

# **Truth and Falsehood in *The Faerie Queene*, Book I**

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## **Abstract**

This capstone project explores two opposite yet interrelated concepts in Christianity: truth and falsehood. Since the Bible, the struggles between the two forces and their interactions with humanity have been heavily featured in literature. Renaissance literature, influenced by the Reformation, saw the relationship between truth and falsehood growing more complicated, with the elect mingling with falsehoods and exhibiting sinful behaviour as a reprobate would. In Book I of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, truth and falsehood are forces that both strongly influence the main character Redcrosse, who must suffer from his wrong choices and learn moral lessons from his mistakes. The discussion in this project is divided into three sections. The first part examines the subtlety of evil, which disguises itself and co-exists alongside goodness. The second part explains the gullibility of people, including the elect, in the face of falsehood due to their weaknesses and sinfulness. Nevertheless, as shown in the third part, one may be saved by turning their encounters with falsehoods into lessons of scruple and letting their desire for God's grace grow. I shall illustrate that in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Book I, even though humans may be deceived and suffer from falsehoods because of their spiritual weaknesses, the suffering may be providential in providing an elect the necessary knowledge to embrace truth during a passive process of election, as demonstrated in Redcrosse, the knight of holiness.

## **Reflection**

I thank the English Department for my fruitful years of English literature education. I had the pleasure to study masterpieces from the Greco-Roman period to the contemporary world, an opportunity which has enabled me to better understand and appreciate the sublimity of human thought. The capstone project allowed me to combine two of my personal interests: theology and literature, both of which I am interested in because of their immense influence on our perception and the way we live life.

I would like to show my greatest gratitude to Professor Jason Gleckman, whose lectures on Renaissance literature and Christian theology first introduced me to the subject and prompted me to conduct further research. As a supervisor, Professor Gleckman had been very helpful and patient when providing feedback on my work and answering the many questions that I had, and without him the project would not have been satisfactorily completed.