements of Christian mysticism or their own miraculous skill, invoking their apostolic inheritance of healing powers. Richard Bostocke, a

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[45] For an excellent overview of the varied medical profession in Norwich, see Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 203-229.

[46] Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 97. The responses to plague by early modern physicians did not merely recycle features of Galenic theory, but rather incorporated their own experience of what was generally regarded to be a new type of disease. They nevertheless struggled to find a framework to understand plagues. See Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 275-313.

[47] With regard to medical practitioners leaving the city during epidemics, see Margaret Pelling, "Skirting the City? Disease, Social Change and Divided Households in the Seventeenth Century," *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. Paul Griffiths (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 154-175.

[48] Several explanations for the poor reputation of physicians were put forward by contemporaries. See, in addition to Bacon's *Advancement*, Thomas Powell, *Tom of all trades. Or The plaine pathway to preferment* (London: 1631), 29.

Paracelsian, suggested that the followers of the "Chymicall doctrine," unlike those

heathenish Galenic practitioners, are "more paynefully, faythfully, sincerely, charitably and

Christianlike for the certein helpe of his neighbor, and not for lucre or veine glory and

pompe."[49] It is doubtful Bostocke intended that fantastic pun, veine glory, but he clearly

marks out his own territory of Christian healing in opposition to the atheist and

blasphemous arts propagated by Aristotle and Galen. In an apologetical preface to his

treatise describing Paracelsian experiments, Barnard G. Londrada A Portu Aquitanus

claims that Paracelsus began reforming the supposed errors of the medical community on

account of the divine law "full of Christian Loue and Charitie."[50] Charity was not merely

associated with medical reform but also medical revelation; Sir Thomas Elyot compares

contemporary physicians unfavorably to their Greek, Roman, and Arabic authorities, who

"in this part of charity … far surmounted vs Christians, they that would not haue so

necessary a knowledge as Phisick is, to be hid from them which would be studious about

it."[51] Indeed, promoters of Paracelsian medicine often advertised their work as a

divulgation for the public benefit of secrets long hidden (in Latin and Greek) by the

medical establishment, or as practical remedies intended to facilitate self-help or

household healing, arguments that would be recycled with particular vehemence by

Helmontians in the 1640s and 1650s.[52] In the preface to a treatise by John Hester, a noted

distiller and Paracelsian, James Fourestier describes the content as "charitable learning or

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[49] Quotation found in Wear, "Medical Ethics in Early Modern England," 111. See Bostocke, *The difference betwene the auncient phisicke, first taught by the godly forefathers, consisting in vnitie peace and concord: and the latter phisicke proceeding from idolaters, ethnickes, and heathen: as Gallen, and such other consisting in dualitie, discorde, and contrarietie* (London: 1585), sig., Fiiiv.

[50] *A hundred and fouretene experiments and cures of the famous physitian Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Paracelsus*, trans. John Hester (London: 1596), sig. A3.

[51] *The castell of health, corrected, and in some places augmented by the first author thereof* (London: 1595), sig. Av. Burton similarly indicts contemporary physicians by comparing them to their classical pagan counterparts who served patients out of charity. See Burton, 2.4.1.1.

[52] See William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 138-9.

learned charitie, practised vpon and performed vnto those, which haue stood in neede."[53]

Many Paracelsian treatises explicitly advertised the affordability and efficacy of their medicines.[54]

The dichotomy between charitable lay practitioners and acquisitive physicians was reinforced and in some ways legally ratified by the 1542/3 act of 34° & 35° Hen. VIII c.8, which offered legal protection to "divers honest psones aswell men as woomen, whome God hathe endued with the knowledge of the nature kinde and operacon of certeyne herbes rotes and waters." The statute nominally dissolved any legal monopoly in London enjoyed by the (supposedly avaricious) College of Physicians, Company of Barber-Surgeons, and Society of Apothecaries:

> The saide psones have not takin any thing for theyre peynes and cooninng, but have mynistred the same to the poore people oonelie for neighbourhode and Goddes sake and of pitie and charytie; and it is nowe well knowen that the surgeons admytted wooll doo no cure to any psone, but where they shall knowe to be rewarded with a greater soome or rewarde than the cure extendeth unto [...] the greatest parte of Surgeons admytted been muche more to be blamed than those psones that they trouble, for althonghe the most parte of the psones of the saide crafte of Surgeons have small cooning, yet they wooll take great soomes of money and doo litle therfore, and by reasone therof they doo often tymes impaire and hurte theyre patients rather thenne doo them good.[55]

Note how the statute takes for granted ("it is nowe well knowen") that a surgeon would only endeavor to cure a sick person out of hope for gain. Contemporary physicians did little to combat these perceptions. Cotta could, in a fit of hyperbole, describe the learned physician in rapturous terms – "What emploiments are more continuall workes of charitie? what vertue commeth nearer vnto God in goodnesse and mercie?" – but most advocates of

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[53] *The pearle of practise, or Practisers pearle, for phisicke and chirurgerie* (London: 1594), sig., iir.

[54] Fourestier, for example, makes a memorable comparison of costs between Paracelsian and Galenic cures: "I dare also auouch, that any poore body, may better commit his crasie body, to be healed or helped, of any outward or inward maladie, by the right prepared medecines, for the value of ten shillings (which he can hardly spare) then a wealthy man, to their deceits) I would say receits) for ten crownes." *The pearle of practise*, sig. ivr.

[55] *Statutes of the Realm*, III, 906.

learned medicine, Cotta included, more often appealed to the classical ethics of Hippocrates and Aristotle.[56] These tenets, though compatible with Christianity, clearly privileged acquired learning before spiritual revelation and seemed to place the imperative of charity in the context of professional reputation rather than as a good in itself. Municipal schemes of poor relief relied on a varied assortment of medical practitioners, and learned physicians participated with varying degrees of enthusiasm and often with the expectation of remuneration.[57] It is telling that the College of Physicians demonstrated no philanthropic activity of any kind, as was expected among London companies, and physicians rarely participated in any kind of civic role of office.[58] The College did not provide a charitable dispensary for the sick poor until the end of the seventeenth century.

Most damning, however, was the perceived monopoly of medical practice enjoyed and jealously guarded by learned practitioners, symbolically represented by the College of Physicians. This was a theme expressed with greater vehemence after Browne published his *Religio*, when a substantial number of radical social critics would rail with articulate fury at the three professions of law, divinity, and physic, but resentment toward the College had been entrenched in the medical community practically since its founding in 1518.[59] Although its standards tightened under Laud's oversight, the ecclesiastical licensing system in place for the rest of England was relatively inclusive, and a medical license could be obtained by evidence of education and good reputation. In London, however, the College

[56] Cotta, 122. For the early modern physician's relative silence on the topic of charity, see Andrew Wear, "Medical Ethics in Early Modern England," 98-130.

[57] See Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 79-104; and Andrew Wear, "Caring for the Sick Poor in St Bartholomew Exchange," 41-60.

[58] Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, 18-21.

[59] Charles Webster, "English medical reformers of the Puritan Revolution," *Ambix*, 15 (1967): 16-41; Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 246-323; Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 157-78; Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 230-58.

exerted control over the city's apothecaries and barber-surgeons, and examined or prosecuted all "irregular practitioners," or those who did not possess a license, in addition to governing its members (an extremely small number of fellows, candidates, and licentiates). Rather than promoting education or participating in the civic fabric of parish and city institutions, the College's main function, it seems, was as a policing agency, and although their regulatory system was established ostensibly to guard against medical malpractice it was equally effective in discouraging competition. The Dutch physician Gerard Boate, for example, a Leiden graduate who settled in London in 1630 and received an appointment as physician to Charles, was harassed by the College until he accused the institution of "making a monopoly of physic."[60] If a bit simplistic the accusation was not entirely unfair, and the College, the Society of Apothecaries, and royal physicians all negotiated to profit by the growing demand for pharmaceutical therapies, especially distilled remedies.[61] But the term "monopoly" was loaded for contemporaries with symbolic equivalence to the exploitation of royal prerogative, representing the Stuart regime's supposedly vast abuses of political corruption and promotion of special interest to the detriment of the public good.

In the case of Browne's *Religio Medici*, then, we can piece together some of the immediate assumptions made by a number of his reading audience, and given this context several of Browne's comments acquire an additional resonance. Like a number of learned physicians, Browne was sympathetic to elements of Paracelsian medicine, but his primary scholarly authorities, Galen and Aristotle in particular, were considered irreligious and medically suspect by a number of rival practitioners, and would probably be cited as

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[60] See Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, 179-84.

[61] Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 254. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Europe's Physician: The Various Life of Sir Theodore de Mayerne* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 207-14 and 331-38. Accusations of this kind were not limited to one particular faction; Cotta, for example, could also indict his Paracelsian competitors for their "ignorant and peruerse Hermeticall monopoly" (83).

evidence to corroborate the learned physician's contemporary reputation as cold, aloof, and Latinate. Perhaps Browne has these accusations in mind when he compliments the divinity of Aristotle and especially Galen, whose work compares favorably, Browne claims, to the Jesuit Suarez's work on metaphysics. Likewise, as a member of an elite class of medical practitioners who were considered monopolistic bullies and accused of hoarding professional secrets, Browne might be thinking of rival complaints when he claims that he intends "no monopoly but a community of learning" (II.3). The very notion of charitable medicine, meanwhile, was a contentious topic among learned physicians and lay practitioners. Any discussion of a prescribed system of medical ethics would be implicated in larger debates over medical licensing, physician profits, and the public good, especially as it related to the sick poor. Finally, the consideration of a physician's perceived atheism was not merely a matter of social or religious importance but a crucial aspect of market relations for any young medical practitioner. Despite attempts by Cotta, Hart, and others to carve out a privileged position for physicians within the religious landscape, a stigma of avarice remained attached to Browne's profession. If his religiosity became a model for subsequent physicians, there is little evidence that Browne himself had the opportunity to draw on conventional examples of the charitable physician, besides Continental itinerants and Galenic critics like Paracelcus or Van Helmont, or perhaps Thomas Clayton, the Regius Professor of Physic during Browne's time at Oxford.[62] The title *Religio Medici*, after all, announces itself as a paradox.[63]

These issues seem especially pertinent to his early years of practice in England, as he grew accustomed to the cultural peculiarities and practical exigencies of his chosen

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[62] Lund, 229-246.

[63] Browne failed to convince every reader of his Christian belief. Consider physician John Collop's poem "*On Doctor* Browne," which celebrates *Religio Medici* and simultaneously acknowledges its reputed irreligion: "*Religio Medici* though th'wor[l]d Atheism call, / The wou[r]ld shows none, and the Physitian all. / More zeal and charity *Brown* in twelve sheets shows, / Then twelve past ages writ, or th'present knows" (ll. 1-4), qtd. in Keynes, 181.

occupation. If Brooke Conti observes a "strangely defensive" tone at the beginning of Browne's treatise, which she considers (rightly, I think) a mark of his genuine religious anxiety, such apprehension would likely have been exacerbated by the practical import of his profession's reputation for atheism, especially in a provincial and "godly" Yorkshire town like Halifax.[64] Browne already had witnessed conflict between medical and ecclesial authorities in Padua, which had experienced a plague in 1630-31 that aggravated tensions between the two communities.[65] *Religio Medici* registers a sensitive awareness of the conflicting imperatives of medical and religious discourse.

The capacious personality of Browne's *Religio* seems particularly well suited to engage various competing visions of early modern medicine. These apparent contradictions emerge in Browne's writing, and his "soft and flexible" discourse accommodates a balanced measure between the conventional bedrock of his natural philosophy and religion, and the rigorous skepticism with which he treats both disciplines. His rhetorical posture is never shrill or defensive as he engages the conventional accusations aimed at learned physicians. Indeed, he seems to take for granted the legitimacy of these attacks, directly confronting the dangers of serious philosophical inquiry – "I remember a doctor in physick, of Italy, who could not perfectly believe the immortality of the soul, because Galen seemed to make a doubt thereof" (I.21) – which should nevertheless fail to "startle a discreet belief." Later inconsistencies in the text belie his confident sprezzatura, but Browne's capacity for humor and humility (ironic or otherwise), as well as his flexibility and compassion, allow him to defuse many of the

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[64] Brooke Conti, "*Religio Medici's* Profession of Faith," *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*, eds. Reid Barbour and Claire Preston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 154. For the impact of Halifax on Browne's *Religio*, see Barbour, "Charity, Halifax, and Utopia: The Disadvantageous Setting of Thomas Browne's Religio Medici," *Renaissance Papers, 2007* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 17-32.

[65] See Barbour, "Atheists, Monsters, Plagues, and Jews: Tares in the Garden of Thomas Browne's Padua, 1632," *Writing and Religion in England, 1558-1689: Studies in Community-Making and Cultural Memory*, eds. Roger Sell and Anthony Johnson (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 328-9.

traditional indictments of learned physicians.[66] Nor does he forget his apparently atheistic peers. As a young practitioner of medicine Browne demonstrates a mastery of the conventions in which he was familiar. Consider his brief mention of botany, which is offered as evidence of the manner in which his temperament combats pride and punctures his own (implicitly deserved) pretensions: "I know most of the plants of my country, and of those about me, yet methinks I do not know so many as when I did but know a hundred, and had scarcely ever simpled further than Cheapside." Even his discussion of the limits of his intellect, placed as it is in a self-deprecatory remark, nevertheless confidently asserts his comprehensive knowledge of simples and herbal remedies, an elegant piece of self-advertisement as a physician who has fully mastered his editions of Nicolaus de Salerno, John Gerard, and Jean de Renou, who has been educated in the botanical gardens of Padua and Leiden, and who regularly studies the *London Pharmacopoeia*.[67]

Browne is never so blatant as Cotta or Hart, but he marks clear boundaries between doctors of physic and divinity that distinguish their respective skills and professional contexts. One can detect a subtle reference to the tension between physicians and clerics, for example, when he claims, "I cannot go to cure the body of my patient but I forget my profession, and call unto God for his soul" (II.6). Framed as an apology, the comment suggests a sensitive respect for professional decorum which is nevertheless subordinate – he cannot help it – to his Christian charity. It is as if he were violating some code of honor practiced by members of the respective professions, with its corresponding insinuation that a number of clerics abuse etiquette by crossing the border from the other direction. This is a strategy that Browne often employs when his discourse brings together the disciplines of divinity and physic, especially when he asserts a confident superiority to clerics, as he does in contrasting their authority and efficacy in treating spiritual maladies with his own:

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[66] See Conti, 149-167.

[67] See Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 46-103.

> Again, – to speak nothing of the sin against the Holy Ghost, whose cure not only, but whose nature is unknown, – I can cure the gout or stone in some, sooner than divinity, pride, or avarice in others. I can cure vices by physick when they remain incurable by divinity, and they shall obey my pills when they contemn their precepts. (II.9)

Note the poised syntax here, a perfect, almost euphuistic balance of clauses that underscores the antithesis between professions, even as the ambiguous diction suggestively heightens Browne's powers: the physician's pills can cure gout or stone as well as vices like avarice or pride, while the cleric's precepts fail at both. The otherwise mystifying reference to the sin against the Holy Spirit – about which, more below – might be intended as a nod to ministerial authority (although he chooses an oddly democratic member of Trinity) or could serve to register an awareness of rival theories of physic that incorporated mystical elements.[68] Respectful of an alternative recourse to healing, Browne remains hesitant to dismiss something scripturally sanctioned and impossible to measure or understand, but he nevertheless upholds his own privileged position in this realm.

A similar tension is evident in his discussion of "those sordid and unchristian desires of my profession," a longer passage that deserves fuller comment, as it engages a number of issues specifically relevant to early modern medicine:

> Let me be sick myself, if sometimes the malady of my patient be not a disease unto me. I desire rather to cure his infirmities than my own necessities. Where I do him no good, methinks it is scarce honest gain, though I confess 'tis but the worthy salary of our well intended endeavours. I am not only ashamed but heartily sorry, that, besides death, there are diseases incurable; yet not for my own sake or that they be beyond my art, but for the general cause and sake of humanity, whose common cause I apprehend as mine own. (II.9)

Throughout this passage Browne conveys a spirit of humanity, assisted by a clever sense of humor. Announcing a mild oath – "Let me be sick…" – he declares his sympathetic bond with his patient – "if, when my patient is sick, I am not sick too." The world of the

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[68] Richard Bostocke's Paracelsian treatise *The difference betwene the auncient phisicke, first taught by the godly forefathers* begins with a rapturous invocation to each member of the Trinity.

physician, it seems, begins and ends with sickness, as Browne's prose circles back on itself in a complicated joke that must have been popular among physicians, or at least the healthier sort. More importantly, he combats popular assumptions about the physician's aloof and avaricious conduct, underscoring his primary interest in curing illness before curing his own penury (another bit of humorous wordplay). He articulates a confidence in his method of "honest gain" that relies less on acquired learning than diagnostic and prescriptive efficacy. But Browne does not retreat from the justice of a "worthy salary," even if it is couched in a subordinate clause, and he suddenly shifts into the plural pronoun to ally himself with his professional peers. That summary phrase, "our well intended endeavours," used to place the whole of physic under the aegis of charity, likewise suggests, in similar fashion to early modern English merchants, that private gain could be married to public good.

Browne's confidence deserts him slightly, however, when he announces his shame and frustration with incurable diseases, a quasi-legal definition that seemed to serve several purposes. The term, according to the orthodox medical community, was intended to dissuade dishonest practitioners from receiving money for cases they knew to be hopeless, and the conscious treatment of incurables was sometimes employed to identify a mountebank or witch.[69] Here too was another means of separating the professional realms of physician and minister, since an incurable disease ushered in the minister to the bedside and initiated the Christian ritual of dying well.[70] For family and friends, or even the diseased patient, an incurable verdict might be therapeutic, as Browne suggests in *A Letter to a Friend*, writing, "Besides his soft Death, the incurable state of his Disease might somewhat extenuate your Sorrow" (393). But the concept of incurables was situated uncomfortably next to ethical precepts derived from classical writers that obligated

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[69] Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 87; and *Medical Conflicts*, 246-7.

[70] Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 34, n. 67.

physicians to assist any sick person, a principle bolstered by the Christian admonition to perform the corporal works of mercy (as well as the parable of the Good Samaritan), and Paracelsians and Helmontians used the concept to attack the learned physician's lack of industry and lack of spiritual power.[71] Bacon found the notion of incurable diseases a deplorable "lawe of neglect."[72] In *A prooved practice*, William Clowes dramatizes this ethical dilemma by providing an anecdote in which he is asked by a soldier to repair an apparently mortal wound. Thinking the man doomed to die, Clowes recalls the advice of several manuals that urge surgeons to avoid treating incurable wounds, as it makes the surgeon vulnerable to slanderous accusations of malpractice; but Clowes, before ultimately deciding to treat the man, remembers, "If we shall leaue the wounded man destitute of all ayde and helpe, and then he dye, wee shall worthely bee esteemed wicked, and without all charitie and humanitie."[73] Ultimately it seems clear to Clowes which is the correct course of action, and his charitable disregard for the surgeon's code receives its own reward: the soldier is miraculously cured.

Nor was the concept of "incurable" disease confined to medical discourse. As Browne signals himself, there was a great deal of overlap between the physical and spiritual vocabularies of illness, and his allusion to the sin against the Holy Ghost references an especially problematic nexus of this kind (presumably this is what he also has in mind a few sentences earlier when he mentions "Vices incorrigible in Divinity").[74] Mentioned by the synoptic gospels as the single unforgivable act, the sin was interpreted by the early fathers in literal terms as blasphemy against God, but its scriptural and semantic fields

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[71] Wear, 375-7.

[72] Bacon, *Advancement*, 100.

[73] *A prooved practice* (1588), sig.P.iiiiir

[74] The reference occurs in Mark 3:28-30, Matthew 12:31-32, and Luke 12:10, respectively. Patristic thinkers included a relevant passage from 1 John 5:16, and Calvin made the sin much more general (and accessible) by invoking Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-29.

were expanded over time until Calvinism codified the term as a manifest signal of reprobation.[75] Included in theological examinations of spiritual despair, the sin against the Holy Ghost acquired a complicated and powerful resonance in the Calvinist experience of spiritual self-assessment, since despair might be a catalyst for the receipt of divine grace and subsequent sanctification, or it might be a sign that your saintly credentials remain suspect and possibly reprobate. Intended to be consoling to Christian believers, the logic of particularity inherent to Calvinist notions of double predestination could also exacerbate anxieties related to one's elect status, as memorably dramatized by famous narrations of Francis Spira's death or, nearer to Browne's era, the frantic despair of Joan Drake, each of whom was personally convinced of sinning against the Holy Ghost.[76] This phenomenon was conceived by both Bright and Burton as an extreme type of religious melancholy and was often described by other writers as a diseased conscience beyond the curative power of spiritual or physical medicine.[77] Thus the "incurable sin" became implicated in larger issues of soteriology related to predestination and the doctrine of assurance, and these questions erupted in England at various moments in the first half of the seventeenth century (as well as in 1595 with the Lambeth Articles), underscoring crucial differences along the theological spectrum of grace. Rigid Calvinists believed that one's predestinate status – election or reprobation – could be perceived with certainty, whereas opponents resisted a doctrine that might discourage the supposed elect from repenting for sins and might also plunge the supposed reprobate into despair (hence the connection to the sin against the

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[75] See Baird Tipson, "A Dark Side of Seventeenth-Century English Protestantism: The Sin against the Holy Spirit," *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 301-330.

[76] For more on Drake, see Tipson, 302. Spira's experience became a famous Protestant account related by Matthew Gribaldi, first translated and printed in England as *A notable and marvailous epistle of the famous Doctor, Mathewe Gribaldi*, trans. Edward Aglionbi (London: 1550), and later brought back to the forefront of England's consciousness by Nathaniel Bacon in *A relation of the feareful estate of Francis Spira, in the year 1548* (London: 1638).

[77] For an excellent examination of Burton's departure from conventional discussions of sin against the Holy Ghost, as well as its accompanying Calvinist theology, see Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51-76.

Holy Ghost). This lends a peculiar force to Browne's own objection against incurable diseases, which springs from "the common cause" rather than his own sake, and it echoes his treatment of that "terrible terme Predestination" (I.11). Just as Browne acknowledges the incurability of sins against the Holy Ghost but shrouds the phenomenon in mystery – "whose cure not only, but whose nature is unknown" – he neither rejects nor supports double predestination, maintaining a nominal (if tenuous) Calvinism. But Browne explicitly resists any doctrine of certainty that might separate elect from the common plight of sinful humanity, decrying the religious partisans who "with as much uncharity as ignorance do err, I fear, in points not only of our own, but one another's salvation" (I.56).

Of course, even as Browne glances briefly at contemporary discussions related to universal salvation, his gaze remains focused on the learned physician. In this context, Browne's reference to "the common cause" seems especially ambiguous. Does Browne mean his own potential danger in contracting an incurable disease? The shame to his profession on account of its inefficacy in treating such diseases? Or his profession's shameful desire for additional clients? The comment seems a superfluous addition, unnecessary ornament, but Browne clearly takes the "unchristian desires" of his profession seriously. It remains unclear whether these conceptions of the uncharitable physician are erroneous products of the popular imagination or derived from his own experience – the tenor of Browne's prose suggests the former – but they obviously possess forceful currency in Browne's vision of his own professional landscape.

"The true Anatomy of my selfe": Browne's Charitable Constitution

I want to examine several other occasions in Browne's treatise that unite the discourses of medicine and religion, especially in light of his bold advertisement of his power in physic: "I can cure vices by physick when they remain incurable by divinity." After all, he may apologize for physicians, but he invokes specific areas of early modern medicine throughout *Religio Medici*, and it is clear that his professional discipline shapes the

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manner in which he identifies and engages various problems related to charity. In particular there are intriguing similarities between the tensions inherent to charity, which requires simultaneous attention to communal and individual imperatives, and to early modern discourses of medicine, which involved a comparable dialectic between Galenic and occult conceptions of medicine, as well as the differing considerations of theory and praxis. Moreover, the language of early modern medicine complemented many of the standard tropes employed in religious discourse, which were inherited from Old Testament imagery, in particular the Psalms and Proverbs, as well as extracanonical texts like the Vulgate's *Ecclesiasticus* and *Sapientia*, or Book of Wisdom, which explicitly links illness with sin and declares that the Holy Spirit will only minister to a disciplined mind *and* body.[78] It is especially fascinating to observe how Browne takes advantage of medical tropes in order to illustrate his complicated negotiation of apparent conflicts of interest related to charity: between his own singularities in religion and a concern for "the common cause," and between his desire for reforming error and his resistance to religious partisanship.

Browne's medical training is immediately apparent at the beginning of Part II, when he declares of his own charity, "And if I hold the true Anatomy of my selfe, I am delineated & naturally framed to such a piece of virtue: for I am of a constitution so generall, that it consorts, and sympathizeth with all things" (II.1). Setting to the side for the moment Browne's peculiar notion of charity, which consorts and sympathizes with "all things," consider his even more peculiar logic of causation, attributing his charitable impulses to a natural frame and constitution rather than any kind of education, habit, or

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[78] See Wisdom 1:4-14, cited in *De habitu et constitutione corporis* by Levinus Lemnius, translated by Thomas Newton as *The Touchstone of Complexions* (London: 1576), 24. A third edition of Newton's translation was printed in 1633. See also Margaret Healy's discussion of the overlap in medical and religious discourse during the period, figured most emphatically in a vocabulary of "corruption," in *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues, and Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), esp. 42-45.

willpower. At this moment in the text Browne sounds very much like a physician, assessing both Galenic naturals and non-naturals, and finding "no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy, in diet, humour, air, anything" (II.1). Charity can be the product of a physical disposition, it seems, and consequently might be subject to anatomical examination. Browne employs "anatomy" here in its figurative sense, of course, but the term immediately gestures toward the physical realm, and Browne maintains this dialectic between moral virtue and its natural or bodily origins throughout *Religio Medici*. Nor is such anatomical inspection an isolated enterprise, conducted out of curiosity or even narcissism, but instead rigorous self-knowledge becomes essential to a healthy spiritual community. This type of empirical gaze, turned inward to assess one's own physical constitution and body (a doctrine most notably promulgated by Celsus) or one's spiritual health, was a familiar principle of early modern medical regimens as well as Calvinist manuals of pious living, since religious writers encouraged vigorous introspection so as to experience the influence of divine providence.[79] There was a pragmatic imperative at work as well. As Thomas Hill explains in his treatise of physiognomy, medical diagnostics serve a crucial role because a knowledge of self allows you to love God and neighbor: "Seeyng it is true (gentle Reader) that the first and principallest poynt of wisedome is to know God, the second to knowe our selues, and the thirde to knowe our duties towardes our neighbors."[80] In other words, Hill notes, knowing yourself – and knowing your *body* – allows you to love yourself, God, and others as well. Thus the early modern period baptized the classical dictum *Nosce te ipsum* in equal measure with religion and medicine. Browne's own attitudes toward charity are clearly shaped by this cultural commonplace, and his discussion of universal concerns often seem inflected by personal concerns, though he carefully frames his own remark in the

[79] Celsus, *De Medicina*, I.3.13. For more on the overlap between medical practice and Calvinist spiritual experience, see David Harley, "Spiritual physic, Providence and English medicine, 1560-1640," 101-117.

[80] Hill, *The contemplation of mankind* (London: 1571), sig. ¶¶iv.

conditional, "If I hold the true Anatomy," acknowledging the uncertainty of any anatomical or physiognomical enterprise (an important qualifier, as we will see).

If he is careful to qualify his own capacity for self-knowledge, Browne appears less cautious in describing charity, which he considers to be something that "consorts, and sympathizeth with all things." One can imagine some of Browne's severer readers riffing on Mercutio, "Consort! Do you make yourself a minstrel?"[81] Charity was associated with the kind of communal emphasis Browne endorses, but it was supposed to be a purifying essence born of a well-ordered love of God, self, and neighbor, a love for righteousness, and this notion was not merely a Protestant one. Browne's charitable regard for difference here (as well as his professed conversation with all men, like the sun) is easy to identify with contemporary appeals to religious toleration that many Calvinists and Roman Catholics found equally problematic, although one might add that this feature of Browne's treatise does not square quite as easily with the accusations of elitism levied by some scholars. But Browne's conception of charitable sympathy remains altogether orthodox in the context of natural philosophy. His preference to be part of a common whole seems less an engagement with specific doctrinal debate than a product of his intellectual habits of thought, which envisions the human body interacting with the larger cosmos. Browne wants to sympathize with rather than be subsumed into all things, to find some correspondence that can produce harmony by consorting with dissimilarities. This passage gestures at the notion of *concordia discors* even in its rhetorical fashioning, as Browne moves from a consideration of his individual constitution to matters of cosmic importance, but this interaction is knit together by paradoxical phrasing: Browne's own personality dilates outward into "a constitution so generall," whereas charity, which apparently creates universal harmony, becomes reduced to merely "a piece of virtue."

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[81] *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, III.i.45-49.

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A similar pattern emerges in Browne's discussion of heresy and schism, as he deploys medical tropes to maintain a balance between individual and communal concerns. When Browne observes, "Those have not only depraved understandings, but diseased affections, which cannot enjoy a singularity without a heresy" (I.7), he suggests there is a medical as well as religious problem to solve, a disease as well as depravity, as with the French divine "so plunged and gravelled with three lines of Seneca, that all our antidotes, drawn from both Scripture and philosophy, could not expel the poison of his error" (I.21). Browne's curative rhetoric, which frames his arguments as "antidotes" intended to "expel the poison of his error," was a conventional metaphor for describing heresy, but it becomes more relevant when employed by a physician. Indeed, Browne seems to employ a hybridized Galenic scheme to construct his understanding of heresy, with its attention to the correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm, and its sensitivity to the disruption of every human individual's constitutional balance, which manifests itself in an infected singularity. Browne has few qualms declaring his own penchant for various heresies, since all of these are prompted by "charitable inducements," a regard for the spiritual welfare of others – even, one might add, concern for the devil. That is, Browne's own heresies are brought on by his desire to participate in a universal framework, a clear contrast to Milton's equation of heresy with the choice of individual conscience.[82] If Milton is proud of his singular interaction with the Holy Spirit, Browne is pleased that even his sins are neither rare nor exclusive:

> I thanke the goodnesse of God I have no sinnes that want a name, I am not singular in offences, my transgressions are Epidemicall, and from the common breath of our corruption. For there are certaine tempers of body which, matcht with an humorous depravity of mind, doe hatch and produce viciosities, whose newnesse and monstrosity of nature admits no name.
>   (II.7)

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[82] For the clearest description of Milton's understanding of heresy, see the preface of *A Treatise of Civil Power*, in *Complete Prose Works*, gen. ed. Don Wolfe, vol. VII (New Haven: Yale University Press), 647.

Of course, in Browne's paradoxical fashion, he expresses gratitude for his commonality in astoundingly idiosyncratic fashion. With a rhetorical flourish, Browne expresses comfort in his own sinful character by gesturing toward devastating contemporary epidemics of plague and pox; whereas others often used the notion of divine disfavor to explain the disastrous spread of disease, Browne seems to invert the providential meanings of epidemic, suggesting that these, like his sins, are gifts from "the goodnesse of God."[83] Moreover, Browne apparently reverses the etiological links between disease and immorality: rather than assuming the pox beset depraved individuals and communities, a popular notion of the period dismissed by most learned physicians, Browne understands bodily constitution and disease, "an humorous depravity of mind," to be the origin of spiritual corruption. Browne seems fascinated here by the issue of generation, by the corporeal intersection of matter and morality, and it is likely that Browne has in mind the same topic he discusses elsewhere with regard to traduction (explored in detail in I.36, but gestured at here by linking together the issues of human generation and human depravity), bestiality, the result of which creates "newnesse and monstrosity of nature." Venturing into a discussion on the traduction of the human soul – which, like Donne, he holds in a tenuous balance with theories of infusion – Browne looks to the material body as a landscape in which he can explore religious topics of dubious nature, using the mysterious intersections of human corporeality and spirituality to invert common expectations. Elsewhere Browne explicitly mentions the consolation he derives from knowing that anatomical inquiry has yet to discover the seat of the rational soul (I.36), and in this case Browne's initial expression of gratitude for his "common breath of corruption" allows him to move from the doctrine of original sin to complications of copulation between man and beast, and other singular depravities produced by humoral distempers.

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[83] Mary Lindemann discusses the stubborn endurance of these popular conceptions in *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 50-83. See also Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 275-313.

So, while Browne desires to participate in the communal fabric, even if that means

sharing in the epidemical conditions of plague and smallpox, he engages in the topic with a

pronounced sense of individuality. Browne never rejects singularity outright, although he

finds it dangerous, and in one celebrated passage reminiscent of Burton's digression of air

he celebrates the opportunity for recreative speculation in "many things untouch'd,

unimagined," as long as those explorations are restrained by sobriety, honesty, and

orthodoxy:

> 'Tis true, that men of singular parts and humours have not been free from
> singular opinions and conceits in all ages; retaining something, not only
> beside the opinion of his own church, or any other, but also any particular
> author; which, notwithstanding, a sober judgment may do without offence
> or heresy; for there is yet, after all the decrees of councils, and the niceties of
> the schools, many things, untouch'd, unimagined, wherein the liberty of an
> honest reason may play and expatiate with security, and far without the
> circle of a heresy.

For all of Browne's worry over the problem of singularity, this is an incredible defense of

individual liberty – a playful liberty, moreover, which, like the "liberty of reason" Browne

ascribes to the world of dreams, seems to accommodate Browne's desire to humor his

fancy.[84] It is important to remember, then, that Browne intends for his vision of orthodox

"security" to actually protect the private imagination. In a similarly paradoxical vein, there

is a democratic appeal in this passage, for all of Browne's supposed elitism, which

confidently declares the existence of "unimagined" spiritual matters that can be accessed

by any singular individual. For someone who describes his own behavior as "full of rigour,

sometimes not without morosity" (I.3), Browne carves out a remarkable space for his

imagination to roam, but this recreative impulse first needs its limits defined by "a sober

judgment."

    Browne never seems fully capable of resolving this desire for playful expatiation

with the more serious threats associated with singularity, although much of *Religio Medici*

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[84] For a relevant discussion of "fancy," another vexed term for Browne and his contemporaries in the
1630s, see Barbour, *Literature and Religious Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 91-117.

attempts to reconcile these competing impulses, and charity clearly plays an important role in this effort. The impulse to break free of restraints imposed by the communal body ultimately results in disruptive violence. Just after he explains that a melancholic disposition prompted his own temporary belief in apocatastasis, or Origen's belief in universal salvation, Browne gestures at humoral pathology to describe and understand the problem of religious schism:

> For heads that are disposed unto schism, and complexionally propense to innovation, are naturally indisposed for a community; nor will be ever confined unto the order or economy of one body; and therefore, when they separate from others, they knit but loosely among themselves; nor contented with a general breach or dichotomy with their church, do subdivide and mince themselves almost into atoms. (I.8)

It is difficult to tell whether Browne's mention of complexion here refers to the classic Galenic sense of humoral combination, or if his gaze focuses on the skin, its color and texture, as if he were conducting a physiognomic study identifying the facial characteristics of the average schismatic. And does he mean "heads" in a physical sense, and the brain in particular, or is he using a metonymic phrase to describe any kind of nonconformist thinker? A few sentences later, in a wonderful expression, Browne confides that religious subtleties never "stretched" his own *pia mater*. But it is clearly a *natural* indisposition, and it seems to be a physical one as well, a medical malady that manifests itself in the social and religious community. The entire passage, with its concern for "the order or economy of one body," betrays a slippage of terms that conflate political, religious, and medical discourses, a confused mixture Browne uses to engage and explain the problem of singularity. In this case "innovation," a typical marker of complaint among religious reformers, results in bodily mutation or even a kind of willful atomism. In the course of Browne's description schism ends up sounding like a flesh-eating disease. One wonders if this, too, is incurable.

Browne suggests that schismatic complexion results from a humoral imbalance, and he seems to point in particular to distempered bodies suffering from "adustion," a problem of overheating that was linked to madness. Although charity, the traditional opponent of schism, was considered a virtue of some warmth (using natural philosophy to legitimize the scriptural adage "Charity grows cold"), Browne attempts to locate charity elsewhere in the Galenic humoral scheme:

> 'Tis the general complaint of these times—and perhaps of those past—that charity grows cold, which I perceive most verified in those which most do manifest the fires and flames of zeal, for it is a virtue that best agrees with coldest natures and such as are complexioned for humility. (II.4)

Followed to its logical conclusion this model would align charity with typically phlegmatic (cold and moist) or melancholic (cold and dry) constitutions, an anomalous theory compared to more conventional approaches to affective disorders. After investigating a whirligig of causal factors related to melancholy in his *Anatomy*, for example, Burton's discourse culminates (and thereby discovers a kind of stability) by contrasting melancholy and charity, and earlier Browne seems to do the same thing when discussing Origen's heresy.[85] Disregarding the obvious paradox of Browne's expression – charity grows cold because of the flames of zeal – his description of charity remains perplexing. It was possible, of course, to align charity with cold in a Galenic scheme, but usually this occurred in the context of humoral balance. Consider Juan Huarte's *Examination of Mens Wits*, which discusses the impact of choleric adustion on the melancholic and his consequent variability of temperament: when heated he is proud, lecherous, and vengeful, but when cooled he is reverent, charitable, and merciful.[86] Laurentius is equally supportive of cold organs, which he aligns with reason and compares favorably to the heat of incontinent

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[85] See Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 56-72.

[86] *Examen de ingenios. = The examination of mens wits*, trans. M. Camillo Camiili and R.C. Esquire (London: 1594), 147.

desire.[87] A similar contrast between choler and charity could be found in popular

conceptions of Galenic medicine, like Sir Thomas Elyot's *Castel of Helthe,* which claims

that the natural heat engendered by ire results in "losse of charitie, amitie, credence, also

forgetfulnes of benefite proceeding, and of obedience, dutie and reuerence."[88] One also

thinks of Denham's *Cooper Hill,* which pits Roman Catholic asceticism against Protestant

zeal: "Is there no temperate Region can be known, / Betwixt their Frigid, and our Torrid

Zone?" (ll. 139-140).[89]

> Browne himself employs this oppositional framework to link together microcosm

and macrocosm by way of *concordia discors*, envisioning a constitutional harmony in his

own body that is mirrored by the universe:

> It is no breach of charity to ourselves to be at variance with our vices, nor to
> abhor that part of us, which is an enemy to the ground of charity, our God;
> wherein we do but imitate our great selves, the world, whose divided
> antipathies and contrary faces do yet carry a charitable regard unto the
> whole, by their particular discords preserving the common harmony.
> (II.8)

But these notions of passionate, embodied virtue all require some semblance of humoral

balance; if charity is lost by too much heat in these discourses, so too is it threatened by

severe cold. None of the above references, Browne's included, accommodates the

problematic extremity of his intentional superlative in the phrase "coldest natures."

Perhaps the cosmopolitan Browne is thinking of William Harrison's rather propagandistic

revision of geohumoral conventions, which links the cold British climate with courteous

inclinations.[90] But it seems more likely that he is appropriating humoral discourse to

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[87] M. Andreas Laurentius, *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight*, trans. Richard Surphlet (London: 1599).

[88] *The castell of health, corrected, and in some places augmented by the first author thereof*, 96.

[89] Perhaps a more apt comparison to Browne is Shakespeare's complicated Sonnet 94, which claims "unmooved, could" individuals "rightly do inherit heaven's graces." For a fascinating discussion of this poem and humoral discourse, see Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 83-95.

[90] *Description of England* (1577), 445-8.

articulate his own notion of stability in the physical and figurative body, gesturing at the problematic volatility of zealous reformers who upset the balance of various religious or political affections, preferring instead a virtue that remains constant even in extremity. Browne was not alone in conceiving of charity as something equally radical and stable. In Bacon's description of philosophy that was related to the human body and mind, and because "of all substances, which Nature hath produced, mans bodie is the most extreamly compounded," he claims there is only one virtue or affection that remains reliable: "All other affections though they raise the minde, yet they doe it by distorting, an vncomlinesse of extasies or excesses; but onely Loue doth exalt the mind, and neuerthelesse; at the same instant doth settle and *Compose* it."[91]

　　Whatever its theoretical origins, there is a rhetorical advantage to rooting this affective discourse in the stuff of bodily matter. Browne's medical vocabulary provides a safer figurative expression for charity than Stoicism, a "cold principle" (I.47) that Browne leans toward by privileging a "generall and indifferent temper" and declaring that "it is the method of charity to suffer without reaction" (I.5), or even by suggesting the potential abuses of charity in choleric zeal and sanguine desires. It is worth noting again that Browne's indifference to Rome prompts Ross's accusation of a "luke-warm" and "stupid" charity, but the epithets only confirm what Browne has been laboring to demonstrate: his own charitable ideal *is* lukewarm, *is* stupid, and consequently avoids the polarizing impact of the "hotter sort of protestants" and Roman Catholic controversialists. In this case Browne might not be interested in configuring a humoral scheme to accommodate his sense of moral virtue, but instead he uses temperature as a general indicator of relative peacefulness. Browne would receive agreement from Burton, who is similarly frustrated by

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[91] *Advancement*, 96 and 155.

religious controversy, declaring, "With this tempest of contention the serenity of charity is over-clouded."[92]

"There is surely a physiognomy": Reading the Charitable Body

If Browne's deployment of humoral theory struggles to clarify his understanding of charity, other features of his medical tropes are likewise complicated, but they reveal a similar fascination with the problem of singularity. Just before his description of charity as agreeable to "coldest natures," Browne returns to the subject of physiognomy in a fascinating digression. Observing how experienced beggars seem to target specific individuals when pleading for aid, Browne's explanation is at once fanciful (he proposes that gypsies have inherited skills in chiromancy from the ancient Egyptians[93]) but also emblematic of his persistent habit in using the vocabulary of learned physic and natural philosophy to knit together spiritual and material phenomena. In this case Browne's physiognomy, a relatively obscure discipline that studies bodily features and signs to predict a patient's future, becomes implicated in the discourse of material charity. His playful observation engages the social and political dilemma of poor relief, which, as we have seen, involves a problematic course of reading the poor and classifying them into categories of "deserving" or "able-bodied." Browne suggests the process is even more dynamic, that "master mendicants" just as certainly read the bodily texts of their potential donors, which results in further abuses of charity:

> There is surely a Physiognomy, which those experienced and Master Mendicants observe, whereby they instantly discover a mercifull aspect, and will single out a face, wherein they spy the signatures and markes of mercy; for there are mystically in our faces certaine characters which carry in them the motto of our Soules, wherein he that cannot read *A.B.C.* may read our natures.　　(II.2)[94]

[92] *Anatomy*, I, 35.

[93] The subject continued to fascinate Browne, who includes a more complete discussion of gypsies, or "counterfeit Egyptians," in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, VI.xiii.

[94] Although Browne claims to have been unfamiliar with Montaigne's *Essays* when he wrote *Religio Medici*, this sentence bears a remarkable similarity to a passage in John Florio's translation of the

Somehow in deliberating over "this great worke of charity," and in particular its many counterfeits and problematic errors, the study of appearance asserts itself as an imperative. In this context, as he probes the authenticity of apparently charitable actions, Browne invokes an abstruse medical science to explain one characteristic problem associated with charitable giving. Nor does this link between charity and physic remain stable. Physiognomy might facilitate the exploitation of merciful dispositions, but the discipline can be marshaled (as Browne does in the same section) toward an appreciation of divine providence and the supreme handiwork of God. Indeed, Browne has already suggested that Christians, "who cast a more careless eye on these common hieroglyphics, and disdain to suck divinity from the flowers of nature" (I.16), would do well to consider the mystical and hieroglyphic artifacts of divine creation. Later in his career, in *Christian Morals*, Browne reverses the interpretive dilemma and sets physiognomy in a positive light, claiming that "true Charity is sagacious" and urging readers to "Acquaint thy self with the Physiognomy of Want, and let the Dead colours and first lines of necessity suffise to tell thee there is an object for thy bounty" (*CM*, I.6, 419). Browne's digression into physiognomy and chiromancy underscores the difficulty of reading the body's valuable but inscrutable text. At once holy – "The finger of God hath left an inscription upon all his workes" – and also vulnerable to disease, violence, and disguise, the body figures as a complex work full of contradictions and interpretive challenges.

The body was particularly confounding – and crucial – for early modern thinkers insofar as it offered potentially demonstrable evidence of spiritual or affective conditions. The science of physiognomy provided a tantalizing opportunity to understand the bodily traffic between spiritual and physical discourses. Occult treatises of physiognomy

essay "Of Physiognomy": "There are some favourable Physiognomies; For in a throng of victorious enemies you shall presently amiddest a multitude of vnknowne faces, make choise of one man more than of others, to yeeld your selfe vnto, and trust your life." *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (London: 1603), 630.

confidently declared their access to a secret wisdom, which, underwritten by a doctrine of corresponding signatures that were at once legible and essential, matched facial features with interior conditions (red hair always revealed a predisposition to ire, for example). This kind of attitude is evident in Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, the most thorough anatomical treatise written in English during the period, which sneers at Momus for wanting windows into men's souls when the eyes will do just as well: "Do not all the passions of the minde appear plainly characterized in the face, in the countenance, & in the eyes, so that he which runnes may reade them?"[95] Browne's entire literary career evinces a continual fascination with the subject of surfaces, probing bodily exteriors for signs of human morality and divine purpose, attempting to discover a discipline whereby one might "acquire a Physiognomical intuitive Knowledge, Judge the interiors by the outside, and raise conjectures at first sight" (*CM*, III.22, 465).

There was classical precedent for this kind of intellectual inquiry, even the venerable Aristotle, who declares in *Prior Analytics*, "It is possible to infer character from physical features, if it is granted that the body and the soul are changed together by the natural affections."[96] However, as several early modern medical authorities emphasize in their own physiognomic studies, perhaps in an effort to distance their work from occult treatises, Aristotle acknowledges that the link between these signatures is probable rather than essential. Taking up the complicated meaning of a sign, medical writers considered the dilemma of encountering multivalent signs and symptoms, and attempted to design theories of probability that might stabilize the interpretive process.[97] That is, even as

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[95] *Mikrokosmographia: a description of the body of man* (London: 1615), 8.

[96] *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 113. Browne was clearly familiar with pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomica* as well, since he cites the work in *RM* II.2.

[97] See, among others, Giambattista della Porta's *Physiognomia*. See Ian Maclean, *Logic, Signs and Nature in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. chapter 5.

physiognomy was rooted in a tradition of hermetic wisdom, the discipline was gaining

prominence in the medical field as a sophisticated mode of interpreting physical evidence.

Although he appears to be ignorant of this trend in learned medicine, Bacon makes a

comment in his *Advancement* that is relevant to this context. Introducing a more general

discussion of the sympathies and concordances between the mind and body, he highlights

the crucial importance of reforming the arts of physiognomy and oneirocriticism,

observing the power derived from observing "the present humour and state of the mind &

will," and ignoring its medical benefits for considerations of social utility: "And therefore a

number of subtile persons, whose eyes doe dwell vpon the faces and fashions of men; doe

well know the aduantage of this obseruation … that it is a great discouerie of dissimulations,

and a great direction in Businesse."[98] Martin Porter notes that this represents a departure

from hermetic understandings of physiognomic knowledge, as Bacon attempts to resituate

relations between the mind and body within a rigorous program of rational observation,

presupposing that the psychosomatic link is neither obvious nor stable.[99]

This attitude toward physiognomy, which underwrites the enterprise as it attempts

to strengthen its logical processes, mirrors a more general trend in early modern culture

noted by Richard Sugg with regard to the period's increased anatomical rigor and expertise:

namely, that medical developments generated an intensified effort to discover the interplay

between body and soul, an old notion now "vividly resituated in a new context of

empiricism, sensuous exactitude, and interior complexity."[100] This does not mean, however,

that Browne's appreciation for hermetic or hieroglyphic signatures of divine handiwork

betrays an outmoded or archaic medical outlook. As Ian Maclean argues of physiognomy in

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[98] *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 94.

[99] Porter, *'Windows of the Soul': Physiognomy in European Culture, 1470-1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 30.

[100] Sugg, *Murder After Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 89.

the early modern period, "There are not two distinct mentalities – the rational and the

hermetic – but rather one, informed by the looser dialectical categories [of semiotic

logic]."[101] In other words, Browne could honor the mystical legacies he found so expressive

of Christian piety even as he participated in the development of increasingly complex

theories of probability in medical discourse. More importantly, Browne repeatedly

articulates his own brand of skepticism concerning the legibility of hieroglyphic signs,

which are sometimes transparent and self-evident but often unreliably volatile, and more

likely, as Reid Barbour notes, "to reflect backwards on the human decipherer than

outwards and upwards to the divine geometrician."[102]

        Indeed, Browne is careful to protect his own probabilistic logic from any kind of

essentializing rigor that effaces individual difference. Consider his stern disposition toward

those who quickly make generalizations after observing specific cases:

> There is another offence unto Charity, which no Author hath ever written of,
> and few take notice of, and that's the reproach, not of whole professions,
> mysteries and conditions, but of whole nations, wherein by opprobrious
> Epithets wee miscall each other, and by an uncharitable Logicke, from a
> disposition in a few conclude a habit in all.   (II.4)

The statement is disingenuous, of course – Browne is well aware of the many authors,

"Puritans" and "Arminians," "papists" and "heretics," taking notice of uncharitable name-

calling by their opponents – as he employs his own brand of ironic humor to engage the

polarized religious culture of the period in England and abroad. Note that "we miscall each

other," that there is a problem of classification, which reduces the various singularities of

man or nature into rigid categories, but Browne concentrates most of all on the error of

judgment. That is, Browne focuses on a problematic application of inductive reasoning or

empiricism – he calls it an uncharitable *logic* – that moves by induction up from particular

to general traits, whereby the behavior of individuals can be applied to a larger population.

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[101] Maclean, 336.

[102] Barbour, "The Hieroglyphics of Skin," *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*, 295.

Implicated in the Baconian project, which makes clear the crucial importance of method, Browne's statement clearly shows this is a matter of social urgency as well.[103] Browne returns to this problem in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, itself a response to Bacon's call for a calendar of popular errors, by observing that this kind of mistaken logic is the most common: "*A dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* ... This fallacy men commit when they argue from a particular to a general; as when we conclude the vices or qualities of a few, upon a whole Nation. Or from a part unto the whole."[104] Indeed, this frustration with fallacious logic might be a better context in which to understand Browne's aversion for the multitude, which he explains in more detail in his examination of popular errors. In the *Pseudodoxia* Browne describes this kind of fallacy as a "circle," linking the problem figuratively to his earlier discussion in *Religio Medici* of "the circle of a heresy" (I.8). But the main thrust of Browne's argument, whether he intends to attack the multitude, religious controversialists, or natural philosophers, is to protect contingency, circumstance, and singularity. Even as he articulates a careful orthodoxy, Browne remains careful to avoid anything that effaces individuality in the cause of essentialism, and he finds it particularly important to retain the probabilistic core of semiotic or "charitable" logic.

Browne's appreciation for contingency was perhaps motivated by his fascination with exteriors, especially the skin, which he treated as a hermetic text. In addition to a discussion of skin color in *Pseudodoxia Epidemic*a and a reference to the strange condition morgellons in *A Letter to a Friend*, he wrote his Leiden thesis on smallpox, a disease which prompted fear and mystified curiosity on account of its virulent effect on the skin. Smallpox was widely considered to be an "envious and foul disease," as much for its marks on the disease's fortunate survivors as for its rate of mortality, which was increasing during

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[103] For a comparison of the inductive methods of Bacon and Browne, see Egon Merton, *Science and Imagination in Sir Thomas Browne* (New York: Octagon, 1969).

[104] *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, I.4. For Bacon's appeal for a calendar of errors, see *The Advancement of Learning*, 91.

the period.[105] The disease was often described as "uncharitable" (one wonders if the apparently overboiling humours of smallpox encouraged Browne to align charity with coldness). Consider Richard Corbett's "Elegie Upon the Death of the Lady Haddington," which addresses the disease itself in rather odd fashion: "Thou shouldst have wrought on some such mould / That ne're did love her lord, nor ever could / Untill she were deform'd, thy tyranny / Were then within the rules of charity." Corbett is primarily concerned with marshaling wit to offer consolation in the face (scarred or otherwise) of grief and fear, but his poem underscores the overlap between disease and charity, in that both discourses involve the crucial but difficult role of interpretation. Charity, just like medicine it seems, remains reliant on the vague signifiers of outward appearance. Alexander Brome makes the relationship even more emphatic in "To a Gentleman that fell sick of the small Pox. When he should be married," attempting to incorporate this new and problematic disease into an older tradition of medicine that united the bodily exteriors with interior conditions:

> These things I guess not by your face, I find
> Your front is not the *Index* of your mind.
> Yet by your Physnomy, thus much is ment,
> You are not spotles though you're innocent.

The skin, in particular, must have seemed to Browne and others like a canvas of intriguing but unreliable possibility, and a disease like smallpox posed an especially dangerous threat of disruption to the traffic between interior and exterior bodily conditions.

Browne's own practice of semiotics was incredibly complex, often intersecting medical and moral imperatives. As he explains his prognosis in *A Letter to a Friend*, Browne mentions a consideration of facial expression, the planetary motion during a patient's nativity, peculiarities of the hand and ear (referencing Cardano and Scaliger, respectively), the patient's record of previous illnesses, relative hairiness and dental

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[105] See Raymond Anselment, *The Realms of Apollo: Literature and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 172-212. The quotation is from Ben Jonson, "An Epigram. To the Small-Pox."

records, diet, and even oneirocriticism. Although Browne quickly rules out a number of factors as irrelevant or dubious, the scope and variety of his interest is dazzling. He reads nearly every aspect of Robert Loveday's life and illness.[106] Loveday's skin and face – that is, his physiognomy – plays the most important role in this process, corroborating Browne's initial diagnosis and suggesting a mortal prognosis immediately confirmed by the patient's subsequent death. But the apparent fatality of the disease does not stop Browne from proceeding to a consideration of Loveday's interior condition, especially since so many patients exhibit "that stupid Symptom" of avarice near the end of their lives, a kind of spiritual sickness that joins the bodily disease. Browne clearly considers it important to mention that Loveday was charitable, ascribing something like material reality to the patient's generous but illusory desires to donate "publick and lasting Charities":

> Surely where good Wishes and charitable Intentions exceed Abilities, Theorical Beneficency may be more than a Dream. They build not Castles in the Air who would build Churches on Earth; and tho they leave no such Structures here, may lay good Foundations in Heaven.   (403-4)

Note how much vitality Browne assigns to the interior world of human desire. Here, in that wonderful phrase "theorical beneficency," we catch a quick glimpse at Browne's own permeable threshold between faith and charity, the two supposedly rival virtues of early modern theological discourse, as Browne traces the ontological origins of charity, equating the start of good works to the onset of good wishes. Perhaps more importantly, the passage demonstrates Browne's facility in moving between medical and ethical or spiritual matters, as his physiognomy does not conclude with a prognosis but continues into something like a eulogy. As Preston notes, the generic mixture of a "medical *consilium* which attends to the specifics of an individual case history, and *sententiae* which expound general truths"

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[106] I am following Frank Huntley in using Loveday's name, although I acknowledge the identification is dubious, for reasons most recently outlined in Kathryn Murphy's article "The Christian Physician: Thomas Browne and the Role of Religion in Medical Practice," *'A man very well studyed'*, 240.

accounts for the odd push and pull of the work, blending together a focus on the singular disease of the patient with universal truths.[107]

This stylistic approach is typical for Browne, who demonstrates a similar pattern of logic throughout *Religio Medici*, especially in his treatment of charity. To use a fairly reductive illustration of the phenomenon, observe the inverse movement generated by charity in the context of friendship: at times charity acts as an ideal bonding agent – indeed, apparently marrying Platonic *eros* to Stoic *amicitia* – by uniting virtuous friends in a spiritual embrace (II.6); but charity also performs the crucial role of dividing friend's afflictions into an almost insensible quality, participating in the kind of intentional atomism Browne disparages elsewhere: "It is an act within the power of charity to translate a passion out of one breast into another, and to divide a sorrow almost out of itself; for an affliction, like a dimension, may be so divided as, if not indivisible, at least to become insensible" (II.5). The concluding result is similar, as in both cases two bodies share aspects of one soul, but the pattern of movement initiated by charity is reversed. Regarding the topic of physiognomy, Browne makes a similar shift, moving from a discussion of natural hieroglyphs to a leisurely rumination on the singularity of each human being: "There was never anything so like another, as in all points to concurre, there will ever some reserved difference slip in" (II.2). In this instance the thought seems potentially problematic to Browne, as if those differences might explode the hope of ever understanding the human body or soul, but he is also fascinated by the infinite variety of divine creation, and he quickly expresses optimism about the potential for charity to accommodate these distinctions.

Indeed, Browne's discussion of singularity here is not some mysterious digression – that quick transition, "but to return from philosophy to charity," has mystified readers –

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[107] Preston, "'An Incomium of Consumptions': *A Letter to a Friend* as Medical Narrative," *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*, 209.

but instead a crucial consideration of the paradoxical nature of charity. If Browne is worried elsewhere over the threat to charity from singularity, innovation, and schism, here he seems more optimistic about human difference: "I hold not so narrow a conceit of this virtue as to conceive that to give alms is only to be charitable, or think a piece of liberality can comprehend the total of charity" (II.3). Browne consistently returns to the problem of narrowing charity, a concern he revisits to in *A Letter to a Friend*, and it seems as if he is attempting to construct a multitudinous array of charitable acts to compensate for the singularity of each human: "Divinity hath wisely divided the acts thereof into many branches, and hath taught us, in this narrow way, many paths unto goodness: as many ways as we may do good, so many ways we may be charitable" (II.3). Browne clearly wants charity to accommodate the radical singularity of humankind. In other words, charity does not merely knit together society but also divides itself into as many fragments that exist in the world, a concept mirrored by "the discontinuousness of Browne's prose," especially in the second part, which partitions charity into so many independent fragments.[108]

Browne's charity facilitates this kind of "double movement," to use Barbour's apt phrase, differentiating into particulars and then uniting in a comprehensive harmony, narrowing his own religious sphere to Reformed spirituality but remaining connected to the apostolic and patristic bedrock of Christianity, negotiating between singular and communal imperatives, and constructing his own hybrid version of himself that can accommodate Puritan "morosity" with the accoutrement of Roman Catholic ceremony.[109] Indeed, Browne's paradoxical description of humankind, with its traffic between the material and divine, becomes a fitting emblem of his idealized charity: "We are only that amphibious piece, between a corporeal and a spiritual essence; that middle form, that links those two together, and makes good the method of God and nature, that jumps not from

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[108] Webber, *The Eloquent I*, 154.

[109] Barbour, *Literature and Religious Culture*, 190-191.

extremes, but unites the incompatible distances by some middle and participating natures"

(I.34).

CHAPTER FIVE

"ALL UNDER THE FEET OF CHARITY": MILTON AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF DIVORCE

At the end of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton refers to both Church

and State as twin champions in an epic enterprise. Not, it seems, the enterprise of

opposing the joint machinations of prelacy and papacy and royal prerogative in a dubious

military conflict gripping all of England. No, in the chaotic years of 1643 and 1644, perhaps

the most uncertain and violent of the entire civil war period, Milton, already redefining the

traditional ideals of heroism, assigns a different kind of task to his champions: reforming

the current divorce laws.[1] By doing this, by shrugging off the tyrannical shackles of Custom

and Error and canon law, they might liberate helpless Christian spouses, set free so many

daughters of Israel, reclaim giddy sectarians for the true church, repair the institution of

marriage to its original blessed intent, and restore man to his dignified state. How is this to

be accomplished? The answer is at once easy and impossible: "They shall recover the

misattended words of Christ to the sincerity of their true sense from manifold

contradictions, and shall open them with the key of charity."[2]

The collective members of Parliament and the Westminster Assembly failed Milton

in this particular endeavor, we know, but ever since it seems that scholars have been trying

to recover his "key of charity" for their own purposes, to unlock so many doors otherwise

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[1] As recent scholars have noted, the political implications of divorce, in addition to the immediate
relevance of the topic of marriage to political and ecclesial authorities, were of incredible importance
during the period (see in particular Sharon Achinstein, "'A Law in this matter to himself':
Contextualizing Milton's Divorce Tracts," *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, eds. Nicholas McDowell
and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174-85). But in typical fashion, Milton's
style of prose transforms the current topic of his concern into one of all-consuming significance, and
his rhetorical pyrotechnics place even more weight on his concept of charity.

[2] John Milton, *Complete Prose Works*, II, ed. Don Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959),
355. References to the *Complete Prose Works* will hereafter appear in parentheses.

closed to us: Milton's notion of Christian liberty, for example, and his peculiar method of

scriptural hermeneutics; his conception of gender politics and cosmology and divine love;

his understanding of Mosaic law and natural law and contractual law; the obscure and

affecting details of his sober personal life; and especially the thorny problems of his later

poetry, *Paradise Lost* in particular.[3] It is unfair to reduce this excellent scholarship to mere

summary, but it makes an essential point in crude fashion: charity was clearly of crucial

importance to Milton, in his divorce tracts and elsewhere, but it remains equally unclear

exactly what role to assign the concept. Contemporary readers of Milton were similarly

flummoxed. The anonymous author of *An Answer to a book intituled, The doctrine and*

discipline of divorce asks Milton what seems to be an ingenuous question: you say current

divorce law violates and neglects the supreme law of charity, "but how is this done?"[4]

Implicit in the question is a recognition of contradictory perspectives or values regarding

charitable conduct; it seems as if Milton's charity needs its own interpretive key. Perhaps

this is why, in his otherwise impatient response, *Colasterion*, Milton feels compelled to

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[3] Arthur Barker discusses the divorce tracts and the role of charity in shaping Milton's notion of Christian liberty in *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942). The most important discussion of charity in Milton's scriptural hermeneutics is Dayton Haskin's study, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), esp. 54-90; but see also Regina Schwartz, "Milton on the Bible," *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas Corns (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 37-54, and Stanley Fish, "Wanting a Supplement: The Question of Interpretation in Milton's Early Prose," *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 41-68. Stephen Fallon discusses the cosmological implications of Milton's rule of charity in "The Metaphysics of Milton's Divorce Tracts," *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, 69-84, and Douglas Trevor uses the notion of charity to explore the relation between Milton's views of gender and cosmology in "Milton's Oneness," *Milton Studies* 49 (2009): 77-104. For a discussion of Milton's charity and contract law, see Victoria Kahn, *Wayward Contracts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jason Rosenblatt discusses Milton's conception of Mosaic law in *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); and natural law. Although he only briefly touches on the divorce tracts, Russell Hillier considers charity to be an essential thematic concern of *Paradise Lost* in *Milton's Messiah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); David Aers and Bob Hodges also link the divorce tracts to *Paradise Lost* in "Rational Burning: Milton on Sex and Marriage," *Milton Studies* 13 (1979): 3-34; see also Phillip Donnelly, "*Paradise Regained* as Rule of Charity: Religious Toleration and the End of Typology," *Milton Quarterly* 43 (2004): 171-194.

[4] *An Answer to a Book, Intituled, THE Doctrine and Discipline OF DIVORCE, OR, A Plea for Ladies and Gentlewomen, and all other Maried Women against Divorce* (London: 1644), 30.

explain again and yet again precisely what he means by charity – a command precedent to all civil ordinances, including marriage, a command to forgive but not be friends to enemies, to be reconciled with but not enslaved by unfaithful spouses, to love oneself as well as one's neighbor – finishing his lecture with an air of finality: "And this I trust none can mistake" (2:750). Yet Milton's own efforts to explain charity highlight the underlying tension involved in any kind of charitable conduct, which is further complicated by the enormous importance ascribed to the concept.

Indeed, this entire chapter disputes Milton on that point, taking as its point of origin the indeterminate nature of charity. Milton returns to the concept with persistence throughout the divorce tracts, belying his own confidence in its supposed hermeneutical omniscience. As Jason Rosenblatt observes, Milton employs the word charity ninety-two times in these prose works, a convincing demonstration of its prominent function in this particular set of arguments about domestic liberty and scriptural interpretation.[5] Nor is it merely a matter of sheer numbers. Milton habitually deploys charity at the end of an important paragraph or chapter, or even at the end of a treatise, as he does to conclude *The Doctrine and Discipline*: "God the Son hath put all other things under his own feet; but his Commandments hee hath left all under the feet of Charity" (355-6).[6] This practice returns in *Paradise Lost*, which, despite its limited use of the word charity, employs the term as the culminating expression at crucial moments in Books III and XII. In the divorce tracts charity often arrives in tandem with another abstract concept – "wisdom and charity" (248); "God and charitie" (260); "religion and charity" (310); "somtimes with humanity, much lesse with charity" (355) – which underscores the fluid nature of charity in the period,

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[5] *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost*, 103. It is surprising to find that Milton explicitly references "charity" in his divorce tracts nearly twice as often as he does "faith."

[6] This trend begins in the *DDD*, when Milton ends his prefatory address to parliament by styling them "defenders of Charity" and daring to combat any reader "who so preferrs either Matrimony, or other Ordinance before the good of man and the plain exigence of Charity" (232-3), and continues throughout the divorce tracts, especially his extensive biblical commentary, *Tetrachordon*.

as well as its strange ability to join with other related virtues. As Milton's references to charity proliferate in the divorce tracts, the concept experiences a kind of dilation, expanding outward into all of the important topics explored by Milton scholars – Christian liberty, natural law, interpretive ethics, and more – which begs the simple question: what exactly *is* charity for Milton, beyond some kind of spiritual or intellectual trump card to be played whenever an important hand needs to be won?

The abrupt nature with which charity suddenly assumes centrality in Milton's thinking and subsequently fades from immediate notice after the divorce tracts is striking. Prior to the *Doctrine and Discipline*, Milton's most daring use of charity is one of omission, when the Lady invokes Faith, Hope, and Chastity in *A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle*, and though this chapter will labor to show the enduring influence of charity in Milton's later prose and poetic works, he never again invokes the term with the same vehement power or persistence, besides his enigmatic reference to a "paradise within" at the conclusion of *Paradise Lost*. Even in *De Doctrina Christiana*, when Milton attempts to build a coherent systematic theology from scriptural texts, charity seems to slip somewhere into the cracks between his division of faith and works.

The divorce tracts' description of charity, meanwhile, is impressively grand but frustratingly amorphous. Consider the following list of the celestial epithets Milton devotes to the concept: in addition to "the general and supreme rule of charity" (277), there is the "fundamental and superior laws of nature and charitie" (325), or "that authentick precept of sovran charity; whose grand Commission is to doe and to dispose over all the ordinances of God to man" (343); "charitie, the interpreter and guide of our faith" (236); "the christian arbitrement of charity is supreme decider of all controversie, and supreme resolver of all Scripture" (637); "the wing of charity, and protection of the Church" (591), "the immaculate hands of charity" (340) and "the now-only lawgiving mouth of charity" (669); "the all-interpreting voice of Charity her self" (309) and "the divine and softning breath of charity

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which turns and windes the dictat of every positive command" (604-5). Note the corporeal

(and female) dimensions Milton often assigns to the concept: he envisions feet, hands, a

wing, a mouth, a voice – in fact, he comes perilously close to a composite picture of the

Holy Spirit, with its tongues of flame, its breath of wind, and its associations with the dove.

And yet there remains a kind of rational ballast throughout the divorce tracts, charity as a

law, a rule, a precept, or a command. The Spirit, of course, was traditionally individualist

and lay, opposed to clerical hierarchy, and associated with the dangers of religious

enthusiasm and antinomian excess. Contemporaries, fairly or no, branded most religious

thinkers who argued in behalf of the Holy Spirit as "*Anabaptisticall*, *Antinomian*,

Hereticall, *Atheisticall*" – terms, in other words, of exactly the kind William Prynne

attaches to Milton's *DDD*.[7] But Milton rarely speaks explicitly of the Holy Spirit in his

divorce tracts, even if its influence remains discernible, and by associating charity with

natural law and equity, the treatises read more like learned commentaries in the style of

Hugo Grotius or John Selden than the work of a religious radical. So, Milton's

contemporaries feared that his prose would usher in a Familist orgy fueled by religious

enthusiasm; and now his scholars accuse him of privileging reason before revelation of any

kind, including the bible.[8]

 At the center of this conundrum is charity, and this chapter will explore some of the

different (and at times competing) visions of charity that Milton appears to join in his

divorce tracts and elsewhere in his work. As the preceding discussion has shown, we should

not necessarily be looking for a consistent application of charity from Milton's writing,

which, like his own method of charitable interpretation, requires a consideration of context,

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[7] Prynne, *Twelve Considerable Serious Questions Touching Church Government* (1644), 7.

[8] I will discuss this in more depth later in the chapter, but take as representative of this critical stance R. Kenneth Kirby's comment on Milton's biblical hermeneutics in the divorce tracts: "Almost from the beginning of his argument on divorce, Milton found it necessary to sacrifice Scriptural precept to reason," in "Milton's Biblical Hermeneutics in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*," *Milton Quarterly* 18 (1984): 118.

an eye to the "drift and scope" of his entire meaning, and a sensitivity to contemporary usage. The presiding argument of this chapter is rather a simple one: charity for Milton was an exceptionally flexible trope despite its association with various problematic legacies, and so it offered him a way of trafficking between concepts of apparent opposition, negotiating the dynamic between body and spirit, for example, between reason and revelation, and even between marriage and divorce. But this argument offers no more solutions to the Milton scholar than it did to Milton himself. Instead it provides an entry point into complex positions of intellectual, political, and religious discourse that Milton was attempting to engage and reform. In other words, it asks of modern readers and scholars the same obligations Milton desired from his contemporary audience – to reconsider their customary positions, be they religious, intellectual, or political, and to "be still and heare all out" (241).

If readers over the centuries have struggled to understand Milton's intentions with regard to deploying charity, the reason is fairly simple: the imperative typically becomes manifest in complicated prose. This chapter is organized by particularly rich and paradoxical passages in Milton's work that stand in for larger topics related to politics, hermeneutics, theology, and poetics. I believe it is important to leave space for paradox in an examination of Milton's use of charity, and not merely because I am convinced that Milton's understanding of the concept runs contrary to the received opinion of many contemporaries. Paradox was often deployed by writers in the Renaissance to generate further inquiry and consideration, to stimulate conversation, and to produce wonder and admiration at divine or human craftsmanship. I think Milton intends for charity to accomplish a similar aim. When he declares that Parliament and the assembly might open the "misattended words of Christ" with "the key of charity," he claims such an action will in fact discover and defend charity; charity is both the key that unlocks the box *and* the treasure inside. Dennis Danielson makes a similar point about Milton's theodicy, noting

that its "conclusion is also its starting point."[9] In the divorce tracts, charity is both Milton's point of origin and his end, a word that fleshes forth inward intention and simultaneously sanctifies works with interior belief, the virtue that prompts, governs, and validates the entire process of reading and interpretation.

Binding and Loosening: Charity and Christian Liberty

> He who wisely would restrain the reasonable Soul of man within due bounds, must first himself know perfectly, how far the territory and dominion extends of just and honest liberty. As little must he offer to bind that which God hath loosn'd, as to loos'n that which he hath bound.   (*YP*, II, 227)

I offer up one of these complicated quotations, from the prefatory address to Parliament and the Westminster assembly appended to the *Doctrine and Discipline*, as a means of introducing what is perhaps the central focus of Milton's charity: liberty. It is hardly novel to claim that liberty is the essential concern of Milton's pamphlets – after all, he himself summarized their aim and purpose in as many words in his *Defensio Secunda* – and much of this section rehashes precepts that have become canonical in Milton scholarship. An earlier generation of scholars focused on Milton's understanding of Christian liberty and its relation to the various expressions of Puritanism current during the 1640s and 50s, an emphasis that has received revision (and beneficial nuance) from recent studies that have demonstrated Milton's association with Christian humanism, Hebraic law, rational skepticism, and classical republicanism.[10] However neat its *telos*, it is

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[9] Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 229.

[10] Arthur Barker's study of Milton's notion of Christian liberty remains important and well worth reading closely; see *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942). Joan Bennett places Milton in the context of such rational humanists as Richard Hooker in *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). Quentin Skinner notes that Parliamentary debates in the early 1640s, particularly the arguments of Henry Parker, relied heavily on Roman law and its conception of fundamental liberties in "Milton and the Politics of Slavery," *Milton and the Terms of Liberty*, eds. Graham Parry and Joad Raymond (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 1-22; David Norbrook discusses Milton's developing republicanism in *Writing the English Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Martin Dzelzainis provides a lucid account of Milton's republican principles in "Milton's Classical Republicanism," *Milton and Republicanism*, eds. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-

no longer quite right to claim, as A.S.P. Woodhouse does, that Milton "makes Christian

liberty the very corner-stone of his theory of toleration; and from the ecclesiastical sphere

he presses on boldly to the civil."[11] Instead scholars have shown Milton's impressively

synergistic thought during this period in attempting to reconcile Mosaic law, natural law,

and gospel law. This section offers an addition to the conversation by suggesting that

Milton's charity traffics between these civic and religious principles, blending together

Christian liberty and classical *libertas*, and negotiating the rights and obligations inherent

to both complicated legacies.[12]

Both Christian liberty and classical liberty resist bondage of various kinds. The

classic Protestant conception of Christian liberty, articulated most fully by Luther in his

commentary on Galatians, describes a freedom in Christ from bondage to the law of works

and its inevitable incurrence of divine wrath. This freedom, according to Luther and most

other commentators, is essential to forming and sustaining Christian community. Although

he often deploys rhetorical formulations of Christian liberty, Milton actually qualifies its

purpose in his divorce tracts, most notably by attempting to reinstate a particular feature of

Mosaic law, but also more generally in his optimistic understanding of charity and vision of

a beneficent deity. In these prose works Christian liberty is just as often metaphorical or

analogical as it is instrumental: as the Christian is free from the law to love fully, Milton

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24, as well as "Milton's Politics," *The Cambridge Companion to John Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 70-83. Catherine Gimelli-Martin's recent book participates in this general revision of Milton's life and work; see *Milton among the Puritans* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

[11] Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty, being the Army Debates (1647-9) (Chicago:* University of Chicago Press, 1951), 48.

[12] Jason Rosenblatt has already expanded the field of vision by explaining that charity is not an exclusively Christian virtue for Milton, who centers much of his argument in the divorce tracts on "the most charitable, and yet most injur'd Statute of Moses" (2:224). See *Torah and Law in* Paradise Lost, 9-11. Barbara Lewalski briefly notes the relation between charity and liberty in the divorce tracts in "Milton, Liberty, Servility, and the Paradise Within," *Milton, Rights and Liberties*, eds. Christophe Tournu and Neil Forsyth (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 35-6.

claims, so should a disappointed spouse gain freedom from marital bondage to love a future spouse with whom he is compatible. *Libertas* functions in a similar capacity for Milton, who was a close reader and emulator of Cicero, Sallust, and other Roman exponents of republican ideals. If its simple definition merely distinguished between a free person (*liber*) and a slave (*servus*), protecting the individual's liberty to do as he pleases unless specifically prohibited by law, the Roman concept of *libertas* carried with it civic responsibilities and a trajectory toward the collective sphere that ideally manifested in national glory. This is clearly in operation at a fundamental level in Milton's divorce tracts, as he envisions the legal reform of divorce producing patriotic engagement and civic leadership (and implicitly, military assistance in the struggling Parliamentarian cause). His own rhetoric in the prefatory letter embodies this strategy; even as argues for his own heroic singularity and defends a particular set of domestic liberties, he frames his project in terms of the duty and service he owes to the entire British nation, claiming for himself such laurels as "to be reck'n'd among the publick benefactors of civill and humane life; above the inventors of wine and oil" (2:240).

Questions related to liberty remain bound up in marriage. Paul prefaces his marital advice for the congregation in Corinth – that is, for everyone to remain unmarried and focus on spiritual rather than worldly matters – by alluding to conventional definitions of liberty, reminding his flock, "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant" (1 Cor. 7:22). If Paul's argument against marriage stems from a desire to remain free from care, Epicurus offered similar advice to aspiring philosophers, encouraging them, unless dictated by special circumstances, to avoid the pain and fear inherent to marriage.[13] Francis Bacon declares that "the most ordinary cause of a *Single Life*, is Liberty," and Henry Peacham

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[13] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, X.119. For a rebuttal to Epicurus, see Epictetus's remarks in his *Discourses*, 3.7.19.

likewise claims in *The Complete Gentleman* that one loses "liberty in marriage."[14] The

optimistic paradox asserted by the speaker of Spenser's *Amoretti* 65 to his romantic

interest – "That fondly feare to lose your liberty, / When, losing one, two liberties ye gayne"

– remained an outlier in early modern literature of marriage.

When Milton articulates a desire for liberty in his divorce tracts, there is a good

chance that charity will be somewhere nearby in the prose, operating as a crucial guarantor

or advocate of personal liberties. The two concepts possess an allegorical as well as

conceptual kinship during this period of Milton's writing: in *Areopagitica*, he personifies

liberty as the "nurse of all great wits" (2:559), while charity assumes the role of "high

governesse of our belief" (2:340). A typical example, from *Tetrachordon*:

> The wife also, as her subjection is terminated in the Lord, being her self the
> redeem'd of Christ, is not still bound to be the vassall of him, who is the
> bond-slave of Satan: she being now neither the image nor the glory of such a
> person, nor made for him, nor left in bondage to him; but hath recurs to the
> wing of charity, and protection of the Church, unless there be a hope on
> either side; yet such a hope must be meant, as may be a rationall hope, and
> not an endless servitude.   (591)

The passage illustrates the slippage between matters civic and spiritual in Milton's thought,

his persistent concern with vassalage, bondage, and servitude of various kinds, and the

assisting role of charity, which seems to exist both within and without the Church. Far from

reserving charity in his divorce tracts for matters of purely religious or spiritual import,

Milton builds a responsible commonwealth by deploying charity in a strenuous defense of

the sufficiency and sovereignty of the self. If Milton describes the trajectory of a spiritually

decrepit community as a decline and fall in two steps – men rely on legal bonds (as

opposed to inner virtue), which cultivates moral looseness – he directs his own spiritual

republic in the opposite direction, envisioning charity as a liberating ethic that frees

individual citizens to perform virtuous service in behalf of the state. At a more personal

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[14] Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1985), 35; Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman*, ed. Virgil Heltzel (Ithaca: Cornell
University Press, 1962), 194.

level, Milton's charity endorses and enables divorce in order to protect and preserve the sanctity of marriage; he wants to loosen bonds – and banns – in order to ensure their power.

With regard to the passage at the beginning of this section, note, first of all, the general affect of Milton's chiastic phrase, which aims for a delicate equilibrium between the obligations of cultivating a holy community (binding) and protecting individual liberty (loosn'ning), one might say between the desire for marriage and the need for divorce. Throughout the divorce tracts, Milton uses charity to bind (loosely) these separate imperatives. The liberty inherent to the verb "loos'n" remains the heart of the matter, the moral essence at the center of his chiasmus, but Milton takes care to show how such liberty radiates outward into tighter bonds than any produced by enforced conformity. That is, Milton suggests here what he makes even clearer elsewhere in his writing: the true measure of a commonwealth is not in the rigor of its statutory law, which cultivates so many fugitive and cloistered virtues, but in the free expression of "honest liberty" among its individual citizens.[15] Compulsion in matters of love and marriage, in fact, results in frustrated spouses who become "unserviceable and spiritles" (2:347) and ultimately "dead to the Common-wealth" (2:632). He posits a different kind of civic economy than was traditionally associated with purely religious notions of charity, the proverbial (and scriptural) bond of perfection, which preachers and pamphleteers would invoke to prioritize communal and familial harmony at the expense of individual needs or desires.[16] Instead Milton privileges

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[15] Milton provides a succinct definition of a commonwealth in *Eikonoklastes*, describing it as a "societie sufficient of it self, in all things conducible to well being and commodious life" and free of interference by the king or magistrate. See *Complete Prose*, IV, pt. 1, 458.

[16] Consider the position of Smectymnuan Edmund Calamy, who appropriates the charity of Colossians 3:14 as a defense against divisions of any kinds, "whether they be Ecclesiasticall, or Politicall, in Kingdomes, Cities, and Families," claiming that "Whatsoever is divisible, is corruptible." See *An indictment against England because of her selfe-murdering divisions* (London: 1645), 4-7. A member of the Westminster assembly, Calamy was an active participant in the 1644 discussion of marriage and an outspoken opponent of toleration.

the one before the many, articulating a radical defense of individual privilege (motivated in part by his own private desire for divorce). But his logic does not end there. By ensuring individual liberty he claims, paradoxically, to strengthen the bonds that tie together the rest of society, initiating a reformation that starts in the household and culminates in the perfection of state government.

The passage also demonstrates Milton's intimate and imaginative relationship with scripture, as he invokes Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18 but with an important difference. Whereas the biblical texts confer on the disciples (and Peter in particular) a special prerogative – what they bind on earth will be bound by God in heaven – Milton transforms the passage into an admonition for ecclesial and political authorities to beware their exercise of power: do not bind on earth what has been loosened by God in heaven. This departs from his use of the biblical reference in *The Reason of Church Government* to endorse ministerial (as opposed to prelatical) privilege. Here Milton seems to be channeling the spirit of the larger context in which these quotations appear, Matthew 18 in particular, which expresses a theme of pastoral responsibility that prioritizes the one sheep before the ninety-nine.[17] In fact, the inherent balance of Milton's antimetabole is slightly disingenuous, as he clearly focuses here on the particular dangers of binding, preferring to err on the side of Scylla's "abused libertie" rather than the "unmercifull restraint" of Charybdis (2:235). And yet, even as he celebrates individual liberty, Milton employs ambiguous syntax to underscore the importance of binding oneself from license: "[He] must first himself know perfectly, how far the territory and dominion extends of just and honest liberty." The otherwise unnecessary comma serves as an effective caesura, and in that pause before the subordinate clause arrives (which is the sentence's actual direct object), the reader hears the age-old advice to know yourself, *nosce te ipsum*. This dictum

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[17] This same chapter of Matthew includes the famous reference to the millstone hanging from the offender's neck, and it is interesting that Milton turns to a scriptural chapter so popular among earlier English reformers to admonish potential abuses of excessive power among presbyterians.

requires a constant act of self-interpretation which is crucial to enacting fully the liberty

Milton prioritizes throughout the divorce tracts.[18] Delphic maxim aside, the first sentence

introduces the scriptural references by invoking an array of classical principles, inflecting

Christian marriage and its role in the commonwealth with heathen philosophy: a clear

reference to Stoic *honestum*, perhaps an oblique gesture toward the self-restraint

celebrated in Plato's *Phaedrus*, and a general celebration of *libertas* that modulates

between individual virtue and public governance. This synergistic approach to classical and

Christian virtue captures Milton's sophisticated understanding of liberty, which acquires

even more freight given the prefatory letter's context as an address to the joint leaders of

parliament and the Westminster assembly. Keeping these influences in mind helps to

better understand what Milton is trying to accomplish with his charity.

And just how is this related to charity? Immediately after this quotation, Milton

makes a pointed joke at the expense of Reformed religion regarding its own peculiar

superstitions, suggesting that the collective focus among Protestants on preserving binds

offends charity:

> The superstition of the Papist is, *touch not, taste not*, when *God* bids both;
> and ours is, *part not, separat not*, when God and charity both permits and
> commands. *Let all your things be done with charity*, saith St. Paul: and his
> Master saith, *Shee is the fulfilling of the Law*. Yet now a civil, an indifferent,
> a somtime diswaded Law of mariage, must be forc't upon us to fulfill, not
> onely without charity, but against her.   (2:228-9)

Milton's hyperbolic use of prepositions at the conclusion of the passage does invite a

question: would it be acceptable to force a law *with* charity, or *for* charity?[19] But his

principal assertion remains clear, that charity, as a divine command as well as divine gift, is

the chief instrument ensuring liberty, one in this case that liberates spouses otherwise

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[18] Thomas Hobbes underscores the element of hermeneutics embedded in the dictum when he translated the phrase as "Read thyself" in *The Leviathan* (London: 1651), 2.

[19] For a consideration of Milton's problematic (and forceful) application of charitable law in the context of Ireland, see Mary Fenton, *Milton's Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connections of Hope with Land* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 65-96.

confined by the strictures of canon law. Here again he manages to balance appeals to both

parliament ("Yet now a civil") and the assembly ("an indifferent") with a general call for

critical expediency ("a somtime diswaded Law of marriage"). Milton's approach to

adiaphora is radically different from the typical arguments rehearsed throughout the early

modern period by established authorities, who employed the sphere of religious

indifference as an opportunity for political enforcement, as well as religious dissenters,

who claimed that nothing was indifferent to a sanctified Christian. Charity often became

implicated in these arguments, but Milton ascribes to the virtue a power and influence in

governing *adiaphora* that is remarkable. His charity demands that every thing indifferent

(and Milton applies the term broadly) should remain free of legislative jurisdiction.

Although he considers *DDD* orthodox in its treatment of *adiaphora* – merely heterodox in

its consideration of divorce as a thing indifferent – Arthur Barker notes that charity serves

as a vehicle for Milton's enlargement of Christian liberty in subsequent divorce tracts and

other pamphlets.[20] That process is already under way here in the prefatory letter of *DDD*,

as charity seems to overtake all other considerations civil and theological, heralded by that

conjunction appearing to equate God and charity, both of which are characterized by their

permissive (and anti-Calvinist) natures.

In case he was not clear enough about binding and loosening at the beginning of

DDD, Milton repeats the scriptural reference in *Tetrachordon*, again linking its

significance to charity:

> For no other cause did Christ assure us that whatsoever things wee binde, or slacken on earth are so in heaven, but to signifie that the christian arbitrement of charity is supreme decider of all controversie, and supreme resolver of all Scriptur; not as the Pope determines for his own tyranny, but as the Church ought to determine for its own true liberty.   (2:637)

Here he is discussing the role of scriptural hermeneutics in negotiating ecclesial

controversy, although this too becomes involved in the cultivation of individual virtue and

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[20] Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma*, 98-120.

its concomitant responsibilities. Indeed, as I intend to make clear, charity for Milton not only preserves the sanctity of the individual conscience but also works as a catalyst that prompts that individual to perform strenuous moral interpretation, whether in biblical hermeneutics, marital relations, or civil society. This passage recalls the admonition Raphael delivers to Adam in Book VIII of *PL*: "To stand or fall / Free in thine own arbitrament it lies" (640-1). It seems charity, much like reason, is but choosing, and Milton is careful to note that charity can be abused, most notably by papal tyrants. Authentic charity, on the other hand, results in the kind of virtuous conduct that Milton (citing Eusebius) ascribes to Israel's patriarchs living in freedom before the inception of Mosaic law. Milton extends his metaphor of binding and loosening by observing the political implications of spiritual exercise, claiming that every decayed commonwealth manifests its disorder in two consecutive and apparently contradictory steps: first, forgetting to obey inward virtue, men prefer to "live by the outward constraint of law," which results in the second step, "when law becomes now too straight for the secular manners, and those too loose for the cincture of law" (2:639). The best kind of legal "bonds and ligaments of the Commonwealth" are instead for Milton, referencing Plato, "unwritt'n, or at least unconstraining laws of virtuous education" (2:526). Milton's charity remains a liberating ethic but one that carries with it a set of political and intellectual obligations. The year before, translating *The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*, Milton reminds the reader of the "duties of true charity; which preferrs public honesty before private interest" (2:467).

A little over a decade later in *A Treatise of Civil Power* he recycles his earlier riff on the passages from Matthew, admonishing civic magistrates who would engage in any kind of religious coercion:

> As well may he loos'n that which God hath strait'nd or strait'n that which God hath loos'nd, as he may injoin those things in religion which God hath left free, and lay on that yoke which God hath taken off. For he hath not only

> given us this gift as a special privilege and excellence of the free gospel above the servile law, but strictly also hath commanded us to keep it and enjoy it. [21] (7:263)

Here he reverses the constituent parts of his antimetabole, placing divine bonds at the center of his rhetorical figure, but the result is an even more vigorous defense of individual conscience. We are strictly bound by God, he seems to say, to keep and enjoy our liberty, and immediately after he adds references to Galatians and 1 Corinthians, underscoring the scriptural link between love and liberty. Victoria Kahn notes that this passage, which blends together a doctrine of *adiaphora* with Machiavellian rhetorical politics, appears to endorse a republican form of government, since "republics are better able to preserve the realm of contingency in which individual conscience may be exercised and individual virtue may prosper."[22] The republican ideals of *Civil Power* already lay embedded in the arguments of the divorce tracts, which is one reason the Westminster assembly took seriously the political implications of desacralizing divorce and severing bonds of any kind, whether they were related to marriage or the magistrate.[23]

Although he is not yet articulating comprehensive republican arguments in the early 1640s, Milton's preoccupation with cultivating individual virtue is one of the reasons he is always worried about excessive binds in the divorce tracts and elsewhere in his prose works. In response to the Licensing Order of 1643, he would declaim against magistrates trying "to bind books to their good behavior" (2:570) in *Areopagitica*, observing the crucial difference between two contrary attempts to discover Truth in things indifferent: the one, espoused by presbyterian censors, employs force but results in a false show – "give her but

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[21] Rather than referencing Milton's earlier allusions to Matthew 16 and 18, the Yale edition considers this passage an allusion to Job 38:31.

[22] Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 182.

[23] See Diane Purkiss, "Whose Liberty? The Rhetoric of Milton's Divorce Tracts," *Oxford Handbook of Milton*, 186-199. See also Mary Lyndon Shanley, "Marriage Contract and Social Contract in Seventeenth-Century English Thought," in *Western Political Quarterly* 32 (1979): 79-91.

room, & do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true" (2:563) – whereas the other privileges "a little generous prudence, a little forbearance of one another, and som grain of charity," which "might win all these diligences to joyn, and unite into one generall and brotherly search after Truth" (2:554). One can discern in this statement the general trajectory of Milton's charity, which begins by protecting individual liberties but inevitably results in fostering a larger communal enterprise. Even God cannot interfere in this process. In *DDD* he declares that no "Law or Cov'nant, how solemne or strait soever, either between God and man, or man and man, though of Gods joyning, should bind against a prime and principall scope of its own institution" (2:245), and at the beginning of *Tetrachordon*, he reminds his readers that "no ordinance human or from heav'n can binde against the good of man" (2:588). Milton's anxiety over binds becomes more specific in application as his involvement in politics deepens. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton remarks ironically that certain presbyterians "call it thir liberty to bind other mens consciences" (4.1:239), and he reminds Cromwell in Sonnet XVI that "new foes arise, / Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains."

The preoccupation with binding and loosening helps distinguish between charity and its Miltonic philosophical corollary, "esteem," which he calls in *The Reason of Church-government* the second principle after the love of God in establishing pious virtue. As with charity, Milton's esteem does not rely on social or civic sympathies (in the case of esteem, born of shame) but rather derives its scope and power from a conscious sense of personal virtue, clear evidence that he was already shifting away from Calvinism.[24] Both concepts are inwardly oriented, charity an "inward persuasion" (*Civil Power*) and esteem an "inward reverence" (*Reason of Church-Government*). In his study of early modern moderation,

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[24] Milton's preoccupation with "esteem" can be interpreted as a purely Christian phenomenon. Christopher Hill links the concept to a Lutheran notion of the priesthood of all believers in *Milton and the English Revolution*, 251-3, and Barker likewise ascribes a Christian causality to Milton's esteem in *Puritan Dilemma*, 41-2.

Joshua Scodel observes how Milton appropriates the notion of esteem as a more positive conception of self-love, and he notes the particularly Stoic resonances involved in a vision of self-respect that becomes productive of self-restraint.[25] This commitment to self-governance embodies Ciceronian republican ideals crucial to Milton's own developing vision of politics, and he maintains a commitment to healthy esteem throughout his career, most notably in *Paradise Lost*, when Raphael intervenes in paradisal marriage: "Oft-times nothing profits more / Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right / Well managed" (571-3).

This Stoic virtue, however, receives a kind of Epicurean counterbalance in Milton's recourse to charity throughout the divorce tracts, which express the necessity of fulfilling one's (moderate) desires, attempt to acquire freedom from spousal perturbation, and implicitly posit a fortuitous causality ruling over marital relations rather than perfect divine providence.[26] In *Comus* and his anti-prelatical tracts, Milton admires the chaste (as opposed to charitable) self-restraint of esteem, which, according to Scodel, even combats the temptation to masturbate: "Yet is it not incontinent to bound it self, as humid things are, but hath in it a most restraining and powerfull abstinence to start back, and glob it self upward from the mixture of any ungenerous and unbeseeming motion" (1:841-2). But the threat of masturbation becomes replaced by the problem of congested menstruation in the divorce tracts, as Milton compares the restraint of lawful liberty to a menstruous body "where natures current hath been stopt, that the suffocation and upward forcing of some

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[25] Joshua Scodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 271. Richard Strier has also written a complementary study of the subject, in "Milton Against Humility," *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 258-86.

[26] Milton seems opportunistic in his appropriation of Stoic and Epicurean cosmologies in behalf of divorce. At times he gestures at anti-providentialism by underscoring the problem of marital accidents, declaiming the "most unchristian mischance of mariage." Elsewhere, however, he adopts a fatalism in suggesting that some spouses are by their natural complexion incompatible (although this necessity prompts divorce rather than Stoic *apatheia*).

lower part, affects the head and inward sense with dotage and idle fancies" (2:278-9). In this case a careful degree of free external expression preserves the purity of "inward sense." In an anonymous pamphlet supporting toleration, *The ancient bounds, or Liberty of conscience*, the author (probably Francis Rous) employs a similar corporeal metaphor to describe healthy scriptural interpretation: "The Word of God, which requires this Libertie ... for its better operation, as Physick doth require open weather, when the humors are stirring, not clung up nor restrained, for to purge them away."[27] The severe Stoic becomes a presiding image for Milton's conception of presbyterian behavior during the civil war period, since they initially opposed the joint prerogatives of prince and prelate but turned "Malignant backsliders" (3:222) in refusing to pursue genuine ecclesial or political reform, choosing instead to impose their own tyrannical rigor on sectarian opponents. This preoccupation reinforces John Leonard's convincing reading of Sonnet XII as an indictment of presbyterians, which centers on a definition of "revolt" as "draw back or refrain [from one's duty]": they "bawl for freedom in their senseless mood, / And still revolt when truth would set them free. / Licence they mean when they cry Liberty; / For who loves that must first be wise and good."[28]

Milton probably has the rigor of presbyterian opponents in mind when he nears the conclusion of *DDD* and counters the severity of current divorce law with a remarkable invocation of Epicurean ideals:

> *Bee not righteous overmuch*, is the counsel of *Ecclesiastes; why shouldst thou destroy thyself*? Let us not be thus over-curious to strain at *atoms*, and yet to stop every vent and cranny of permissive liberty: lest nature wanting those needful pores, and breathing places which God hath not debarr'd our weaknes, either suddenly break out into some wide rupture of open vice, and frantick heresy, or els inwardly fester with repining and blasphemous thoughts, under an unreasonable and fruitles rigor of unwarranted law.
> (2:354)

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[27] *The ancient bounds* (London: 1645), A3.

[28] John Leonard, "The Troubled, Quiet Endings of Milton's Sonnets," *Oxford Handbook of Milton*, 136-54.

Using atoms as metaphors for individual spouses in a cosmology of marriage, Milton warns against those who prefer to strain, or bind, matter that prefers to be in motion. Note the inward effect of exterior rigor, how too much restraint produces "some wide rupture of open vice, and frantic heresy." Perfect righteousness is counterproductive, even dangerous, in this vision of Solomonic wisdom, and elsewhere too Milton employs the "Wise-man" and his ethics of honest pleasure to indict current divorce law. Ecclesiastes was a controversial text precisely because of its apparent support of Epicurean principles, and numerous early modern readers struggled to reconcile Solomonic hedonism and fortuity with a robust providentialism and Christian piety, a particularly vexed project for the Caroline church in the previous decade given the Stuart monarchs' identification with Solomon.[29] Milton, however, opposing presbyterians rather than Laudians, seems unworried by the association – indeed, he reinforces it by referring to atoms a mere sentence after quoting the scriptural verse – but his vision of deity clearly contrasts the Epicurean model, which allows him to safely enlist Ecclesiastes in behalf of moderate pleasure. Far from removing himself from human affairs, in fact, God assumes the role of exemplary magistrate or lawgiver (Milton returns to this image throughout the divorce tracts), and the permissive liberty he affords the Israelites should be replicated in the British state. Perhaps that is Milton's purpose for the "key of charity," which he mentions a few sentences later, to open up that space of "needful pores, and breathing places" in the commonwealth. The blend of legacies, both Stoic and Epicurean, illustrates the strain involved in Milton's project to cultivate self-governed virtue and pleasurable liberty.

Questions about divinely sanctioned pleasure become implicated in the realm of sexual ethics, especially since the topic of marriage elicits from Milton a fundamental ambivalence about the physical realities of matrimony. In the midst of his project to

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[29] See Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 105-11.

redefine what constitutes marriage, Milton shifts the emphasis from a contractual arrangement designed to further procreation and to avoid sin, and focuses instead on a relationship born of spiritual love and the mutual desire for companionship, a concept of marriage he felt aligned better with the institution's scriptural origins of Genesis: "A meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of mariage; for we find here no expression so necessarily implying carnall knowledg, as this prevention of loneliness to the mind and spirit of man" (2:246). Indeed, so careful is Milton to eliminate carnal intentions from marriage that he re-reads Paul's injunction to the Corinthians – "It is better to marry than burn" – as a rational burning, a combustible lust for the company of a spiritual help-meet rather than a physical bedfellow. Such conspicuous sexual anxiety prompts Annabel Patterson to examine the treatise through a psychoanalytic lens, offering a persuasive reading of the *DDD* as a proto-domestic novel, a confession of his own unpreparedness for a heterosexual marital relationship.[30] Removing the erotic elements of matrimony assumes central importance in this treatise, replacing marital *eros* with *caritas* and engendering a safer form of loving community, but Milton's project remains vexed on account of the pragmatics of marriage and the realities of human desire. James Grantham Turner captures the dilemma of the *DDD* succinctly: Milton "ventures hesitantly into the complex implications of voluntary sexuality, only to take frequent refuge in the simplicities of dualism and ascetic denunciation of the flesh."[31] The anonymous answer to Milton's divorce treatise exploits this tension, mocking what he portrays as wondrous naiveté concerning sexual lust, and assuring Milton he need not worry about divorce since a poor marriage "will not endanger or stir up any other desires but to converse with the soules of

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[30] Annabel Patterson, "No Meer Amatorious Novel?," *John Milton*, ed. Annabel Patterson (London: Longman, 1992),87-101.

[31] Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 204.

other mens Wives; and this we allow you to do and keep your own still."[32] Indeed, the physical bonds of matrimony, knit closer than any filial relationship, impart a claustrophobia that jeopardizes Miltonic charity: "It will easily be true that a father or brother may be hated zealously, and lov'd civilly or naturally; for those duties may be perform'd at distance," Milton claims, but he cannot conceive how "all cohabitation of marriage be kept, how that benevolent and intimate communion of body can be held with one that must be hated with a most operative hatred" (2:263). Recognizing the inevitable physicality of marriage, even articulating a provisional desire for sexual "communion," Milton does not necessarily require a separation from these carnal bonds – merely its availability.

Two comments need to be added that partially qualify Milton's dualistic posture toward sexuality, which is complicated by his polemical language and his developing monism. Like a number of religious reformers before him, Milton employs a dualistic vocabulary of the flesh to articulate divergent motives in scriptural interpretation, between what Augustine would call *caritas* and *concuspiscentia*, the former of which charitably privileges the spirit while the latter remains enslaved to an "alphabeticall servility" (2:280). This becomes especially forceful in his discussion of marriage and divorce, since scriptural interpretation becomes mapped over conjugal relations. To Milton, the understanding of marriage expressed in canon law, as a contractual arrangement designed to further procreation and to avoid sin, betrays its own carnal understanding of marital love. And arguments used to bolster canon law by using obstinately literal interpretations of scripture serve "to bind our Saviour in the default of a down-right promise breaking, and to bind the disunions of complaining nature in chains together, and curb them with a canon bit" (2:334), merely demonstrating further evidence of carnality. However much Milton's

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[32] *An Answer to a book intituled, The doctrine and discipline of divorce*, 32.

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arguments evince sexual anxiety, and they do, they remain focused on scriptural hermeneutics rather than sexual relations.

Secondly, as several scholars have noted, Milton's divorce tracts already reveal a developing monism, not merely in his synergistic approach to law but also in his understanding of the overlap between spiritual and physical love.[33] Citing the divorce tracts, R.A. Shoaf makes a helpful distinction between dualism and duality in Milton's work, observing that "if Milton is so concerned with difference, distinction, separation, and severity, it is not because he subscribes to dualism, but because he is in search of unity and must therefore be ever on guard against 'unmeet consorts,' incompatible realities."[34] The divorce tracts persistently go in fear of hollow forms, and Milton desires charity to break the marital bonds shackling spouses to so many corporeal cases divested of any spiritual core. In fact, he characterizes sexuality of this kind as an affront to liberty, calling it "servil copulation" (2:258). Milton constructs as his allegorical opponent in *DDD* an image of anti-charity, referencing the maxim *scientia inflat* of 1 Corinthians 8 in deriding the "meer face" of Custom, "a swoln visage of counterfeit knowledge," which "puffs up unhealthily, a certain big face of pretended Learning" (2:223) and a "blown physiognomy" (2:232). It is perhaps his desire for the spiritual to gain authentic immanence in (and yet eminence over) fleshly communion that provokes his sternest denunciations of mere "bodily conjunction" (2:239-40), when an innocent spouse "shall find himselfe bound fast to an uncomplying discord of nature, or, as it oft happens, to an image of earth and fleam" (2:254).

Here again, the chiasmus of binding and loosening offers a helpful image of Milton's preferred sexual relations. One of the most prominent arguments Milton employs in behalf of domestic liberty is its strengthening influence on sexual morality: "The vigor of

[33] Stephen Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. 79-110. See also Gimelli Martin, "Dalila, Misogyny, and Milton's Christian Liberty of Divorce," *Milton and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 53-76.

[34] Shoaf, *Milton, Poet of Duality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 26

discipline they may then turn with better successe upon the prostitute loosenes of the times"
(2:355). A perceptive reader of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Milton would have recognized one
of the recurring paradoxes in its treatment of sexual behavior, as various characters
(Redcrosse in particular) become entangled in chains born of loose eroticism, just as
temperate restraint enables authentic freedom. My treatment of that phenomenon in
Spenser's allegory locates the source of much of this convoluted imagery in Spenser's
attention to the scriptural paradoxes associated with Christian liberty (expressed most fully
in Galatians 5), but it is helpful to consider a number of other classical analogues which
describe or metaphorize a lover enslaved by passion: Hercules in bondage to Omphale; the
servitium amoris of Augustan elegists (Propertius in particular); Horace's Satire 2.7; and
many others. The same paradoxes abound in Milton. So, the heroic chastity and arduous
intellectual effort endorsed by Milton throughout his prose career earns and even requires
an honest recreative pleasure, "somtime slackning the cords of intense thought and labour"
(2:596), whereas Samson deplores his own "foul effeminacy," which "held me yok't / Her
Bond-slave" (410-11).

In Milton as in Spenser, however, distinctions between the bonds of *eros* and *agape*
are difficult to perceive, particularly in the context of divorce. Further complicating matters,
contemporary apologies for libertinism, as well as the principles promulgated by certain
radical sectarians, bore a nominal resemblance to Milton's arguments about liberty and
divorce. In examining Milton's representations of sexuality, Turner notes that conservative
contemporaries might be forgiven if they suspected Milton of radical sympathies, given his
spiritual hermeneutics and censure of repressive ethics, even if they failed to recognize that
"Milton's dialectic is meant to enhance moral distinctions, while Antinomianism seeks to
soar beyond them."[35] Milton's anonymous answerer clearly associates the arguments for

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[35] Turner, 93.

liberty in *DDD*, as well as its apparent dismissal of the permanence of marital bonds, with Familist sympathies, declaring, "Fie, fie, blush for shame, and publish no more of this loose Divinitie."[36] With or without a nuanced understanding of Christian liberty or ethical *libertas*, contemporary readers might have discerned in Milton's desire to protect individual liberty certain echoes of the sexual libertinism ascribed to radical sects like the Family of Love. In addition to privileging the inward conscience, both often employ prophetic, paradoxical language to express spiritual and sexual freedoms.[37] Take one radical sectarian defense of pantheistic love, for example, which employs the same figures of antimetabole and parison to argue in behalf of transcending earthly bonds of marriage: "There is such a unity where there is this diversity, and such a diversity where there is this unity, that they cannot kisse one but kisse all, and love one but they love all."[38] It is worth noting that this logic results in its own kind of constraint that Milton would have resisted, regardless of sexual promiscuity – the participants of this orgiastic ritual must kiss *everybody* in order to embody the cosmic spirit. Whereas Milton's chiasmus emphasizes by scriptural warrant the equal need for binding as well as loosening, certain antinomians attempted to forestall anything that restricted their notion of liberty, disregarding any practical or moral distinction between sinful or righteous behavior.

Nevertheless, Milton clearly had some compassion for these radical sectarians, and, if his divorce tracts are any indication, he probably considered many of them disappointed and unhappy spouses who suffer from "the restraint of some lawfull liberty, which ought to

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[36] *An Answere*, 37. Milton responded to this misunderstanding of liberty by characterizing the answerer as "a Servingman both by nature and by function" (2:741).

[37] There are similarities in imagery as well. Consider the likeness of Milton's "key of charity" to the Ranters' "key of liberty, whereby he [God] authorizes us to fulfil our own lusts." See Anon., *The Ranters declaration* (1650), 2.

[38] Anon., *A justification of the mad crew in their waies and principles* (1650), 15.

be giv'n men, and is deny'd them" (2:278).[39] This practical observation drives much of his argument, in fact, as he claims that an unfulfilling marriage exacerbates the natural desire for spiritual union, producing a melancholic despair and encouraging licentious behavior. After all, Milton really does desire to honor marital fidelity. It has become a commonplace assertion among scholars (and a correct one, I think) to note that Milton's divorce tracts, which declare the primacy of spiritual rather than copulative bonds, are actually less focused on divorce than on marriage. Even as he articulates a powerful defense of individual liberties, Milton likewise recognizes and celebrates the desire for human companionship. This is an important reminder for readers of *Paradise Lost* who are tempted to map a misreading of the divorce tracts onto the poem, who assume that Milton, were the narrative up to him, would have Adam divorce Eve rather than fall.[40] I want to end this discussion of Milton's vision of charitable liberty with a brief consideration of two separate episodes in *Paradise Lost*. The first is perhaps the most crucial moment related to binding in the poem (a poem that persistently figures forth bonds and links and chains of various kinds): when Eve presents the apple to Adam and he is apparently forced to choose between his allegiance to God or Eve.

Numerous scholars have noted the echoes of Milton's divorce tracts in Book IX, which reinstates several key concepts from the prose works and alludes to the scriptural words of institution in Genesis 2. Milton barely invokes the possibility of divorce, however, an abhorrent prospect Adam mentions peremptorily, it seems, solely as a means of affirming his vows to Eve:

> How can I live without thee, how forego

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[39] David Loewenstein, "Milton Among the Religious Radicals and Sects: Polemical Engagements and Silences," *Milton Studies* 40 (2001): 222-47.

[40] See, for example, Northrop Frye, *Five Essays on Milton's Epics* (London: Routledge, 1966), 69 and 83-4, as well as Philip Gallagher, *Milton, the Bible, and Misogyny*, 104 and 127. This argument receives a thorough critique from both Russell Hillier, 140-1, and Dennis Danielson, "Through the Telescope of Typology: What Adam Should Have Done," *Milton Quarterly* 23 (1989): 124.

> Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,
> To live again in these wild woods forlorn?   (908-10)

Assuredly Milton intends for Adam's inability to envision paradise without the spiritual communion of Eve to elicit the reader's disapproval, but the scenario likewise asserts a notion we first receive, oddly enough, from Satan when he first visits Eden in Book IV – namely, this is a healthy and happy marriage, truly paradisal, at least as far as Adam is concerned. Rather than hypothesizing whether or not Milton would endorse an Edenic divorce, it seems more pertinent to observe that Milton is dramatizing the other half of a phenomenon he had already explored in the divorce tracts: the intractable challenges marriage poses to liberty. In this case, a happy rather than disappointing marriage is the problem. Adam and Eve achieve that blissful height of matrimonial intercourse Milton prizes in the divorce tracts – sweet conversation – a characteristic of Edenic marriage which actually poses critical threats to Adam's innocence, especially given his refusal to consider the prospect of enduring life without his spouse:

> Should God create another Eve, and I
> Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
> Would never from my heart; no no, I feel
> The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh,
> Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state
> Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.   (911-916)

Shortly thereafter, in assuring Eve he will accept her offer of fruit, he echoes his earlier justification, claiming, "So forcible within my heart I feel / The bond of nature draw me to my own" (955-6). In making his choice Adam abdicates moral autonomy, assigning to his fall a fatal necessity that does not exist. Even the closest marital union, Milton suggests, cannot absolve each spouse of his or her individual responsibilities to the self and to God. Adam's decision to yoke himself to Eve (as well as her choice to eat the fruit) results in a fracturing of self-identity which threatens to destroy their marriage. Their sweet converse between body and soul immediately ruptures into an erotic sexuality, a devaluation of spiritual bonds which quickly leads to Adam's violent misogyny and Eve's consideration of

suicide. On the other hand, the best guarantor of obedience is a loosening of those marital bonds – not a temporary separation while working in the garden, nor an irrevocable parting of spouses, but a healthy spiritual independence, which offers the most reliable union.

Reading this episode through the lens of charity, Russell Hillier claims that Adam's invocation of the link or bond of nature satisfies only one half of what Hillier terms the double love, excluding the love of God.[41] But even this obscures the essential point for Milton: social bonds always end up in idolatry of some kind if they are not first invested in spiritual autonomy and obedience to divine prescription. Hillier prefaces his chapter by employing a passage from Herbert's "Divinitie": "Love God, and love your neighbor … / … / O dark instructions; ev'n as dark as day! / Who can these Gordian knots undo?" It is the perfect epigraph for a consideration of Milton (although fortuitous in this case) because it underscores the unorthodox nature of his charity: the "immaculate hands of charity" become, for Milton, the instrument by which "tedious and *Gordian* difficulties" are dissolved; he is more interested in using charity to cut Gordian knots than to make them.

Given this persistent desire to loosen binds, one might get the impression that Milton is a spiritual and political and sexual claustrophobic, jealous of any infringement on his space to stretch his rational soul.[42] Part of this stems from his desire for negative liberty, as the inheritors of Milton's political principles would later call it, a near pathological resistance to state interference of any kind. But there are positive liberties at stake as well. Religious coercion negates the capacity for authentic worship and threatens to devolve into idolatry of various kinds. Consider the accusation he aims at opponents of divorce, who, despite stripping marriage of its sacramental power, nevertheless "invest it with such an

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[41] Hillier, 140. Although I believe Milton's charity is more complicated than he presents, Hillier's analysis is otherwise thorough and lucid in *Milton's Messiah*.

[42] Milton is less worried about binding if it is scripturally sanctioned, as in the Chorus in *Samson Agonistes*: "Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself."

awfull sanctity, and give such adamantine chains to bind with, as if it were to be worshipt

like some Indian deity" (2:277). Milton attempts to restore the principle of charity to a

safer guarantor by shifting the orientation of its discipline, both as social principle and as

scriptural hermeneutic, asserting the virtue's spiritual and rational autonomy before it

manifests a social presence in the world. This is one reason why his concept of charity

almost always designates precedence to loving God and oneself first before directing that

charity into external society.[43] Far from a selfless love, his charity requires rational choice

and moral sovereignty as guarantors of authentic good works, textual or otherwise, or else

they would undercut the capacity to perform heroic labor.

Indeed, if Burton and Browne take comfort in orthodoxy, communal binds that give

both individuals "the liberty of an honest reason [to] play and expatiate with security, and

far without the circle of a heresy," and offer "ample fields of air, wherein [they] may freely

expatiate and exercise," Milton achieves liberty by inverting the trajectory. His is the

harder road in many ways. Whereas Burton and Browne begin in a submissive posture that

affords them the liberty of pleasurable recreation, Milton starts with autonomous liberty,

which initiates a never-ending process of labor. The good works of charity are central to

this enterprise, which Michael emphasizes to Adam at the epic's conclusion. Note the ethos

of labor involved in his description of human charity, appropriate for a poet who infuses

georgic principles into his vision of prelapsarian paradise:

> ... only add
> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
> Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,
> By name to come called charity, the soul
> Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
> To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
> A paradise within thee, happier far.   (XII:581-7)

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[43] Stephen Fallon thoroughly explores Milton's concern with the self in "The Spur of Self-Concernment: Milton in His Divorce Tracts," *Milton Studies* 38 (2000): 220-242.

The obvious scriptural invocation of 2 Peter only partially dulls the immense labor involved in this supposed consolation offered by the archangel Michael. And it *is* a consolation to Milton, even if he takes seriously the willpower involved in responding to those imperatives with obedience. Milton suggests that Adam and Eve, after separate encounters with divine revelation, have acquired this internal resolve when "hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow," they make "thir solitary way" out of Eden into the subjected plain. Even if Milton, publishing *Paradise Lost* in the wake of the Restoration, probably does not intend for Adam and Eve's reconciled marriage to adumbrate the civic potential of a commonwealth born of reformed divorce laws, he nevertheless concludes his epic with one final optimistic picture of binding and loosening: in responding to their respective falls, Adam and Eve have acquired, at great cost, fully sufficient and solitary selves, each having implicitly added charity to their spiritual repertoire, departing paradise with clasped hands bound together.

"The Daughter of Faith and the Mother of Good Works"

By associating charity with liberty, and involving the virtue in a larger project of individual and civic labor, Milton lends it a more heroic cast than is typical among Protestant literature. This attitude results in heterodox phrasing if not heretical doctrine. In his analysis of the divorce tracts, Stanley Fish has identified in Milton's writing a presiding circularity, which often begins and ends with charity. Again and again, as a matter of rhetorical and logical expedience, Milton starts and finishes his arguments by appealing to charitable intention. Fish sees this as the result of Milton's effort to accommodate internal contradictions, his own "state, one might say, of divorce," but I would like to express the phenomenon in more positive terms, as the consequence of Milton's desire to join together apparent opposites.[44] Lana Cable observes a similar pattern,

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[44] Fish, *How Milton Works*, 251.

noting, "His need for such reciprocally consummate accounts of truth pervades *Doctrine and Discipline* with a rhetoric that repeatedly finds—or creates, or compels—accord between seeming disparities."[45] In other words, even if these treatises celebrate the freedom of divorcing, I want to suggest that Milton actually demonstrates a clear pattern of harmonizing discordant concepts and texts, and charity serves as a unique and powerful instrument for this project. This characteristic is suggestive of his later monistic cosmology, a topic of some relevance to the divorce tracts, but I want to examine other, perhaps less obvious implications of this impulse to employ charity as a binding agent, wedding together faith and works, spirit and reason.[46]

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Milton's rhetorical harmonizing is the manner in which he evades the calcified divisions between faith and charity promulgated by various religious factions. Milton's understanding of charity retains its Reformed orthodoxy, by and large, but the rich allusive imagery and curious emphases of Milton's prose can suggest a latent works theology (if that phrase adequately describes Roman Catholic or Arminian notions of justification). Consider the quotation below, from an extended meditation on charity near the end of *DDD*:

> To conclude, as without charity God hath giv'n no commandment to men, so without it, neither can men rightly beleeve any commandment giv'n. For every act of true faith, as well that wherby we beleeve the law, as that wherby wee endeavour the law is wrought in us by charity. (*YP*, II, 340)

Both sentences possess a perfect syntactic balance, preparing the reader for a typical statement of antithesis, but the grammar actually works to connect assertions heavily freighted by religious controversy. In a swift succession of parallel clauses, Milton yokes

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[45] Cable, *Carnal Rhetoric: Milton's Iconoclasm and the Poetics of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 96.

[46] Several scholars point to the divorce tracts as a starting point for identifying Milton's monistic ideas. Douglas Trevor, for example, observes a persistent but illusory desire for oneness in Milton's writing, especially in *DDD*, in "Milton's Oneness," *Milton Studies* 49 (2009): 77-104. Although she focuses on gender, Catherine Gimelli Martin notes the emerging monism of the divorce tracts in "Dalila, Misogyny, and Milton's Christian Liberty of Divorce," *Milton and Gender*, 53-76.

together a summation of divine activity and its appropriate human response, the stuff of an entire theological treatise. Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of the passage is Milton's nonchalance in confidently declaring these claims as self-evident. Intensified by double negatives, Milton's picture of deity seems distinctly Arminian, accessible to human understanding, and certainly a God of mercy rather than justice. The grammatical equipoise ("as without … so without") and antimetabole ("giv'n no commandment" … "commandment giv'n") works to erase the chasm between godhead and believer, moreover, which gives the heterodox doctrine (for Calvinists anyway) an even more unsettling quality. Serving as a chiastic hinge that links god and man, charity is the governing agent of this entire passage – in fact, a few sentences later, Milton will declare that "charity is the high governesse of our belief." Belief repeatedly finds itself subordinated to charity. Presumably thinking of the believing devils cited in James 2:19 (an epistle he defends in *De Doctrina*), Milton claims that men cannot "rightly beleeve" without charity, which he proceeds to explain further: every act of authentic faith, comprised by a belief in the law as well as an attempt to enact it, is the product of charity. A century and a half of Reformed theology seems to dissolve under the pressure of Milton's forceful prose.

Perhaps this paraphrase is not entirely fair. The passive voice – "is wrought in us by charity" – allows for the possibility of some exterior agent, undercutting the volitional aspect of Milton's formulation. Is faith wrought by God's charity? Is charity something different, perhaps an emanation of the Holy Spirit? The ambiguity of that final clause manages to avoid an explicit endorsement of Roman Catholic doctrine, but the expression remains a remarkable defense of charitable action, especially in a text ostensibly addressed to Parliament and the Westminster assembly. For Milton charity is not merely so much sanctified evidence of prior belief, nor is it a kind of ecclesial cement binding together the congregational body, but the fundamental element of any Christian experience.

Scholars have observed that in the divorce tracts Milton's charity begins to acquire certain qualities usually reserved in the Reformed tradition solely for faith. Indeed, Rosenblatt notes that Milton takes advantage of the peculiar confessional circumstances surrounding divorce to exploit otherwise controversial theology: "Milton could hold to various positions (including the efficacy of works, and charity as the sum of the law) resembling those of Roman Catholicism without fear of suspicion, since, of course, divorce was forbidden by canon law, the institution most vilified in all of Milton's tracts of 1643-45."[47] Tracing a hermeneutic of charity from the divorce tracts to *Paradise Lost*, which culminates in Raphael's description of ultimate rapture when Adam and Eve "may at last turn all to spirit," Schwartz detects similarly problematic implications, suggesting that "a hermeneutic of charity is beginning to look very much like faith."[48] In many ways this conflation of faith and charity is unsurprising given Milton's emphasis on charity as an inward virtue.

Milton's later prose works retreat from some of the bold assertions of *DDD*, but he always leaves space for charity to operate in a more vigorous capacity than traditional Reformed positions. This is partly the result of the prominent role he assigns charity in protecting the interpretive liberties of the individual conscience, but he also ascribes a curious efficacy to the virtue, which becomes implicated in the workings of faith. When he boils down the essential matter of Christianity in *A Treatise of Civil Power*, for example, Milton echoes his earlier comments on charity:

> What euangelic religion is, is told in two words, faith and charitie; or beleef and practise. That both these flow either the one from the understanding, the other from the will, or both jointly from both, once indeed naturally free, but now only as they are regenerat and wrought on by divine grace, is in part evident to common sense and principles unquestiond, the rest by scripture. (7:255)

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[47] Jason Rosenblatt, *Torah and Law*, 104.

[48] Schwartz, 52.

As in *DDD*, here Milton blends together the respective provinces of "faith and charitie; or beleef and practice," envisioning a dynamic and fluid relationship that moves in both directions. Faith produces charity, it seems, and charity faith, "both jointly from both," as Milton eradicates any theoretical distance between the two virtues. If Milton is more careful this time in reserving for belief an equal pride of place with charity, he is likewise more confident in expressing a volitional theology, inserting human will into his theological economy. Just as in his earlier discussion, however, which protects its Reformed credentials by including a last qualifier – "wrought in us by charity" – here he uses the same verb to sanction his passage with an Augustinian nod to human depravity: "as [the understanding and the will] are regenerat and wrought on by divine grace." This is the standard theology of the pre-Tridentine church, even if various theologians quibbled over the precise method of divine grace. Simpler and messier than standard Calvinist soteriology, Milton's doctrine gestures toward Arminian or even Roman Catholic positions, suggesting that mankind experiences inherent rather than merely imputed righteousness, but he disregards the question of salvation entirely, focusing instead on divine gift and human worship.

The logical thrust of Milton's effort to break down evangelic religion into simple constituent parts, faith and charity, dilates outward into so many paratactic clauses that dissolve simple distinctions. A similar tendency is evident in his great work of systematic theology, *De Doctrina Christiana*, which echoes *Civil Power* by dividing Christianity into two sections:

> The PARTS of CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE are two: FAITH, or KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and LOVE, or THE WORSHIP OF GOD…
>
> Although these two parts are distinguished in kind, and are divided for the purpose of instruction, in practice they are inseparable. Rom. ii. 13: *not hearers but doers;* James i. 22: *be doers not merely hearers*. Besides, obedience and love are always the best guides to knowledge, and often cause it to increase and flourish, though very small at first" (6:128-9).

Milton's strategy already seems slightly unorthodox by organizing the relevant scriptural passages into a tight chiasmus that confers an equal amount of weight and authority to the epistle of James, Luther's "epistle of straw," as it does the great Protestant epistle of Romans. More problematic is his suggestion that love and obedience might in fact be greater catalysts for increasing faith than the other way around. Although he adds a token gesture to the Reformed position – faith or knowledge already exists in the individual, "though very small at first" – the rhetorical emphasis seems to underscore the importance of loving obedience.

John Carey's translation employs the term "love," but the Latin phrase Milton uses in the above passage is "CHARITAS seu DEI CULTUS." Elsewhere, in discussing other manifestations of love, Milton has to say *which* charity he means: not "charitate fraterna" but "dilectio Dei," which he aligns with holiness and places somewhere between: "It is, as it were, the daughter of faith and the mother of good works" (479). That is, charity does not figure, at least in a relevant and substantial way, in the theological dichotomy between faith and works, serving instead as a nominal link between the two. Even in the second section of *De Doctrina*, ostensibly devoted to charity or worship, Milton's discussion of good works more often references faith. In the first chapter of the second book, for example, Milton is more concerned to juxtapose the works of faith and the works of law:

> Thus we ought to consider the form of good works to be conformity not with the written but the unwritten law, that is, with the law of the Spirit which the Father has given us to lead us into truth. For the works of the faithful are the works of the Holy Spirit itself. These never run contrary to the love of God and of our neighbor, which is the sum of the law. They may, however, sometimes deviate from the letter even of the gospel precepts (particularly those which are special rather than general), in pursuance of their over-riding motive, which is charity.   (640)

Much of this passage recycles arguments Milton had developed in the divorce tracts about the unwritten law and the importance of prioritizing the spirit rather than letter of gospel precept. Charity seems to get thrown in after the fact, as a scriptural arbitrator between faith and law.

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Charity, then, primarily functions for Milton in a different capacity than merely as an embodiment of faith. Given its assigned mediatorial role here and in the divorce tracts, one is tempted to consider charity as its own kind of Christological embodiment or incarnation, but in *DDD* Milton emphatically distinguishes between them (perhaps on account of wanting to avoid an exemplarist theology). Instead he opts for a different member of the Trinitarian economy, suggesting that charity plays a similar role to the Holy Spirit in being sent by Christ for the benefit of humans: "That God the Son hath put all other things under his own feet; but his Commandments hee hath left all under the feet of Charity" (*YP*, II, 356). Earlier in that work, engaging the real problem of heresy and blasphemy within a marriage as a stumbling block for spouses, he mentions that the suffering husband or wife "hath recours to the wing of charity, and protection of the Church" (591). Shortly thereafter he rejects interpretive rigor that privileges the letter of the law for "the divine and softning breath of charity which turns and windes the dictat of every positive command, and shapes it to the good of mankind" (604-5). And throughout the divorce tracts Milton assigns the gendered pronoun "she" to charity.[49]

In each of these cases, Milton's personification gestures at the Holy Spirit, a problematic
legacy involved in a heightened degree of conflict during the 1640s on account of its unruly, disorderly effect on politics and religion, as well as its accessibility to minority dissenting factions. Milton lends balance to his pneumatological emphasis, however, by persistently associating charity with reason, blending together the rational and supra-rational. Catherine Gimelli Martin suggests that Milton's conflation of Mosaic law, law of nature, and law of nations demonstrates a clear kinship to Baconian experiment and humanism in general. That argument might be too quick to discount the power and influence of spiritual

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[49] It is worth noting that Milton feminizes a good number of virtues in his early prose, personifying Discipline, Justice, and other abstract principles as "she."

revelation in Milton's thought, but it provides instructive ballast to a critical overemphasis on Milton's supposedly puritan beliefs.[50] One can see how easily reason and spirit coexist in his argument for divorce: "On both sides the acquitment will be reasonable," Milton claims, noting a few short clauses later that divorce might be "beyond the letter of this law, yet not beyond the spirit of charity" (2:630). This has theological implications, allowing Milton to avoid, on the one hand, accusations of an Arminian salvific calculus achieved by rational piety, and association with radical antinomians on the other. It also allows Milton to impose some order on his vision of the church, and provides a reminder that Milton's trumpet-blast against Laudians, *The Reason of Church Government*, involves its own peculiarly Laudian emphasis on regulation and charity, envisioning the church as "such a heavenly structure of evangelick discipline so diffusive of knowledge and charity" (1:758). Perhaps most importantly, this odd interplay between spirit and reason fashions Milton's peculiar brand of hermeneutics, to which I will now turn.

"The Rule of Charity"

The previous section ended by suggesting that Milton associates charity with both reason and the Holy Spirit in order to accommodate multiple purposes, and this section likewise aims to accomplish two separate imperatives: I want to expand the scope of vision when engaging Milton's interpretive charity by examining a specific phrase that often appears in the prose works of Milton and other controversialists – "the rule of charity" – and I want to show that charitable interpretation was as much an ethic as it was a hermeneutical system for Milton. As Victoria Kahn notes, and as I aim to show, "Milton has essentially conflated the covenant of grace and the rule of charity with natural law of reason and the principle of equity," arguing that God restricts himself in order to liberate the equitable interpretations of humankind.[51] His hermeneutics, then, overlap with the

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[50] Gimelli Martin, *Milton Among the Puritans*.

[51] Kahn, *Wayward Contracts*, 201.

golden rule of reciprocity, an approach to interpretation with enormous implications for his conception of marriage. That is, interpretation becomes a kind of heroic ethic deployed not merely in the task of biblical reading, but also within the space of a marital relationship.

Throughout his divorce tracts Milton repeatedly invokes the "rule of charity," a fact that has prompted spirited debate among scholars concerning the provenance and procedure of Milton's interpretive method. That the rule of charity refers to scriptural hermeneutics is largely taken for granted, a testament to the continued legacy of Augustine's *regula caritatis*, the method for reading the bible that he outlines in *De Doctrina Christiana*. But Milton never references this famous dictum of Augustine, as Dayton Haskin observes, nor does he allude to any other biblical commentators who employ a rule of charity, conveniently ignoring the long tradition of scriptural hermeneutics to which he is apparently indebted.[52] Nor does Milton seem bound by the *regula fidei et caritatis*, or the "rule of faith and love," a foundational tenet of Reformed theology which ensures that interpretations of obscure biblical passages remain anchored by "the plain places of Scripture," as Francis Roberts explains in a contemporary work of scriptural hermeneutics.[53] This technique, just like its close cousin the *analogia fidei*, privileges received authority before individual interpretation. Instead, as Haskin convincingly demonstrates, Milton reshapes the method into a more rigorous comparison

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[52] See *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 72. Gladys Willis appears unbothered by this lacuna, contending that Milton's notion of charity derives completely from Augustine's rule of charity in *The Penalty of Eve: John Milton and Divorce* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984).

[53] *Clavis Bibliorum, The key of the Bible, unlocking the richest treasury of the Holy Scriptures* (London: 1648), 32. It is worth noting that Roberts, like Milton, uses the analogy or rule of love to privilege a figurative or spiritual meaning before a literal interpretation. For a clear explanation of this Reformed tenet, see Heinrich Bullinger's *Second Helvetic Confession*. The *analogia* was deployed to deflect Anabaptist readings and later used to dismiss anti-Trinitarians.

of scriptural places that actually creates more room to dissent from the customary beliefs of the church.[54]

According to some scholars Milton might be doing something even more innovative. Theodore Huguelet contends that Milton, perhaps on account of Ramist method, discovered his own hermeneutical rule of charity that is unrelated to Augustinian interpretation and the refinements made to it by subsequent biblical commentators.[55] Others agree that Milton's rule of charity is of his own making, but whereas James Potts, Jr. traces the influence to Platonism, R. Kenneth Kirby believes Milton privileges reason over scriptural precepts and invents his own hermeneutical principle to accommodate his rational argument for divorce.[56] Channeling Milton's spirit of chiastic expression, Thomas Festa likewise equates the rule of charity with reason: "The rule of charity instructs the exegete to overturn the assumed hierarchies of gender and religion because it is reasonable to be charitable and charitable to be reasonable."[57] Regina Schwartz, meanwhile, attributes to Milton a kind of scriptural hermeneutics of desire: "The rule of charity reconciles biblical passages that seem harsh and unpleasant to those that seem kind and generous."[58]

This debate is fascinating enough in its own right. But the "rule of charity" did not always mean a hermeneutic for Milton and his contemporaries. Indeed, Milton claims that he derived his notion of charity from Hugo Grotius, who "whisper'd rather than disputed about the law of charity" (*YP*, II, 434) in his discussion of Matthew 5, which Milton

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[54] Haskin, esp. 54-83.

[55] See Theodore Huguelet, "The Rule of Charity in Milton's Divorce Tracts," *Milton Studies* 6 (1975): 199-214.

[56] James B. Potts, Jr., "Milton and Augustine: the Rule of 'Charity'," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 18 (1992): 101-110. R. Kenneth Kirby, "Milton's Biblical Hermeneutics in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*," 116-125.

[57] *The End of Learning: Milton and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 60.

[58] *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas Corns (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 42.

paraphrases as follows: "If we mark diligently the nature of our Saviours commands, wee shall finde that both their beginning and their end consists in charity: whose will is that wee should so be good to others, as that wee be not cruel to our selves" (*YP*, II, 330).[59] Although this discusses (and embodies) the process of biblical interpretation ("If we mark diligently…"), both the content and context of Grotius's discussion of charity focuses on the golden rule – "We should be so good…" – and a notion of reciprocity that remains more closely related to the formulations of natural law and equity articulated elsewhere by Grotius, John Selden, and other natural rights theorists. These ideas deeply inform Milton's own arguments about charity, especially in the second edition of *DDD*.[60] In this particular case Grotius employs the term charity to epitomize the character of divine law, but elsewhere he takes for granted the universal acceptance among Christians of a rule of charity obligating individuals to relieve those in necessity, and he repeatedly refers to a law or rule of charity that mitigates the strict justice of property rights or self-defense by enjoining proportionate responses. Selden, too, employs the phrase to describe a basic "Office of humanitie" that recognizes and relieves human necessity by redistributing goods "which are profitable to the Receiver, and not troublesom to him that give's or permit's the Favor."[61] Richard Hooker likewise uses the concept of social obligation to link the law of charity with natural reason, a move that receives John Locke's approbation in his *Second*

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[59] Paraphrased from Grotius, *Annotationes in Libros Evangeliorum* (Amsterdam: 1641), 98-99: "Quod si diligenter advertamus ad naturam omnium Christi praeceptorum, reperiemus & originem eorum & consummationem in charitate consistere, quae ita nos vult aliis consulere, ut ne in nos ipsos crudeles simus."

[60] Milton, though clearly influenced by Grotius, possessed a much more optimistic view of charity's compatibility with natural law. For differences in their conceptions of gospel legislation in particular, see Jason Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 142-7.

[61] See the translation by Marchamont Nedham of John Selden's *Mare Clausum*, *Of the dominion or ownership of the sea two books* (London: 1652), 147.

Treatise of Government.[62] The primary logic informing these disparate notions of charity is not a matter of biblical hermeneutics but a conception of primitive rights in society, getting to the first order of things, articulating a concept of charitable reciprocity that remains modulated by self-interest, where the spheres of mercy and justice intersect. And though these concerns are predominantly focused on negotiating the fragile relationship between private property and communal society, the same undergirding principles can be observed in Milton's description of a rule of charity, which, as John Halkett notes, is for Milton the central concept uniting natural law, Mosaic law, and the law of the Gospel.[63]

Perhaps more importantly, many of Milton's contemporaries considered the rule of charity to be of specific scriptural derivation, a divinely-ordained mandate explicit in biblical sources. But those sources, and the precise command they express, vary in context and application. Sometimes, it is true, this rule of charity refers to hermeneutics. Romans 12:6, "Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith," was the conventional (and dubious) scriptural authority for the Protestant *analogia fidei*, for example. Meanwhile, certain biblical commentators, Calvin most prominent among them, enlist 1 Cor. 13:7 – "Charity beleeveth all things" – to describe a hermeneutical "rule of charity, which entertaineth no suspition," as the invading Scottish covenanters aptly put it in 1640, although Milton chafes in *DDD* at this particular reading of 1 Corinthians.[64] More often in early modern religious discourse, however, writers might invoke Romans 14:23 or 1 Cor. 8 or 2 Cor. 6 to describe a rule of charity that attempts to reconcile the imperatives of individual conscience and congregational harmony, forbidding any kind of offense that might act as a "stumblingblock" to fellow Christians. As in the earlier discussion of the

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[62] Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, viii; John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, sec. 5.

[63] Halkett, *Milton and the Idea of Matrimony* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 53.

[64] *The intentions of the army of the kingdome of Scotland* (1640), 7. Milton derides this traditional Calvinist interpretation in *Complete Prose*, II, 340.

Admonition controversy, these scriptural citations were enlisted by conformists and nonconformists alike, by Church of England clergy and Presbyterians and Baptists and Independents and other radicals, all of whom sought to appropriate a "rule of charity" that might be comfortably aligned with their own particular set of beliefs and practices. Perhaps the most fascinating contemporary use of the rule is that of Roger Williams, since he refers to two different rules of charity in immediate succession: the first relegates individual actions below communal concerns, the more familiar protection of weaker brethren from scandal (1 Cor. 8), but the second rule of charity claims that "no man be forced to submit against his Conscience" (Rom. 14: 23), supporting his larger principle of religious toleration.[65] There was no consensus about whence in scripture the "rule of charity" derived or what it entailed, but it remained a powerful expedient in the logic of religious controversy.

One of the most relevant documents of the period, the *Constitutions and canons ecclesiasticall* (1640), which were modeled after Elizabeth's 1559 *Injunctions* and the 1604 version of ecclesiastical canons instituted by James in 1604, explicitly invokes the "rule of charity."[66] Better known for its infamous et caetera oath, the *Canons* included another important section that examines "some Rites and Ceremonies." Primarily concerned with the placement of the communion table in the East, the ecclesial authorities invoked the concept of *adiaphora* in order to defend the uniformity of worship:

> And in the practise or omission of this Rite, we desire that the rule of Charity prescribed by the Apostle, may be observed, which is, That they which use this Rite despise not them who use it not, and that they who use it not, condemn not those that use it.   (Fr)

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[65] Roger Williams, *The bloudy tenent, of persecution, for cause of conscience, discussed, in a conference betweene truth and peace* (London: 1644), 141. In the wake of their notorious publications of 1644, Milton and Williams were often linked together by Presbyterian heresiographers like Ephraim Pagitt. See Thomas Corns, "Milton, Roger Williams and the Limits of Toleration", *Milton and Toleration*, eds. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 72-85.

[66] For more on Milton and things indifferent, see Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, 169-71.

The chiastic expression nicely embodies a message of accommodation and compromise, but its force is deflected somewhat by the rest of the document's rigid calls for compulsory uniformity. More importantly, however, opponents disagreed with this entire premise of charity. In its response to the canons, the anonymous tract *Englands complaint to Iesus Christ, against the bishops canons of the late sinfull synod* (1640) posits a rival interpretation concerning *adiaphora*, observing that the prelates abused the rule of charity by willfully appropriating the concept in order to put stumbling blocks in the way of honest Christians. As a consequence, so they claim, the prelates have chosen to "prescribe to a whole Land a Rule of false *Charity" (E5v)*.

Finally, antinomian hermeneutics deserve inclusion in this conversation, if only because they became associated with Milton's own interpretive practices. Few of these sects provide clear expositions of their own method, but ecclesial authorities clearly worried over the implications of such loose, spirit-led reading. Consider the Ranter Laurence Clarkson, who prescribes a hermeneutic that determines its own moral ontology rather than one mediated by scriptural interpretation: "So that consider what act soever is done by thee, in light and love, is light, and lovely; though it be that act called Adultery, in darkness, it is so; but in light, honesty, in that light loveth itself, so cannot defile it selfe." That is to say, whatever the individual determines righteous – adultery, drunkenness, or anything else – actually *becomes* righteous. Clarkson describes an interpretive process similar to Milton's own "all-interpreting voice of charity," one enacted either by internal conscience or indwelling Spirit but devoid of any link to biblical prescription. Elsewhere Clarkson employs Milton's Pauline hermeneutic from *Areopagitica* – "to the pure all things are pure" – to further substantiate his claims.

Although Milton remains centrally concerned with interpreting biblical texts related to divorce, it is unclear how he intends to deploy the rule of charity, especially since

his divorce tracts repeatedly invoke natural law, attempt to harmonize conflicting interests (both social and textual), and gesture at toleration – for antinomian sects among others. Prominently situated on the title page of the first edition of *DDD*, "the Rule of Charity" appears in an ambiguous dependent clause at the conclusion of the treatise's title: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce; Restor'd to the good of both Sexes, From the bondage of Canon Law, and other mistakes, to Christian freedom, guided by the Rule of Charity*. Obviously Milton intends to signal its importance to his project, but his syntax leaves the reference in some doubt: is the entire treatise "guided" by the rule of charity and its supposedly orthodox method of interpretation, or is Milton already tipping his tolerationist hand, so to speak, and aligning the rule of charity to Christian freedom of conscience? Since the second edition of 1644 removes the phrase, it appears obvious that Milton reconsidered the efficacy of advertising his "rule of charity," but his intentions remain inscrutable, especially because he removes no other references to the rule elsewhere in the revised edition and returns to the phrase twice in *Tetrachordon*. Nevertheless, the fact that Milton felt compelled to alter his title page, probably in order to dissociate his treatise from antinomian principles, underscores the sphere of contention that surrounded the rule of charity.[67]

If Milton's title pages do little to clarify his application of the rule, the rest of the tracts only cast more doubt on the subject. Early in the *DDD* he seems to have in mind biblical hermeneutics or the Pauline injunction against stumbling blocks when he declares, with some hyperbole, "Who shall answer for the perishing of all those souls perishing by stubborn expositions of particular and inferior precepts, against the general and supreme rule of charity?" (*YP*, II, 277). But later he recycles the phrase in a passage concerned with equity and conscience: "Besides that usury, so much as is permitted by the Magistrate, and

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[67] See Haskin, 72-4.

demanded with common equity, is neither against the word of God, nor the rule of charity, as hath been often discus't by men of eminent learning and judgement" (322).[68] That Milton is thinking about natural rights here seems particularly likely given his distinction between scriptural precept and charitable rule, but the discussion of usury in Calvin, as well as in English casuists like William Perkins and William Ames, suggests a great deal of overlap between the two spheres.[69] In *Tetrachordon* Milton gestures at the Augustinian *regula* when he describes "a pattern how to reconcile other places by the generall rule of charity" (596), but in a discussion of Matthew 19 he aims for something quite different, a supreme law that seems to encompass every potential meaning of the rule of charity: "the rule of perfection is not so much that which was don in the beginning, as that which now is nearest to the rule of charity. This is the greatest, the perfetest, the highest commandment" (667).

The slippage that seems to occur when Milton deploys a conventional phrase like "the rule of charity" makes more sense in light of its varied application among contemporaries, but Milton's notion of the rule appears to be particularly idiosyncratic, as the argument about its meaning among scholars makes clear. Readers invariably locate Milton's "rule of charity" in the field of biblical hermeneutics, and nearly all of them agree it is something new, but they trace his departure from precedent to a variety of different causes. Given the way charity mediates the private space of domestic liberty and the public sphere of legislation and polity, this division between scholars is often a matter of stressing individual or collective imperatives.

Consider the opposing perspectives of Haskin and Fish, whose respective discussions of Milton's rule of charity are (I think) two of the best. Haskin starts with the process of reading itself, rigorously situating Milton within a traditional practice of

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[68] See Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, 126.

[69] See, for example, Ames, *Conscience with the Powers and Cases thereof* (London: 1643), 239-44.

devotional and experiential reading of scripture, a largely private sphere of charitable hermeneutics. It is no surprise, then, that in Haskin's narrative personal concerns shape Milton's approach to interpreting scripture: "Milton recognized that a facile application of the New Testament places about divorce threatened to fix him in a lasting misery," so he redefined the concept in such a way that raised, rather than settled, interpretive questions related to scripture.[70] That is, the rule of charity, as Haskin sees it, encourages Milton to wrestle with an otherwise clear passage of scripture – Christ forbidding divorce for anything but fornication – and to initiate a spirited debate among members of Parliament and the Westminster divines in an effort to reform current divorce law. Haskin's point of origin places considerable weight on Milton's biography, the question of his marriage to Mary Powell in particular, but the larger role and function of domestic politics remains equally salient: private reading practices shape and prepare individuals for the broader world of public discourse and commonwealth politics.

Stanley Fish flips the orientation, placing Milton first in a public and polemical context, in which the rule of charity becomes something more like a rhetorical instrument aimed at snuffing out any rival interpretation, settling the question of divorce once and for all. In other words, the rule is not a reading tool but a rhetorical one. But it remains vulnerable to misappropriation by Milton's opponents, as Fish notes:

> But the rule fails as a constraint on interpretation in the same way that intention fails; for the question of what charity means is, like the question of God's intention, an interpretive one ... In short, the "all-interpreting rule" of charity must itself be interpreted in order to be applied, and if it is interpreted once, then it can always be interpreted again.[71]

In fact, Milton never mentions an "all-interpreting rule of charity." Instead he invokes "the all-interpreting voice of Charity" (309), which reinforces and even trumps plain sense and equitable reading. Fish is probably right that Milton is thinking about and redefining the

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[70] Haskin, 56-9.

[71] Fish, *How Milton Works*, 246-7.

traditional rule of charity here, given his references to specific applications of the term like

the plain places of scripture, but Milton's personified figure, with its suggestion of divine

utterance, expands the scope and power of charity. A rule regulates and rationalizes the

process of scriptural inquiry; a voice delivers prophetic revelation.[72] Milton returns later in

Samson Agonistes to the question of whether or not the Holy Spirit informs individual

interpretations of divine commands, but here it seems clear that he assigns some role to

spiritual influence.[73] More to the point, placing Milton's biblical hermeneutics within a

primarily rhetorical domain encourages Fish to understand Milton's "all-interpreting" rule

of charity in opposition to Haskin – as something that interprets a text once and for all,

including divorce law, as a way of ending the labor of interpretation (conveniently in

Milton's favor).

Given the implications of this disagreement, it is worth taking a closer look at the

specific text Fish cites, even if Milton does not explicitly cite a "rule of charity":

> And therefore even plain sense and equity, and, which is above them both, the all-interpreting voice of Charity her self cries loud that this primitive reason, this consulted promise of God *to make a meet help*, is the onely cause that gives authority to this command of not divorcing, to be a command. And it might be further added, that if the true definition of a wife were askt in good earnest, this clause of being a *meet help* would shew it selfe so necessary, and so essential in that demonstrative argument, that it might be logically concluded, therfore shee who naturally & perpetually is no meet help, can be no wife."   (*YP*, II, 309)

Milton adamantly declares that the all-interpreting voice of charity limits the definition of

marriage to a single purpose and criterion – "a meet help" – so in a sense he is shutting

down other sources of interpretive labor, as Fish claims, but that is only part of the story.

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[72] Fish appears to assume that Milton's mention of the Holy Spirit, like his "rule of charity," is a rhetorical move, a means of self-effacement. See *How Milton Works*, 243-4.

[73] Kirby and others reduce Milton's hermeneutics to rational process, but Milton almost always gestures at a more complex combination of spiritual revelation, conscience, and reason. Consider his succinct description of scriptural interpretation in *A Treatise of Civil Power*: "the gospel, our new covnant, upon the heart of every beleever, to be interpreted only by the sense of charitie and inward perswasion."

The hermeneutic task of divorce law might be concluded, but the interpretive work in marriage is just getting started. Early in the *DDD*, Milton prepares the reader for this argument, outlining the principal scope of marriage from its original words of institution in Genesis, which "are infallible to informe us what is mariage, and what is no mariage" (*YP*, II, 245). In this later passage Milton is even clearer, declaring that when a wife does not fulfill her spousal obligations as a spiritual comfort and social companion, she is by definition no longer a wife: "shee who naturally & perpetually is no meet help, can be no wife." The language here is one of absolutes ("naturally & perpetually"), gesturing at a kind of relational fatalism, describing a no-fault divorce that diminishes the potential blame ascribed to either spouse.[74] But Milton clearly implies that the formal institution of marriage is contingent on the presence of a continuing spirit of companionship. This strategic move opens up marriage as a site of constant interpretation.[75] The marital contract becomes, as Mary Ann Radzinowicz describes with regard to *Samson Agonistes*, "a useful contract not only terminable but essentially terminated if the ends for which it was ordained are not achieved."[76] Indeed, in Milton's idealistic conception of marriage the nuptial torch is apparently reignited with every show of companionship, but this requires continual effort and even some degree of heroism.

Milton desires greater interpretive freedom and responsibility for spouses (or perhaps just husbands) in the domestic space of matrimony. In a way this is similar to

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[74] Several scholars note Milton's humoral language in tracing the causes of an unhappy marriage. See Stephen Fallon, "The Spur of Self-Concernment: Milton in His Divorce Tracts," *Milton Studies* 38 (2000): 220-242, and Jennifer L. Nichols, "Milton's Claim for Self and Freedom in the Divorce Tracts," *Milton Studies* 49 (2009): 192-212.

[75] Martin Dzelzainis identifies a similar notion in Milton's attitude toward the covenant between magistrates and the commonwealth: that a ruler or governor ought to be removed (or divorced) when he abuses his authority. See "Milton's Classical Republicanism," *Milton and Republicanism*, esp. 18-9.

[76] *Toward* Samson Agonistes*: The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 42.

Tyndale's translation of *agape* consistently as "love," which removed church authorities from mediating the individual reader's scriptural encounter. If the analogy were pursued further, Thomas More's role as polemical opponent would be supplied by the indefatigable Thomas Edwards, who explains in *Gangraena* exactly why Milton's *DDD* was dangerous to civil society by quoting from a letter of William Jenney to his abandoned wife: "You have been for me rather a disturber of my body and soul than a meet help for me."[77] Earlier in his treatise Edwards suggests that Mrs. Attaway, for whom Jenney left his wife, had been reading Milton's work on divorce as well. The narrative implicates Milton in the growth of radical sectarianism and social anarchy, but the lexical details of Milton's own passage suggest a latent ambivalence, as if he recognized the implications of his argument but remained unsure whether to fully endorse such a conclusion. Note the repetition of "it might," the auxiliary verb expressing conditional possibility, offsetting the inexorable logic of the "demonstrative argument."[78] This ambivalence, which disappears in *Tetrachordon*, is present in the phrase modifying charity as well: Milton might intend "all-interpreting" as some kind of interpretive apocalypse, ending the process altogether, but Haskin's model seems more likely, placing emphasis on the present participle: charity is always involved in the process of interpretation, always considering equity and circumstance, always examining biblical places in light of the rest of scripture, and always, it seems, evaluating marital relations.

Milton expresses similar disgust for those who interpret texts or marriages in a literal (and he would say uncharitable) fashion: he has nothing but scorn for scriptural exegetes who do not consult "with charitie, the interpreter and guide of our faith, but [rest]

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[77] Diane Purkiss, "Whose Liberty? The Rhetoric of Milton's Divorce Tracts," 199.

[78] In the *Defensio Secunda*, Milton admits that he should have written the divorce tracts in Latin, which suggests that he disliked the manner in which sectarians appropriated his ideas, but Catherine Gimelli Martin notes that Milton never condemns the female readers of his divorce tracts despite pressure to do so. See "Dalila, Misogyny, and Milton's Christian Liberty of Divorce," *Milton and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 53-76.

in the meere element of the Text" (236); as for spouses concerned only with conjugal relations, with no regard for spiritual conversation, he claims that "instead of being one flesh, they will be rather two carkasses chain'd unnaturally together; or as it may happ'n, a living soule bound to a dead corps" (326). Clearly, Milton's focus in the divorce tracts is on interpretation but not solely textual interpretation, and this is where I think it is helpful to expand the "rule of charity" beyond merely biblical hermeneutics. Charity becomes the primary vehicle which affords individuals the space to exercise their reason and conscience, two of the other "rules of charity" in early modern discourse. Likewise, Milton affords space for the conscience to express the workings of its inner spirit and reason. *Doctrine and Discipline* gestures toward a marital formula akin to Milton's later theology, in which a spouse's love must be free to fall – that is, subject to divorce – in order to demonstrate its sufficiency free of coercion or necessity. This attitude reflects the developing concept of the divine character in Milton's theology, since he envisions a God who enacts charity for mankind by limiting his intervention and facilitating a volitional, human response. Even Christ's manner of speaking enlarges meaning by limiting or condensing expression: "Therfore it is that the most evangelic precepts are given us in proverbial forms, to drive us from the letter, tho' we love ever to be sticking there" (637). This fits with Milton's larger discussion of discipline – Milton recognizes that undisciplined libertines will exploit the space afforded to more pious Christians, but that disorder is worth the price of individual freedom of conscience.

As with unruly husbands, so with unruly texts. A focus on charitable interpretation puts *DDD* in closer conversation with *Areopagitica*, a treatise that seems on the surface, despite its close chronological proximity, to be the product of a different thinker. If the God of the divorce tracts seems to remove obstacles from humans, even unhappy marriages, the God of *Areopagitica* puts obstacles constantly before them. But the link between the texts goes beyond the mere fact that Milton had recently felt the sting of Presbyterian censors, as

both *DDD* and *Areopagitica* prioritize the freedom of individuals to perform their own acts of interpretation. Indeed, when Milton exclaims in *Areopagitica*, "How many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conscience, had we but charity" (562-3), he might well be thinking of divorce. So, Fish is right about charity but wrong about Milton: charity *can* be interpreted and applied in different ways by different people, but this is not a potential problem for Milton (even if it prompts him to vent in *Colasterion*). Instead it is one of the primary reasons Milton believes parliamentary and ecclesial authorities must avoid legislating against the individual conscience.

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