MILTON AND THE BODY POLITIC

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

WILLIAM JOHN ROSCELLI, B. A., A. M.

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The Ohio State University
1960

Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of English
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In February, 1638, there began in Scotland a revolt which Lord Macaulay described as

the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes, liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which since have worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, havekindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.¹

This monumental rebellion is known in history as the Puritan Revolution. If, to modern readers, Macaulay's estimate of its significance appears somewhat exaggerated, his enthusiasm is certainly understandable. If ever a war was waged on behalf of principle, the Puritan Revolution was that war. Roundhead and Royalist alike sacrificed their lives in the defense of beliefs whose validity lay far beyond the reach of rational demonstration. For God, for Truth, for Christian Liberty, lords and peasants, yeoman and craftsmen, prelates and presbyters slaughtered each other in a futile attempt to prove by force of arms the justice of causes whose right the un-sided human reason could not sufficiently establish.

The roots of the trouble could probably be traced to the outmoded political structure of the British monarchy, which had been in decay since the last years of Elizabeth. Inept administration, abuse of the royal prerogatives, and short-sighted policies which inflicted economic and social injustices upon the great masses of the people were undoubtedly powerful factors in creating unrest. However, the spark which ignited the conflagration, the cause for which so many thousands of men willingly gave up their lives, was essentially religious.

From the viewpoint of the rebels the chief villain was William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Arrogant, autocratic, occasionally ruthless in his methods, Laud, some three hundred years after his death, remains a controversial figure. Yet, whatever may have been his defects as man and prelate, there is no denying that he was an extraordinarily capable administrator. His gift for organization enabled him to reform an amorphous Anglican Church and build it into a national institution whose formalized liturgy and dogmas were binding upon all its prelates and ministers. He envisioned a national Church whose authority, dignity, and prestige would make it the peer of the Papacy.

For Laud the enemy was apparently not Rome but Geneva. He determined to extirpate Calvinism from the realm and in this cause en-

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2Recent studies on Laud have been more sympathetic than formerly. See particularly H. R. Trevor-Roper, Archbishop Laud (London, 1940), and E. C. E. Bourne, The Anglicanism of William Laud (London, 1947).
listed the support of the Crown. His intolerant attitude and the repressive methods he employed to obtain his goal may seem abhorrent to modern readers, but Laud was thinking and acting in conformity with the spirit of his times. As one modern writer has put it:

A society could be united only if committed to one religion, and heresy was to 16th- and 17th-century Englishmen, Anglican and Puritan alike, tantamount to anarchy or rebellion. For these reasons church and state could not be separated, and defense of the true religion was regarded as one of the proper duties of civil magistrates.3

Before King or Bishop is eternally damned for his religious intolerance, it must be remembered that it was the equally adamant intolerance of the Puritan Parliament which ultimately forced the establishment of Cromwell's dictatorship.

In his campaign against the Calvinists Laud was nothing if not thorough. For the King he prepared lists of clergymen on which each name was appropriately marked with an "O" or "F" to distinguish the orthodox, who were to be promoted, from the Puritans, who were to be suppressed. Further, he sent his vicar-general through all the dioceses of his province for the purpose of noting devotional irregularities and deviations from the prescribed rituals. He secured an order forbidding Puritan lecturers to preach. He obtained authorization for Justices of the Peace to enter private homes and search for persons holding conventicles. In the Star Chamber he

himself actively persecuted Bastwick, Burton, and Prynne (1637), and later brought about the ruin of Bishop Williams. But the zeal and efficiency which Laud brought to his task were not enough. Neither prosecution nor persecution proved effective in stemming the rising tide of the Puritan heresy.

Scotland proved particularly irritating to the Archbishop. Both James and Charles had attempted to introduce episcopacy among the Scots with but token success. By and large, the people stubbornly clung to the Presbyterianism of John Knox and refused conversion to the Church of England. Laud tried to force the issue. In collaboration with the Scottish Bishops he drew up a new prayer book, modeled after the English Book of Common Prayer, which he attempted to thrust upon the recalcitrant Calvinists. When in July, 1637, upon Royal authority, the new liturgy was introduced in St. Giles' Cathedral, riots broke out in Edinburgh and elsewhere. The following February Charles was informed that, if he wished to insist upon the use of the new prayer book, he would need an army of forty thousand men. Such an ultimatum constituted overt defiance of the Royal authority and, as such, could not be tolerated. Charles accepted the challenge and with a woefully inadequate force marched north to face what was literally a whole nation in arms. By so doing, the King made what was probably the greatest blunder in a career notorious for egregious errors in judgment. His decision was eventually to cost him both his crown and his life.
The conflagration ignited in Scotland shortly thereafter spread
to England with the result that, within four years, the entire
country was caught up in the holocaust of civil war. What had begun
as a protest to procure a measure of religious toleration within the
framework of the established government eventuated in an attack upon
the institution of monarchy itself. The consequences attendant upon
the rebellion proved to be of tremendous import: episcopacy was
temporarily abolished and replaced by a Presbyterianism which, for
all practical purposes, showed itself as intolerant as had its
predecessor; the existing government was overthrown and the chief of
state executed; a dictatorship was reluctantly established. But
above all, there was held out to the English people the glorious
dream of a commonwealth which would guarantee religious toleration,
protect civil liberties, and provide for long overdue social, eco-
nomic, and political reforms.

After the death of Cromwell in 1658 the revolutionary tide be-
gan to ebb and by 1660 the old order, with appropriate modifications,
had been triumphantly reinstated. Yet for all this, the Puritan
Revolution did not prove a failure. Within thirty years of the
Restoration most of the principles for which the Roundheads had
fought and died in the Forties became permanently enshrined as in-
delible articles of the unwritten British Constitution.

It is one of the ironies of history that the men who insti-
gated the Bishops' War of 1638-39 had no intention of overthowing
the monarchy and establishing a commonwealth. As late as 1647 the victorious Parliamentarians were still endeavoring to preserve the monarchy under some guise or other; so that, in reality, both Commonwealth and Protectorate were unexpected by-products of the revolution. What had motivated the original rebels was a sincere desire to protect what they deemed to be their historic right to liberty of conscience. It was this and nothing more. But events got out of hand. The conflicts between religious principles and political ideals proved to be irreconcilable. Strong-willed antagonists could not or would not effect the necessary compromises. The masses, after suffering through decades of severe social and economic injustice, unleashed their pent-up fury and refused to back down from any of their demands for religious and political freedom. Last, there were on both sides an incredible series of blunders, which so fanned the flames of hate that any equitable solution became virtually impossible. In the wake of these unforeseen circumstances followed the consequences described above, and England, almost accidentally, made what has proved to be a monumental contribution to modern political theory.

The errors of Charles and the Royalists have been greatly exaggerated. What fed the Monarchists' hopes was the interminable wrangling among the victorious Puritans. Had the latter been able to agree upon a definite policy in 1647, Charles would not have fled to Carisbrooke Castle and precipitated the second phase of the Civil War. It was as much the incompetence of Parliament as the treachery of the King which eventually caused Cromwell and his army to destroy the monarchy. For full details see S. R. Gardiner, History of the Great Civil War, 3 vols. (London, 1886-91).
One of the few men of vision who, from almost the beginning, understood that the sweeping religious reforms desired by the Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritans would not, indeed could not, be effected without some corresponding alteration in the political structure was John Milton. From as early as 1641 he appears to have been aware of the political implications involved in the reform movement and actively to have supported those republican policies which were eventually to cause the temporary overthrow of the English monarchy. This is not to say that at the outset Milton was a conscious revolutionary. In all probability he was not. What he saw was that the political framework, if it was to meet the needs of the English people, must be overhauled. The political reforms he demanded could have been achieved without destroying the monarchy. But, as things turned out, the Crown stubbornly rejected all pleas for political reorganization. This failure of the government to look to its own reformation may ultimately have destroyed Milton's faith not only in his King, but, more important, in the institution of monarchy itself. In any event, when the time came for him to choose between his political beliefs and his King, he turned his back on his monarch. It was a decision he apparently never regretted, despite the failure of the Cromwellian Commonwealth to meet the standards he had set for it.
That Milton should have supported Parliament in its struggle
with Charles is hardly surprising. Everything we know of his back-
ground and temperament suggests that he could not help sympathizing
with the Scots and Puritans in their fight for religious and politi-
cal liberty. And in this connection, Don M. Wolfe's analysis of the
nature and origin of Milton's political attitude is worthy of care-
ful scrutiny:

Milton was one of the many Puritans who gave his
whole-hearted support to the Parliamentary cause
in 1642, one of the rebel few who hailed the de-
struction of kingship and lords in 1649. Milton's
background made him inevitably a partisan of the
Parliamentary faction. A city home of Puritan
inclinations, a neighborhood of wealthy merchants,
a boyhood outlook of deep seriousness enhanced by
Bible study, a Puritan minister in the parish
pulpit, a strict Puritan master in his earliest
school, two or three susceptible years at St.
Paul's under the Calvinist Thomas Young, Cambridge
study under Joseph Meade--these influences were
decisive. But it was inevitable, too, that
Milton should dissent from Puritan orthodoxy.
His imagination was too intense, his confidence
in his intellectual powers too deep, to be bound
by Presbyterian creed. His prolonged reading of
the Greek and Roman classics (a university habit
which in Hobbes' view nourished the rebellion)
emphasized his early love of liberty and miti-
gated the harshness of Calvinist discipline.
Time after time he was to justify revolutionary
opinions by the humanistic law of nature. But
the most important factor in Milton's alliance
with the Puritans was his belief in the indi-
vidualistic interpretation of the Bible. Him-
self his own interpreter, he identified the law
of nature with the law of God, unhesitatingly
repudiating the religious and political teach-
ings of his time. On Milton as on few other
figures of the period, Protestant individualism
stamped a revolutionary attitude, an almost
reckless reforming zeal, removing him as far
from the orthodox Puritan as from the staunch royalist. The Restoration he was to regard with complacent contempt, scornful of the idolatrous multitude, secure in his republican principles.  

While one may take exception to certain particulars in this appraisal, the overall picture of Milton as a man vitally concerned with political issues, a man whose background and experience endowed him with firm political convictions concerning human rights and liberties remains substantially accurate.

Indeed, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of Milton's political activity. He devoted what, in more propitious circumstances, might have been his most productive years to the composition of pamphlets designed to influence the thoughts and actions of his contemporaries, and a large segment of these prose works deals with politics. More than that, he sacrificed his eyesight writing polemical defenses of the English Republic against charges hurled by foreign antagonists. To be sure, in large measure he failed to convert his audiences to his way of thinking. But the significant fact is that in his tracts he attempted to provide practical solutions to contemporary problems of paramount importance.

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The value which Milton himself attached to his political labors has been frequently underemphasized, even by astute students of his work. That the general reader should consider the prose pamphlets little more than persuasive justifications of the Puritan Revolution is understandable. Haphazard reading and overall unfamiliarity with the civil war period can easily account for such an attitude. But that the specialists too should, for the most part, show a marked tendency to minimize the importance of Milton's political writings is more difficult to explain.

It is not that the political tracts have been neglected. On the contrary, many competent scholars have made searching examinations into Milton's political attitudes and beliefs. They have discussed his sources, analyzed his contribution in the light of contemporary thought and events, and attempted to cast his theories

6Of particular interest are Herbert Agar, Milton and Plato (Princeton, 1928); Kathleen E. Hartwell, Lactantius and Milton (Cambridge, Mass., 1929); Irene Samuel, Plato and Milton (Ithaca, 1947); and George C. Taylor, Milton's Use of DuBartas (Cambridge, Mass., 1934).

into a coherent philosophical system. All of these studies have proved valuable in casting new light on Milton's political accomplishments. As a result of such investigations it has become clear that the prose works provide detailed expression of many fundamental concepts which later figure so prominently in the major poems. Further, it has been demonstrated that the great Civil War became a most influential factor in shaping the perspectives which Milton laid before his readers in the epics and Samson Agonistes. Yet not one of these conspicuous contributions to scholarship offers an adequate assessment of Milton's political achievement. The authors, almost to a man, appear to present his political thought either as a mere extension of his religious doctrine or as the product of an idealistic theoretician who was not closely in touch with practical political realities.

Superficially, both judgments appear defensible. In Stuart England it was virtually impossible to divorce politics from religion. The theory of the Divine Right of Kings, so staunchly maintained by James and Charles and, until 1642, supported by the majority of the English people, depended in large part upon religious sanction for its effect. Further, the revolutionary principles enunciated by the Puritan faction to which Milton adhered found their justification in the

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9 Even so fine a scholar as H. J. C. Grierson, Milton and Wordsworth (Cambridge, 1937), fails to distinguish between the religious and secular aspects of Milton's thought.
authority of the Bible. Thus, both sides looked to religion as the final arbiter of their dispute. In the torrent of pamphlets which flooded England from 1570 to 1660 questions of constitutional principle were invariably subordinated to the primary issue of religious toleration and reform. Whether consciously or not, most pamphleteers argued in favor of a theocratic state. The difficulty lay in determining which was the true religion and, once that problem had been settled, how to deal with heretics. It was generally agreed by most parties--Milton and the Sectarians dissenting--that a state church was not only a necessary prop to the civil power but that it also had clearly defined functions to perform within the political framework. Not even Cromwell nor the Army, the most powerful voices in the cause for toleration, ever seriously espoused the idea of disestablishment.¹⁰ In an atmosphere such as this, it was inevitable that political questions should be inextricably mixed with religious issues.

Apart from Lilburne and the Levellers,¹¹ whose interest in constitutional principles sets them off in marked contrast to the majority of their contemporaries, Hobbes¹² and Harrington¹³ appear

¹⁰Wolfe, pp. 67-119.


¹²Leviathan (London, 1651).

to have been the only major writers who approached questions of politics primarily from a political point of view. Certainly Milton did not. Most frequently he wrote as if he were God's own prophet and underscored each of his political tenets with a sheaf of Scriptural quotations. Small wonder, then, that many students of Milton's political theories have been tempted to devote most of their time to an examination of his religious principles.

Unfortunately, such an approach, historically accurate and logical enough in view of the circumstances, tends to give a rather distorted view of Milton's political ideas. He was, as all serious scholars have acknowledged, an extreme tolerationist. His hatred for Catholicism prevented him from being wholly consistent in this matter; but he certainly did not subscribe to the orthodox view that the state could recognize only one religion and must suppress all others as heretical. He believed in the independent interpretation of the Bible, that every Christian was qualified to be his own minister, indeed, that a church could be composed of a solitary member. His beliefs being such, any political theories he might advance would require a base broad enough to accommodate his liberal principles. He could remain theocratic only to the extent of demanding acknowledgment of God as the supreme authority, the Bible as His word, and Christianity, i.e., Protestantism, as His religion. In all other respects, if he was to

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remain consistent, his political tenets had to be founded on broad philosophical and humanitarian concepts rather than upon the precepts of any organized church or private religion. From all this it becomes clear that any accentuation of the religious aspects of Milton's political doctrine can easily lead to a restriction of perspective and a consequent de-emphasis of the principle of tolerance which was so fundamental to him.

And there is something more. Even if Milton's ultimate goal had been the establishment of a communion of saints upon earth, he must have known that such a transformation could be brought about only as a result of political action. Surely he was enough of a realist to recognize the necessity for creating a political structure under which such a communion would be possible. And, since the political state must necessarily have come into being before the religious reform could take place, it is not only conceivable but quite reasonable for Milton to have directed his public efforts primarily towards reforming political theory and the political reforms of others. The great defect in the argument of those who refuse to divorce Milton's religious from his political views lies in their failure to consider the possibility that, in his political writings, Milton may have been employing religion as a prop for his political theories rather than the reverse.

This suggestion is based upon the assumption that he was a practical politician attempting to induce his countrymen to initiate governmental reforms which he felt were necessary to insure the internal security of the state. Admittedly this assumption rests upon
rather tenuous ground. Milton was certainly not a political thinker in
the usual sense of the term. His political doctrine is not contained
in any specific work. Rather it is scattered throughout the prose,
given, as it were, in dribbles. Even the primarily political pamphlets
are so cluttered with polemical arguments, defenses of the Commonwealth,
and self-justification that it becomes extremely difficult to dis-
tinguish between mere controversy and argument from political prin-
ciples. Moreover, from 1641 through 1660 Milton's political thought
was in a period of development. Ideas he enthusiastically embraced in
the Forties he later greatly modified or rejected altogether. Apparent
contradictions and inconsistencies frequently occur, oftentimes within
the same work. The net result is confusion within the reader's mind,
not only as to Milton's true position but also as to his intellectual
integrity. Arthur Barker has faced up to these problems and attempted
to give an honest answer:

Certainly he [Milton] was no logical thinker.
Moreover, he was composing polemical tracts, not
philosophical treatises. The habit of the con-
troversialist is to grasp at every argument
which comes to hand and to adopt every means to
refute the arguments of opponents. This Milton
did; but I do not believe him ever to have used
an argument which did not seem to him, at the
moment, sound, nor to have made use of ideas
which were without a relationship to his funda-
mental and constant convictions. It is of il-
logicality rather than insincerity that he should
be accused.

The illogicality of his thinking is only brought
into clearer relief by attempts to construct a
pattern through the bringing together of passages
from compositions widely separated in time. Milton's
opinions underwent a profound change between
his first and last pamphlets. It is also increased if one reads into his phrases—the good of the people, natural right, liberty and equality—the modern meanings which they did not have for him. The prose is not the record of an already ordered body of thought, but the record of Milton's efforts to achieve a satisfactory formulation of his ideals in the midst of national disintegration and under the influence of personal experiences, public events, and the opinions of his contemporaries.  

Most of Barker's observations are indisputably correct. Milton was neither logician nor philosopher; his tracts were ephemeral, polemic exercises; and his ideas cannot be reduced to any systematic pattern. But whether the prose is merely "the record of Milton's efforts to achieve a satisfactory formulation of his ideals" is something else again. This bland assertion brings into focus the basic problem concerning Milton's political achievement: Was he merely a political idealist or was he also a practical politician?  

Strangely enough, our answer to this question will depend not so much on our interpretation of Milton's prose as upon our approach to the English Civil War and its aftermath. If we view the great rebellion as a chain of inevitable events which necessarily culminated in the collapse of the Republic; if we accept the proposition that Royalist and Roundhead leaders could not have acted other than they did; if we believe that, in the long run, affairs turned out for the best—then we must perforce conclude that John Milton, whatever may have been his intentions, was certainly no practical politician. On the

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15 Barker, pp. xix-xx.
other hand, if we look upon the Puritan Revolution as a national disaster which might have been avoided; if we feel that the administrative leadership on both sides was self-seeking, incompetent, and short-sighted; if we hold that England's happy emergence from this stormy period was more fortuitous than deserved--then we must consider Milton's political contribution in another light.

It is my contention that Milton proposed eminently practical solutions to the serious problems which confronted England during the period 1641-1660. In the chapters which follow I shall try to demonstrate the validity of this thesis by examining carefully the four great political issues to which Milton addressed himself--the relation between church and state, civil liberties, the nature and limits of political authority, and the establishment of a commonwealth--and by contrasting his proposals with those ultimately adopted by the English nation. I hope to show how sensible and coherent Milton's political theories appear when they are considered in the light of the historical background against which they were originally formulated. Further, I shall try to make clear that Milton's fundamental political concepts, although theoretically they may be inextricably bound to his religious convictions, in their practical application can and must be divorced from his religious beliefs. Finally, I shall offer the reader what I believe to be Milton's own
evaluation of his practical political activity, an evaluation culled from political passages found in *Paradise Lost*.

In presenting my evidence I shall propose no major reinterpretations of Milton's work. I shall confine myself to focusing attention upon what I consider one of Milton's more important achievements. I shall be content if I can provide the reader with a just and accurate appraisal of Milton's contribution to the politics of seventeenth century England and of the world at large.

Before launching into the examination of Milton's political opinions, I shall take brief notice of the apparent inconsistencies which mar his work. As I observed earlier, his point of view shifted from time to time and, if he was not occasionally inconsistent, he came dangerously close to being so. Such aberrations undoubtedly detract from the force of his arguments, but they by no means nullify the practicality of his proposals.

In fact, the inconsistencies can be plausibly explained. When Milton directed his attention to specific political problems, he was invariably either calling for reforms to be effected within the framework of the existing government or polemically defending policies already in effect. In such discussions he assumed, not the desirability, but the continued existence of the current government. Consequently, he attempted to solve the immediate difficulties within the framework of that government. This method of argumentation, although
admirably suited to his purpose, gives to his political tracts a rather vacillating and expedient character. To be sure, the basic principles shine through clearly enough, and we can infer from Milton's tone that the political structures of both Charles and Cromwell left much to be desired. Nevertheless, in applying his political principles Milton was forced to take cognizance of the existing order and to reach a modus vivendi with it. There was, however, a limit to the compromises which he could make. When it came to fundamental principles, he was remarkably constant. Although his views concerning marriage, politics, and religion were too extreme for his time, he none the less clung tenaciously to them, adamantly refusing to yield ground in the face of repeated onslaughts by his enemies.16

In the last analysis, Milton's inconsistencies can be dismissed as, at worst, minor faults. If in non-essential matters he periodically effected compromises with the existing governmental authorities, he was only doing what any practical politician could reasonably be expected to do.

16 For the type of attack to which Milton was subjected see W. R. Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation (Columbus, 1940).
I

THE WAR WITH THE PRELATES

The first Bishops' War broke out while John Milton was sojourning at Naples. The eruption of hostilities could hardly have come as a surprise. Scotland had been in ferment since July, 1637; moreover, the Covenanters' ultimatum of February, 1638, had made the use of military force all but inevitable. Nevertheless, the conflict between King and presbyters must have been, for Milton, a cause for serious alarm. "As I was preparing to pass over also into Sicily and Greece," he writes in the Defensio Secunda, "I was restrained by the melancholy tidings from England of the civil war: for I thought it base, that I should be traveling at my ease, even for the improvement of my mind abroad, while my fellow citizens were fighting for their liberty at home." To be sure, the return journey was a somewhat leisurely one, too leisurely for some of Milton's less friendly critics. He did not

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1For an analysis of the political situation from a contemporary point of view, see Messon, II, 4-8. The modern reader who expresses surprise at Milton's departure from England during a time of crisis would do well to remember the attitude of so many Americans regarding Germany and Japan prior to December, 1941.

2C. E., VIII, 124-5.

3For a refutation of these attacks see B. A. Wright, "The Alleged Falsehoods in Milton's Accounts of His Continental Tour," MLR, XXVIII (1933), 308-14.
reach England until August, 1639, some two months after the uneasy Pacification of Berwick, "at the time that Charles, breaking the pacification, renewed the war, called the episcopal war, with the Scots, in which the royal forces were routed in the first engagement; and Charles, now finding the whole English nation enraged, and justly, to the last degree against him, not long after called a parliament." 4

Milton had indeed arrived in England at a fateful hour. By the terms of the treaty of Berwick Charles had agreed to both the temporary abolition of episcopacy in Scotland and the immediate convocation of the Scottish Parliament. In return for these concessions the Covenanters promised to restore the royal castles they had seized and to disperse their army. Ostensibly, mutual compliance with the articles of truce would mean reversion to what had been the status quo prior to Laud's introduction of the new prayer book. In practice, however, such a reversion was impossible. In his first encounter with the Kirk, the King had suffered a humiliating defeat: a group of rebellious subjects had overtly challenged the royal prerogative with conspicuous success. They had forced their sovereign to acquiesce to their demands as the price of their fealty. Charles could not permit such a rebuff to his authority to stand without retaliation.

Both Covenanters and Royalists were aware that the King looked upon the Berwick treaty as a device for gaining time to prepare a counterattack. It was mandatory that he restore the Crown's prestige, something he could accomplish only by completely crushing his

4 C. E., VIII, 126-7.
opposition. Such an operation, however, would require both men and money. At the moment Charles had neither. But he was still King of England and Scotland; as such he commanded the loyalty of the vast majority of his subjects. His chief strength, however, lay with the people of England. If these could be persuaded that the Scots remained their traditional foes, they might, in patriotic ardor, rise up to succor their King. And, even should this expedient fail, there still remained Wentworth and his well-trained troops in Ireland. This army would assuredly provide the Covenanters with more formidable opposition than had the weak, ill-disciplined forces which had recoiled before Leslie the previous spring.

Finally, there was the possibility of foreign aid. Charles was married to the sister of the King of France and, at least temporarily, was enjoying friendly relations with the King of Spain. In a struggle wherein the chief political issue was defense of the royal prerogative his brother monarchs might be reasonably expected to assist in maintaining the "divine right of Kings." It was, however, extremely unlikely that Charles would fall back on this resource before all other means of preservation had been exhausted. The intervention of foreign troops was almost certain to alienate even his most loyal supporters among the English and might prompt them to join with the Scots in repelling the invaders. Against such a union a military victory was very

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doubtful, a political victory impossible. Still, if all else failed, Charles might be forced to pin his hopes on foreign troops.

Thus in August, 1639, there were open to the King several avenues of attack. The Covenanters, musing over the ominous possibilities, began to repent their haste in restoring to Charles his fortresses and to fear the consequences of disbanding their army. If the initiative was to remain with them, they must adopt measures to parry whatever thrusts the King had in mind. Therefore, when the Scottish Parliament convened at Edinburgh on August 31st, the Covenanters set about the task of consolidating their position. First, they seized control of the Lords of the Articles, the committee which determined what bills Parliament should consider. Prior to Berwick, fourteen of the twenty-four seats on this committee had been filled by bishops appointed by the King. Now these seats were to be held by Covenanters. The effect of this move was to eliminate entirely the King's influence in Parliament. Second, they abolished episcopacy in Scotland and deprived the bishops of their votes in the Parliament. Third, they decreed that the governors of the castles of Edinburgh, Stirling, and Dumbarton were to be Scottish subjects, appointed by the King with the approval of the Scottish Parliament. Finally, they levied a tax to cover the expenses of the late war, which Charles called a rebellion but which the Covenanters styled a defence of the laws and liberties of Scotland.  

What Parliament was doing was quite evident. While paying nominal homage to the King, it was setting itself up as the governing body of Scotland. Its actions not only challenged the royal prerogatives but, for all practical purposes, unsurped the traditional rights of the Crown. Charles could not afford to accept such an invasion of his domain without a struggle. On November 14th he obtained from Parliament an adjournment. The following June he prorogued it.7

The Covenanters had forced the King's hand. He had now no choice but to make a fight of it. An invasion of Scotland was planned for the following summer. Wentworth was dispatched to Ireland to raise an army; and King Charles, for the first time in eleven years, summoned an English Parliament to underwrite the cost of the expedition.

The first Bishops' War and its aftermath afford a graphic illustration of the complex nature of church-state relations which existed during the Renaissance. Ostensibly this was a religious controversy. The Covenanters publicly proclaimed their loyalty to the Crown, repeatedly sought to arbitrate their differences, and appealed to arms only when all other expedients had failed. Further, once their religious objectives had been achieved, the Scots expressed a willingness to disband their army and return to Charles the spoils they had taken.

Certainly the actions and attitudes of the rebels would appear to sup-
port the contention that their sole aim in taking up arms against the
King was to secure for themselves and their descendants freedom of
worship.

But, in fact, the Bishops' War constituted political rebellion.
Charles quite accurately appraised the situation when he reiterated his
father's famous phrase, "No Bishop, no King." And he was supported in
his interpretation by none other than John Milton, who characterized
the abortive struggle as a fight for liberty. In order to understand
why both Charles and Milton viewed this insurrection as political
rather than religious, it is necessary to examine the character of
church-state relationships during the latter stages of the Re-
naissance.

For the average Renaissance man the modern phenomenon of sepa-
ration of church and state was inconceivable. While it is true that
by the sixteenth century the theocratic universe of the Medieval
period had given place to the homocentric world, God still remained a
powerful force in secular matters, influencing both kings and subjects
by His eternal laws and decrees. These laws and decrees were pro-
mulgated by His church and were binding upon all men, princes and
peasants alike. There were no exceptions. In His infinite wisdom
God had delegated His authority in spiritual matters to His ordained
ministers, in temporal affairs to His anointed kings. If church and
state were to discharge successfully their responsibilities, it was
necessary that they cooperate. Friction between the spiritual and
secular arms could lead only to confusion among the people. Therefore, it was expected that church and state should work in mutual accord, supporting each other. It was part of the Divine plan.  

Renaissance belief in the divided authority of church and state was a legacy of the Middle Ages. During that period, when for western Europe the predominant organ of the Christian faith was the Holy Roman Catholic Church, the system had worked well. The Church had anointed kings and imposed upon the faithful the moral obligation of steadfast obedience to their lawful sovereigns. In its turn, the Crown had sworn allegiance to the Church and assisted it both in stamping out heresies and in punishing heretics. When the Protestant revolt brought about a fragmentation of the Christian faith, such a union between church and state as had existed in the past became, in many instances, no longer feasible. Religion, which had formerly been the bulwark of national unity, now was becoming the source of internal division. New conditions obviously demanded a new approach to the question of church-state relations. But most people failed to perceive the necessity for such a reappraisal. They continued to cling tenaciously to the old belief that there must be a state church. Virtually every sect of

Even the Puritans accepted this concept. See John Downman, A Guide to Godliness (London, 1622), Epistle.

Until the sixteenth century Jews, Mohammedans, and heretics did not create insuperable problems for the Christian monarchs. Occasionally—as in the case of the Albigensians—it took considerable time to wipe out the heretics. In other instances, where the heresy became the predominant religion—the Eastern Schism is an example—the state defected along with the majority of the people. Invariably, however, the state church enjoyed the loyalty of the great mass of the population.
appreciable proportions demanded from the Crown both recognition as
the one true Christian Church and active support in extirpating all
rival claimants.

In England the problem became particularly acute. When for
reasons political, economic, and personal Henry VIII broke with Rome,
he set into motion a revolution, the ultimate fruits of which he
could not have foreseen. It is one of the ironies of history that
the church which Henry founded for the purpose of strengthening the
Crown should eventually become the agency through which the Crown
would first be weakened and overthrown. In his fight with the Pope
Henry's battle-cry was the need for a national church. To win the
support of his subjects he played upon the indisputable fact that
Papal policies in temporal affairs worked to the disadvantage of
England. Throughout the struggle he tried to make it appear that
this was an administrative, not a theological rupture. He retained
as much of the theology, liturgy, and law of the Catholic Church as
consistency with his purposes would allow. He executed both
Protestants and Catholics with perfect impartiality. With internal,
personal convictions he was not at all concerned; an external
manifestation of loyalty to the sovereign was what he demanded from
all his subjects. And the people rallied to his support. Not
only Protestants but also anti-clerical Catholics condoned, when
they did not applaud, his seizure of monasteries and execution of
a recalcitrant martyrs. In his hands the Anglican Church became a
weapon by which both England and the Crown were strengthened. He
was the first and only king who was de facto head of the English Church. 10

At his death both his heir and his church fell into the hands of reforming clergymen. Men such as Cranmer and Latimer, by different methods to be sure, attempted to turn Henry's anti-clerical revolution into full-bodied theological reformation. Their efforts met with forceful resistance from the Catholic party. For six years serious religious disturbances occurred sporadically throughout the kingdom. G. M. Trevelyan has remarked of Edward VI, "He might, if he had lived longer, have ruined the Reformation by overdriving, much as his half-sister Mary ruined the Catholic cause." 11 Thus it was that within twenty years after its establishment Henry's national church became a source of division among his people.

The policies of Mary widened the breach. Not only did she attempt to restore Roman Catholicism with a zeal that bordered on savagery, but she insisted upon consummating a Spanish marriage which could only alienate the vast majority of her subjects. One of Henry's arguments for breaking with Rome had been that the Pope was under the thumb of the Spanish Charles V, the avowed enemy of England. Now the Queen of England was contracting a marriage with Charles' son and, by so doing, "making England the cockboat tied


to the stern of the great Spanish galleon."\footnote{12} Once again religion was mixed with politics. In the eyes of many, English Catholicism became identified with a foreign power whose primary objective was to destroy England's national sovereignty.

When in 1558 Elizabeth came to the throne, religious parties everywhere were about to fly at each other's throats. Such an eruption of hostilities between the sects could easily have brought about the collapse of the state itself. Fortunately there was a foreign enemy against whom Elizabeth could rally Englishmen of all denominations. However, to solidify her position and weld her subjects into an homogeneous whole, she found it necessary to temporize on matters of religion. To mollify the Protestants she reestablished Anglicanism as the state religion and she herself became the nominal head of the church; to pacify the Catholics she refused to accept the title Supreme Head of the Church, contenting herself with the less objectionable Supreme Governor. Further, she unofficially permitted Catholics to worship privately, demanding from them only ceremonial acknowledgement of the state church and fines for non-attendance at Anglican services. The Puritans, who at the beginning of her reign constituted a small minority, she treated with less consideration. Elizabeth had little liking for Calvinism. She mistrusted its republicanism and feared its tendency to usurp what she conceived to be provinces of the state.

\footnote{12} Ibid., p. 76.
Whatever may have been the shortcomings of Elizabeth's religious policies, they succeeded in their immediate purposes. Not only was civil strife avoided, but, when Philip attacked England, Anglicans, Catholics, and Puritans stood shoulder to shoulder to defend their Queen and repulse the foreign invader.

Perhaps the most serious defect in Elizabeth's policy of religious expediency was that it tended to destroy the traditional balance between church and state. Under the Queen all attempts at serious reform within the Anglican Church were stifled. She tried to make it a middle-of-the-road church and succeeded in transforming it into a subservient organ of the Crown. Of the Anglican clergymen of the period William Haller writes:

> In doctrine they moved steadily away from orthodox Calvinism with its disturbing equalitarian implications toward a theology of elastic compromise and continuous adjustment between divine law and human nature, toward a rationalism which supported public security while conceding the desirability of so much change as might in the process of time prove itself to be unavoidable and relatively painless. . . . The themes of Anglican preaching were the divinely established authority of church and crown, the classic loci of the sacred epic hallowed by catholic Christian tradition, and the virtues and vices defined by the historic dialectic of medieval moral science.\(^{13}\)

Protestants who strongly believed in the principles of reformation could scarcely find any spiritual comfort in a religion so hidebound to tradition and so opposed to social change. As a result, thousands

\(^{13}\)Haller, p. 22.
of Anglicans, ministers and laymen alike, defected from the state church to embrace Puritanism as the only means of religious reform.

If the weakening of Anglicanism meant the strengthening of Puritanism, the strengthening of Puritanism brought about a corresponding weakening in the position of the Crown. As Haller has shown, the beliefs of the Puritans could not help eventually engendering antagonism between themselves and their ruler:

Their ideal was the Augustinian and Calvinistic ideal of the church as the city of God, the Kingdom of Christ on earth, the divinely inspired organ of spiritual life in human society, having reciprocal relations with the rulers of this world but acting in complete independence of their authority. Its task was to render men obedient first to God and then under God to Caesar, whose first duty also was to obey God as his church might direct. The church in its obedience instructed both rulers and subjects in theirs. Before God all men were equal in sin, equally deserving of damnation. If any were raised above the rest in this world, it was God's doing, not theirs. This equality was the condition of all government in church or state.14

Put into practice, this theory would mean that "the conduct of government itself would have been subjected to continuous review by the people, or rather by the preachers as a privileged caste telling the people what to think and tolerating no dissent."15 Whether the Puritans realized it or not, their program "could generate a temper in

14Hall, pp. 11-12.

15Ibid., p. 12.
the people which would turn out to be stronger than respect for bishops or even for the crown, a moral atmosphere in which governments would presently find certain things impossible to enforce and others impossible to deny."\(^{16}\)

It was the belated recognition of the threat which Puritanism posed to the Crown that caused James I to exclaim at Hampton Court, "No Bishop, no King!" Although inclined toward Calvinism himself, James realized that "a Scottish presbytery agreeth as well with a monarchy as God with the Devil...Then Jack, Tom, Will, and Dick shall meet and at their pleasure censure me and my council."\(^{17}\) With Anglicanism he could live; with Catholicism he could equivocate. But Calvinism struck at the very foundations of his throne. Elizabeth could afford to temporize with isolated knots of dissenters. By 1604, however, the number of Puritans had grown to alarming proportions. If the royal power was to be preserved, the Calvinists must be controlled. James did what he could. He outlawed, he fined, he persecuted. Over and above that, he attempted to strengthen the Anglican Church as a religious institution.

Charles I shared his father's views concerning the dangers of Puritanism. Furthermore Charles could agree with his Anglican, Catholic, and Puritan subjects who, whatever their theological differences, all embraced the principle that there was but one true church

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\(^{16}\) Haller, p. 21.

\(^{17}\) Trevelyan, pp. 157-8.
established by God to share with the state the responsibility of guiding men's souls to eternal happiness. The true church, the King declared, was the state church to which all loyal subjects must conform. He therefore encouraged Laud to revivify the Church of England and to impress episcopacy upon the Scots.

Superficially, Charles' aims were eminently practical. The establishment of a strong national church throughout Britain, a church to which the vast majority of the people conformed, would eventually serve to create a stronger national unity between Scots and English. Further, through the medium of a national church, Puritanism in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland could be effectively controlled, if not altogether stamped out. Finally, those clergymen who took it upon themselves to censure publicly their King and his policies could be conveniently dealt with by the ecclesiastical authorities.

But in making his appraisal of the religious situation, Charles committed two disastrous errors: first, he underestimated the strength of Calvinism in his kingdom; second, he failed to take into account the hostility toward himself which had arisen among his people as a consequence of political, social, and economic abuses. These two miscalculations ultimately cost him his throne.

The first Bishops' War did much more than point up the strength of Presbyterianism in Scotland. The act of rebellion itself was an explicit denial of the King's right to exercise any authority whatsoever in matters of religion. Further, the rebels overtly demonstrated that loyalty to the Kirk took precedence over loyalty to the Crown,
that the authority of the Kirk superseded that of the King. In addition, by the terms of the treaty of Berwick, the Kirk set itself up as the sole arbiter for determining what religion would be countenanced in Scotland. Implicitly Charles and his Bishops were looked upon as heretics. In practice, the Kirk forbade the King to introduce his own religion within a part of his own kingdom. Thus the Covenanters completely subverted the objectives for which Henry VIII had established his ecclesiastical policies. This was more than a religious uprising; it was a political revolt.

On April 13, 1640, the English Parliament convened at Westminster. It had been summoned to appropriate funds for the continuation of the war against the Covenanters but was to prove somewhat recalcitrant. Actually Commons were prepared to grant the King some measure of the aid he requested but not before they had obtained redress for past grievances and abuses. Acting on the advice of Strafford, Charles appealed to the House of Lords, which dutifully voted that appropriations should be the first matter of business on the Parliamentary agenda. The King's rash action only served to confirm Commons in their obstinacy. They alone held the power to vote taxes and could use their authority as a powerful weapon in bargaining. Through the agency of Sir Henry Vane Charles attempted to mollify the lower House but the members viewed all royal offers with suspicion. Disgusted by Commons' procrastination, the King dissolved Parliament on May 5.
Although it had sat for scarcely more than three weeks, the Short Parliament produced effects of vast importance for the future history of England. By stubbornly refusing to acquiesce to the King's demands, Commons in deed, if not in word, put an end to absolute monarchy in Britain. So long as Parliament controlled the power of the purse, the official actions of the King would be subject to review by his legislators. Henceforward, the King of England would have a partner in the business of government. John Pym had enunciated the new Parliamentary doctrine on April 27th, when he told his colleagues, "The powers of Parliament are to the body politic as the rational faculties of the soul to a man."

It required courage for Pym to make such a statement; it required even greater courage for Commons to implement it.

Without the aid of Parliament Charles could not hope to crush the rebellion in the north. When the second Bishops' War broke out in August, the English were ignominiously routed. In October Charles sent an embassy to negotiate with the Covenanters. Their proposals stunned him. In addition to their former demands the canny Scots now insisted that the King leave them in control of the counties of Durham and Northumberland and undertake to pay their army until another English Parliament convened. After such an ultimatum the King had no recourse but to summon his legislators into session once again.

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18 Gardiner, IX, 102.
In November the famous Long Parliament "met in a black mood, determined no on reform but on revolution." Both Lords and Commons were now convinced that a drastic overhaul of the governmental machinery was mandatory. Now that the King's personal rule had broken down under the pressure of domestic crisis, even the most ardent Royalists conceded that some constitutional changes were inevitable. Consequently, during the first session of this Parliament Puritan and Cavalier worked together to bring about abolishment of the Star Chamber, the High Commission, and the whole prerogative system. Laud was imprisoned and Strafford executed.

Parliament was openly exercising its power. Charles was forced to affix his signature to a bill which forbade dissolution of the existing Parliament without its own consent. A "Triennial Act," requiring that Parliament be automatically summoned at least once every three years was also passed. All taxes levied without the consent of Parliament were declared null and void. A treaty with the Covenanters was signed on the Scots' own terms. Parliament was assuming functions of government which formerly had been reserved to the Crown.

This transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy might have been effected without bloodshed had not Parliament become divided over the religious issue. Until May, 1641, the majorities in both Houses had stood together on questions of administrative and constitutional reform. Aware of the differences among themselves

concerning matters of faith, the members had wisely postponed considering possible ecclesiastical reforms until the more urgent problems of state had been settled. On May 1, however, Commons sent to the Lords a bill providing for the exclusion of the clergy from all secular offices and the bishops from their seats in the Parliament. While the act had passed the lower House without serious opposition, it was doubtful whether the Lords would approve the measure. For one thing, the bishops sat in the House of Lords and that august body invariably resisted any proposal affecting its constitution which originated in Commons. For another, as the Puritan faction held a majority in Commons, so did the High Church party in Lords.

From the viewpoint of practical politics, the Bishops' Exclusion Bill could not have come up at a more unfortunate time. The Lords had not as yet passed on the Bill of Attainder authorizing Strafford's execution. Realizing that the religious issue could stir up sufficient resentment among the Lords to preclude the conviction of Strafford, moderates of both ecclesiastical parties attempted to agree on a compromise. According to Falkland, Hampden assured him that "if the Bishops' Exclusion Bill might pass, there would be nothing more attempted to the prejudice of the Church."20 Armed with this confidence, the Lords approved the attainder act and gave an amended version of the exclusion bill two favorable hearings. The amended bill would exclude the clergy from secular office but would permit the Bishops to retain their seats in Parliament.

The amendment aroused the wrath of Commons. Of the majority who had passed the original exclusion act, only a part favored the abolition of episcopacy. What most feared was the political power of the prelates, whom they held responsible for the late Scottish disaster. If the bishops retained their seats in Lords, the union of church and state, the foundation of absolute monarchy, would be able to exercise its malign influence upon the Parliament. "The bishops," cried Saye, "have had too absolute dependency upon the King to sit as free men." Bishop Taylor, writing in defence of episcopacy, said exactly the same thing.

The interests of the bishops is conjunct with the prosperity of the King, besides the interest of their own security, by the obligation of secular advantages. For they who have their livelihood from the King, and are in expectancy of their fortune from him, are more likely to pay a tribute of exacter duty than others whose fortunes are not in immediate dependency on His Majesty. . . . It is but the common expectation of gratitude that a patron paramount shall be more assisted by his beneficiaries in cases of necessity, than by those who receive nothing from him but the common influences of government.

It was precisely this patron-client relationship which disturbed constitutional reformers. Therefore, when Dering introduced the Root-and-Brench Bill, which provided for the absolute extinction of

21 Gardiner, IX, 301.

22 Jeremy Taylor, Of the Sacred Order and Offices of Episcopacy (London, 1642), Epistle Dedicatory.
episcopacy in England, religious moderates such as Pym and Hampden supported it, not because they necessarily favored the proposal, but because they felt this was a strategic move. They looked upon Root-and-Branch as a means of forcing the Lords to accept the original exclusion bill as the lesser of two evils. Once the bishops had been legally deprived of their seats in Parliament, they believed the Root-and-Branch proposal would be permitted to die a natural death. Unfortunately the strategy backfired. The Lords, resenting Commons' interference in what they considered their own domain and angered by what they felt was Hampden's betrayal, threw out the exclusion measure on the third reading. In Commons, Root-and-Branch was passed by a small majority.

Each House could with some justification accuse the other of breaking faith. The Lords, by amending the original Exclusion Bill, had reneged in part on the compromise with Commons; Commons, in turn, had taken action on legislation prejudicial to episcopacy before the Lords had made a final disposition of the Exclusion matter. While the rift did not prevent both chambers from acting together on such business as taxation and the Scottish treaty, it severely strained relations between ecclesiastical factions in both Houses and made any further compromises on questions of religion almost impossible. The moderates, who up to this time had held the balance of power between the militant Puritan and Anglican parties, were now forced to choose between presbytery and episcopacy.

The issue came to a head in November, 1641, when the Puritans in Commons drew up a Grand Remonstrance to the King. This document
outlined all the failures of Charles' reign, pointed up the reforms Parliament had accomplished, and listed those things which yet remained to be done. Included in the articles was a demand that the King's councillors should be persons trusted by Parliament and a petition that the King deprive the bishops of their parliamentary votes and entrust to the Parliament a reformation of the Church on Erastian-Presbyterian principles. To constitutional reformers such as Hyde, Falkland, and Waller, the Remonstrance was a revolutionary statement and they refused to support it. The resolution barely passed Commons by a vote of 159 to 148. The King, encouraged by the support he had received in the Parliament, at first gave a non-committal answer to the Remonstrance, then issued a proclamation upholding the Church of England.

The lines of opposition were now clearly drawn. Who was to rule England, Charles or Parliament? Commons tried to remove control of the army from the King; the Lords rejected the proposal. Commons tried to abolish episcopacy; the Lords threw out the bill. Commons impeached twelve bishops and was rumored to be considering impeaching the Queen. This was indeed not reform but revolution.

Charles made one foolish effort to restore his authority. Invading the House of Commons, he attempted to arrest Pym, Hampden, Hazelrigg, Holles, and Strode for trying "to subvert the fundamental laws, with inviting the Scots to invade the kingdom of England, and with raising tumults in order to compel parliament to join them in

23 Gardiner, IX, 382.
their treacherous design."24 As Maurice Ashley correctly notes, "This action was not only unconstutional, but, what was worse, inefficual."25 Forewarned of the King's intentions, "the birds had flown," found protection in the City of London, which refused to deliver them over to the Crown.

After this fiasco civil war became inevitable. In February, 1642, Charles left London. Parliament proclaimed a state of emergency and appointed new Lords Lieutenant in the counties. In June Lords and Commons dispatched "Nineteen Propositions" to the King at York. These provided that all appointments of Privy Councillors, Ministers of State, and guardians of the royal children were to be subject to parliamentary approval; that the actions of Crown judges were to be open to parliamentary review; that the army was to be placed under parliamentary control; and that the reform of the Church of England was to proceed under parliamentary direction. For Charles to have accepted these propositions would have been to surrender his crown, to have been no more King in England than he was in Scotland. As soon as the proposals had been rejected, Parliament appointed a Committee of Safety, branded the King an aggressor, and put into the field a force of ten thousand men under the command of the Earl of Essex. For his part, Charles gathered what followers he could and on August 22, raised his standard at Nottingham.

24 Ashley, p. 77.

25 Loc. cit.
From the outset the struggle between Charles and his Parliaments had been primarily political: the note of rebellion having been sounded by Pym in his speech to the Short Parliament. Throughout its first session the actions of the Long Parliament had been dictated by political concerns. Men of differing religious convictions closed ranks to effect needed constitutional reforms. Even when religious issues became involved, the paramount considerations for the majority in both Houses were the political factors. Charles too looked upon his conflict with Parliament as a struggle for power. He resented parliamentary reform as an invasion of the royal prerogative; he resisted it on the grounds that it constituted an usurpation of the Crown's function. On religious questions, whatever his own convictions, he expressed a willingness to temporize in England as he had in Scotland. Only when he found that support of religion could become the political weapon which might preserve his power, did Charles present himself as the champion of the Church. And, in this connection, it should be noted that the King identified supporters of Anglicanism as champions of the royal prerogative, a manifestly false assumption, since many of the adherents of episcopacy had been in the forefront of the parliamentarians who had stripped Charles of so much of his power and influence. The simple fact is that religion had become a pawn in the hands of the politicians.

When all this has been said, it remains to take cognizance of the importance of religion in the great Civil War. That religious convictions exercised great influence over the minds and hearts of many of the combatants is incontrovertible. There were thousands in England
as well as in Scotland who died for their faith rather than for King or Parliament. And in a certain sense religion can be said to have been the cause of the war. But it is important to make some distinctions. Charles did not lose either crown or head because of religion any more than Parliament obtained supreme control of the government because of religion. If the religious issue had never been injected, England would still have moved from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. What the religious tumult did was, first, to precipitate the change by the revolt in Scotland and, second, to retard its consummation by providing a non-political motive for the Civil War. To put the matter briefly, the time had come for a change. The government machinery was no longer functioning adequately. New conditions demanded new approaches, a sweeping away of the traditional principles of absolute monarchy. The entire political, social, and economic structure was badly in need of repair. To this proposition most thinking men agreed. The question was, when and how were the changes to be instituted? The answer was fortuitously provided by religion. The Crown, stubbornly clinging to traditional principles, refused to recognize the need for a modification in its position concerning church-state relationships; indeed, it attempted to force its own principles upon those who could not in conscience accept them. The result: a call to arms.

Thus religion must be counted an important though superficial cause of the revolution that ultimately changed the character of the English government. It provided the spark that set the tinderbox ablaze. The English monarchy was in a state of decay, ready to be
toppled. If the religious issue had not provided the impetus, sooner or later, some other problem—political, social, economic—would have. It was only a question of time.

While the momentous events described above were transpiring, John Milton was living quietly in Aldersgate Street, "where he first undertook the education and instruction of his sister's two sons, the younger whereof had been wholly committed to his charge and care." Hostile critics have been quick to point out that for almost two years after his return from Italy, while his "countrymen were fighting for liberty," Milton's sole contribution to the cause appears to have been pedagogic activity on behalf of his nephews—a rather curious anticlimax to his prideful statement in the Defensio Secunda. Yet, under the circumstances, his actions seem to have been quite logical. He writes:

Looking about me for some place in which I might take up my abode, if any was to be found in this troubled and fluctuating state of affairs, I hired, for me and my books, a sufficiently spacious house in the city. Here I returned with no little delight to my interrupted studies; leaving without difficulty, the issue of things more especially to God, and to those to whom the people had assigned that department of duty.

Indeed, what else could he reasonably have been expected to do? He was

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27 C. E., VIII, 126-9.
not a member of Parliament and, consequently, could not take part in the great debates; he could not in conscience support the King; and for him to join the Scots and take up arms against his own countrymen was unthinkable. He was obliged to stand and wait.

Two circumstances combined to bring Milton into the religious and political arena: the Smectymnuan controversy and the Root-and-Branch Bill. To the first of these he responded subjectively, both as a Presbyterian and as a friend to his former tutor, Thomas Young. To the second he reacted as an intelligent and patriotic Englishman facing up to the political realities as he understood them. The two perspectives merged in the anti-prelatical tracts, five rather extraordinary exercises in vituperative, dialectical polemics.

The political background for the anti-episcopal pamphlets has already been discussed in some detail. It remains to consider the origins of the Smectymnuan controversy.

The collapse of the royal power during the Scottish rebellion had placed the Anglican Church in a precarious position. While only a minority of the people in England favored total abolition of episcopacy, the majority were opposed to the continued recognition of Anglicanism as the state religion unless it were reformed according to Erastian-Presbyterian principles. Such a reformation would undoubtedly strip the bishops of much of their spiritual authority and influence at Court and Parliament, while at the same time depriving them of their benefices and secular offices.
There was, however, one factor working in the Bishops' favor. Although, if every member cast his ballot according to his religious convictions, there were more than enough votes in Commons to effect passage of a reform bill, nevertheless, Parliament as a whole so dreaded the possibility of religious anarchy that it was reluctant to act on any sweeping religious reforms. The bishops attempted to encourage this reluctance by issuing pamphlets which defended by theological argument the position of episcopacy as a Divine Institution.

In January, 1641, at the time when Commons was considering various petitions concerning ecclesiastical reform, Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and Norwich, issued his Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament, in which he presented in a milder, less offensive form the arguments from his Episcopacy by Divine Right, published the previous year. Hall was a sound theologian and a competent controversialist; his words were bound to exercise some influence in Parliament, although the extent of such influence would be difficult to determine. In any event, five divines—Stephen Marshall, Edward Calamy, Thomas Young, Mathew Newcomen, and William Spurstow—collectively wrote An Answer to a Book entitled "An Humble Remonstrance." The bulk of the work was apparently written by Young, although it was signed Smectymnuus, a name derived from the initials of the five authors. The Answer, which appeared in March, argued against Hall's assertions that both episcopacy and the liturgy of the Anglican Church

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were divinely instituted, and attempted to prove from Scripture that the authority of bishops in no way exceeded that of presbyters. Hall, a man of no mean satirical gifts, responded in the same month with *A Defence of the Humble Remonstrance, against the Frivolous and False Exceptions of Smectymnuus*. At this point, whether because Hall felt that he needed support in his battle or because the Root-and-Branch Bill was enjoying favorable readings in Commons, James Ussher, popular Low-Church Archbishop of Armagh and one of the most learned theologians of his time, was invited to join the fray. Ussher responded with a public broadside, *The Judgment of Doctor Rainoldes touching the originall of Episcopacy*, and a privately circulated manuscript entitled, *The Reduction of Episcopacy unto the form of Synodical Government*, a treatise which seems to have affected the discussions then going on in Commons.

Such was the state of affairs when, in May or June, 1641, almost two years after his return from Italy, Milton became publicly involved in the great issues which were dividing his countrymen.

Readers who think of Milton only as the great voice of English Puritanism generally tend to find in the anti-prelatical pamphlets little more than a Presbyterian-oriented attack upon Anglican episcopacy. To a large extent their view of the tracts has been shared by many competent scholars, including such eminent men as Hanford and
Tillyard, 29 who, while conceding that Milton does occasionally take cognizance of the contemporary political situation, nevertheless insist that whatever significance the anti-episcopal tracts do possess they derive from Milton's championing of Presbyterian principles against Anglican traditionalism.

Such an interpretation seems valid enough. Of the five anti-prelatical pamphlets three have almost nothing to do with politics. Of Prelatical Episcopacy, the second in the series (June-July, 1641), is an answer to Ussher and deals exclusively with the point that the legitimacy of episcopacy cannot be established by an appeal to apostolic times. Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus (July-August, 1641) is Milton's curious but tedious rebuttal to Hall. It offers no political arguments and its few eloquent passages are more than offset by Milton's heavy heckling of his antagonist. An Apology for Smectymnuus (March-April, 1642), although it contains one of the great autobiographical statements and a magnificent encomium on those "public benefactors," the members of Parliament, 30 is essentially a point by point refutation of Hall's Modest Confutation of a Slanderous and Scurrilous Libel entitled Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus. The remaining tracts, Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England (May-June, 1641) and The Reason of Church-Government Urged against


30 C. E., III, 336.
Prelaty (January-March, 1642), while they do contain numerous political allusions, can be read as primarily arguments for ecclesiastical reform.

Although the argument for considering the anti-prelatical pamphlets merely as religious documents appears plausible, in some respects it is not quite satisfactory. First, the publication of these pamphlets occurred at a time when the religious issue had become so entangled with politics that any decision by King or Parliament affecting religion would inevitably have resulted in a breakdown of the political structure as it then existed. Milton could hardly have been unaware of the political implications which underlay his proposed ecclesiastical reforms when the Parliament itself was afraid to act because it feared anarchy would ensue. Therefore, to argue that Milton's concern was solely the abolition of episcopacy without reference to the political consequences which such abolition must necessarily entail, is to make him either a fool or a saint. And Milton was neither.

Second, Milton's adversaries were acutely aware of the political implications inherent in the religious controversy. As we have already seen, in their polemics both Hall and Ussher were attempting to influence Commons' decision concerning Root-and-Branch. They were fighting not only for their spiritual authority but also for their political prestige and power as represented by their secular offices and parliamentary seats. This surely Milton must have known. And he must also have known that any response to his antagonists' arguments, even a response devoted wholly to theological arguments, could not escape having political ramifications.
Third, as I shall presently show, the nature of the political allusions in Of Reformation and The Reason of Church-Government is such as to suggest that Milton's thinking in these pamphlets was largely, if not primarily, political; that, in effect, his attack upon episcopacy was an attack upon the church-state principle, the foundation stone on which the Christian concept of monarchical rule was built.

In the light of these considerations it would appear that the anti-prelatical tracts may have a wider scope than has heretofore been recognized. To put the matter bluntly, I contend that in these pamphlets Milton was seriously, perhaps primarily, concerned with the political aspects of the episcopal controversy. In saying this I do not mean to impugn his religious sentiments, concerning which I make no speculation. My point is simply that Milton knew that in the anti-prelatical tracts he was dealing with a problem that was as much political as it was religious. To that problem he attempted to find a solution which would at one and the same time both satisfy his religious scruples and ease the political tension.

I further contend that Milton's antagonism toward the bishops was based upon principles almost identical with those upon which he later opposed the King. It is my view that, for Milton, the vices of monarchy and prelaty were essentially the same. Both crown and crosier violated the principles of equality and freedom, which were fundamental to both his religious and political philosophy.

The evidence upon which these contentions are based can be found in Of Reformation, which represents Milton's appraisal of the
ecclesiastical question and his practical solution to the problem as he saw it, and The Reason of Church-Government, which provides the theoretical background for his position.

The first indication that Milton is concerned with administrative rather than with doctrinal reform occurs in Of Reformation:

For, albeit in purity of Doctrine we agree with our brethren; yet in discipline, which is the execution and applying of Doctrine home, and laying the salve to the very Orifice of the wound, yea tenting and searching to the Core, without which Pulpit Preaching is but shooting at Rovers; in this we are no better than a Schisme from all the Reformation, and a sore scandall to them; for while wee hold Ordination to belong onely to Bishops, as our Prelates doe, wee must of necessity also hold their Ministers to be no Ministers, and shortly after their Church to be no Church.\[31\]

Here, at the outset, the difficulty is presented in clear, concise terms. As long as England recognizes hierarchy as the only lawful organ of religious authority and administration, it cannot consider nations outside the British Isles, although their religious reformations may be in complete accord with that of the English, to have acceptable churches because their church-governments are not hierarchical. Milton's argument is that continental Protestant churches have the same fundamental doctrines as the English, but they do not have prelates, and he uses these foreign illustrations to demonstrate that it is possible to remove bishops without changing any doctrine. If this statement from Of Reformation is accepted as reflecting Milton's true feelings on the matter, then it becomes abundantly clear

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\[31\] C. E., III, 6.
that his primary concern is with the government of the church.

The importance which Milton attached to the question of government is further emphasized in *The Reason of Church-Government*:

> For there is not that thing in the world of more grave and urgent importance throughout the whole life of man, than is discipline. ... Discipline is not only the removall of disorder, but if any visible shape can be given to divine things, the very visible shape and image of vertue.\(^{32}\)

Reduced to its barest essentials, the passage indicates that for Milton government was a basic necessity for man, indeed the most basic necessity. Church-government was but one aspect of discipline and, although it was only this one aspect that he was considering at the moment, the principle he set down and the question he asked himself were almost the same principle and question he was to bring forth in his conflict with the Crown.

> For wherein, or in what works, is the office of a Prelate excellent above that of Pastor? ... But wherefore should ordination be a cause of setting up a superior degree in the Church?\(^{33}\)

In eight years he will substitute the term *king* for *prelate*. Then the question will be, by what right is a king elevated above his subjects? By then he will have reached the conclusion that the rule of any monarch, civil or ecclesiastical, is not only detrimental to the interests of the people ruled, but is also morally, religiously, and politically indefensible.

\(^{32}\) *O. E.*, III, 184-5.

\(^{33}\) *O. E.*, III, 200.
For the moment, however, he is only concerned with the prelates as violators of that discipline which he considers the most essential element in any government, civil or ecclesiastic. In his indictment of the bishops Milton levels three serious accusations.

First, the prelates have so debased their office by grossly neglecting their obligations to their flocks and by exchanging their spiritual authority for temporal power that they no longer can be considered ministers, much less Princes of the Church.

They are not Bishops, GOD and all good Men know they are not, that have fill'd this Land with late confusion and violence; but a Tyrannicall crew and Corporation of Imposters, that have blinded and abus'd the World so long under that Name. He that isabl'd with gifts from God, and the lawfull and Primitive choyce of the Church assembl'd in convenient number, faithfully from that time forward feeds his Parochial Flock, he's his co-equal and compresbyterial Power to ordaine Ministers and Deacons by publique Prayer, and Vote of Christs Congregation in like sort as he himselfe was ordain'd, and is a true Apostolick Bishop. But when hee steps up into the Cheyre of Pontificall Pride, and changes a moderate and exemplary House for a mis-govern'd and haughty Palace, spirituall Dignity for carnal Precedence, and secular high Office and employment, for the high Negotiations of his Heavenly Embassage, then he degrades, then hee un-Bishops himselfe, hee that makes him Bishop makes him no Bishop.  

Second, in their administration of ecclesiastical affairs, the prelates have been guilty of wholesale luxury, venality, and corruption.

Now I speake to all wise men, what an excessive wast of Treasury hath bee within these few yeares in this Land not in the expedient, but in the Idolatrous erection of Temples beautified exquisitely to out-vie the Papists. . . . Now then for their COURTS. What a Masse of Money is drawne from the Veines into the Ulcers of the Kingdome this way; their Extortions,

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34 "Of Reformation" in C. B., III, 12.
their open Corruptions, the multitude of hungry and ravenous Harpies that swarm about their Offices declare sufficiently. . . . Better a penurious Kingdom, then where excessive wealth flowes into the gracelesse and injurious hands of common sponges, to the impoverishing of good and loyal men, and that by such execrable, such irreligious courses.35

Third, in their ecclesiastical courts, the bishops have used their judicial powers to condemn as heretics all who would expose prelatical corruption.

Where are those schismaticks, with whom the Prelats hold such hot skirmish? shew us your acts, those glorious annals which your Courts of loathed memory lately deceas'd have left us? Those schismaticks I doubt we wil be found the most of them such as whose only schisme was to have spoke the truth against your high abominations and cruelties in the Church; this is the schisme ye hate most, the removall of your criminous Hierarchy. A politick government of yours, and of a pleasant conceit, set up to remove those as a pretended schisme that would remove you as a palpable heresie in government. If the schisme would pardon ye that, she might go jagg'd in as many cuts and slashes as she pleas'd for you.36

Milton finds in the corruption of ecclesiastical government something more than spiritual decay. For him the lust for power, the controlled courts, the extortion, greed, and avarice all point to the eventual establishment of a prelatical tyranny which will control both the religious and political actions of the people. In short, he sees the increased ecclesiastical authority and influence in what should be classified as temporal affairs as a direct threat to the monarchy itself.

35 C. E., III, 54-5.

The emulation that under the old Law was in the King towards the Priest, is now so come about in the Gospell, that all danger is to be fear'd from the Priest to the King. While the Priest's Office in the Law was set out with an exterior lustre of Pomp and glory, Kings were ambitious to be Priests; now Priests not perceiving the heavenly brightness and inward splendor of their more glorious Evangelick Ministry with as great ambition affect to be Kings; as in all their courses is easie to be observed. Their eyes ever imminent upon worldly matters, their desires ever thirsting after worldly employments, in stead of diligent and fervent studie in the Bible, they covet to be expert in Canons and Decretals, which may enable them to judge and interpose in temporall Causes, however pretended Ecclesiastical. Doe they not hord up Felfe, seek to be potent in secular Strengthe, in State Affaires, in Lands, Lordships, and Demeanes, to sway and carry all before them in high Courts and Privie Counsels, to bring into their grasp the high and principall Offices of the Kingdom? have they not been bold of late to check the Common Law, to slight and brave the indiminishable majestie of our highest Court the Law-giving and Sacred Parliament? Doe they not plainly labour to exempt Churchmen from the Magistrate?37

Already the policies of the prelates have alienated Protestant states outside Britain, a circumstance which works to the disadvantage of the Crown.

These Priestly polices of theirs having thus exhausted our domestick forces, have gone the way also to leave us as naked of our firmest & faithfullest neighbours abroad, by disparaging and alienating from us all Protestant Princes, and Commonwealths who are not ignorant that our Prelates, and as many as they can infect, account them no better than a sort of sacrilegious, and puritanical Rebels.38

37"Of Reformation" in C. E., III, 57-8.

38 C. E., III, 50-1.
But the bishops' ultimate aim is to make the King himself their puppet.

Certainly a wise, and provident King ought to suspect a Hierarchy in his Realme, being ever attended, as it is, with two such greedy Purveyors, Ambition and Usurpation, I say he ought to suspect a Hierarchy to be as dangerous and derogatory from his Crown as a Tetrarchy or a Heptarchy. Yet now ... the Prelates had almost attain'd to what their insolent, and unbridl'd minds had hurried them; to thrust the Latie under the despoticall rule of the Monarch, that they themselves might confine the Monarch to a kind of Pupillage under their Hierarchy.39

As yet the prelates pose but an incipie n t danger which the Crown can and should remove. However, if the civil government does not take the necessary action to restrain the bishops, it will show itself to be weak and tottering and, through the revelation of its weakness, will stand to lose the confidence and support of the people.

What greater debasement can there be to Royal Dignity, whose towering and stedfast heighth rests upon the unmovable foundations of Justice, and Heroick vertue, then to chaine it in a de­pendance of subsisting, or ruining, to the painted Battlements, and gaudy rottenness of Prelatrie, which want but one puffe of the Kings to blow them down like a pastboard House built of Court-Cards?40

Milton can see no reason why the Crown should not act against the bishops. Episcopacy, he says, is hallowed neither by Scripture41 nor

39 C. E., III, 59.
40 C. E., III, 47.
Tradition. On the contrary, he claims that ecclesiastical power should be derived from the people.

First therefore, if those that over-affect Antiquity, will follow the square thereof, their Bishops must be elected by the hands of the whole Church. . . . That it should not lawfully be without the consent of the people is so express in Cyprian, and so often met with, that to cite each place at large were to translate a good part of the volume. . . .

This voice of the people to be had ever in Episcopall elections was so well known before Cyprian's time, even to those that were without the Church, that the emperor Alexander Severus desir'd to have his governours of Provinces chosen in the same manner, as Lampridius can tell: So little thought it he offensive to Monarchy. 

Milton is here appealing to one of the fundamental doctrines in his political philosophy, namely, that all power resides first with the people, who later delegate certain authority to their magistrates, but always reserve the right to depose those magistrates and reclaim the delegated authority if conditions warrant. The argument which in the anti-prelatical tracts is applied only to ecclesiastical authority, in the later political writings is expanded to account for the origins and limits of civil authority. But the underlying principle remains unchanged.

Although Milton urges the Crown to suppress the bishops, he does not believe that the King will do so. The civil government is every bit as corrupt and rapacious as is the ecclesiastical. Moreover, it is in a state of decay.

\[42\text{C. E., III, 210.}\]

\[43\text{"Of Reformation" in C. E., III, 15-17.}\]
There is no art that hath bin more canker'd in her principles, more soyl'd, and slubber'd with aphorising pedantry then the art of policie; and that most, where a man would thinke should least be, in Christian Common-wealths. . . . This is the masterpiece of a modern politician, how to qualifie, and mould the sufferance and subjection of the people to the length of that foot that is to tread on their necks, how rapine may serve it selfe with the fair, and honourable pretences of publick good, how the puny Law may be brought under the wardship and controll of lust and will; in which attempt if they fall short, then must a superficial colour of reputation by all means direct or indirect be gotten to wash over the un-sightly bruise of honor. To make men governable in this manner their precepts mainly tend to break a nationall spirit, and courage by countinancing open riot, luxury, and ignorance, till having thus disfigur'd and made men beneath men, as Juno in the Fable of Io, they deliver up the poor transformed heifer of the Commonwealth to be stung and vex't with the breese, and goad of oppression under the custody of some Argus with a hundred eyes of jealousie. To be plainer Sir, how to soder, how to stop a leak, how to keep up the floating carcasse of a crazie, and diseased Monarchy, or State, betwixt wind, and water, swimming still upon her own dead lees, that now is the deepe designe of a politician.

This weakness and corruption in the government adversely affects the position of the Crown. Already the royal authority is being questioned in some quarters. At first Milton is content to suggest that it is only the bishops, those incipient tyrants, who are challenging their sovereign's prerogatives:

Have not some of their devoted Schollors begun, I need not say to nibble, but openly to argue against the King's Supremacy?

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44 C. E., III, 37-8.

45 C. E., III, 58.
But after Charles has made his final break with Parliament the tone shifts and Milton gives voice to more republican sentiments:

We acknowledge that the civill magistrate weares an authority of Gods giving, and ought to be obey'd as his viceroygent. But to make a King a type, we say is an abusive and unskilfull speech, and of a morall soliduty, makes it seeme a ceremoniall shadow.46

"When the Law was made, there was no King," he remarks in the same passage.

The import of these musings about royal authority and power is pointed up by a rather curious simile:

I cannot better liken the state and person of a King than to that of mighty Samson; who being disciplin'd from his birth in the precepts and the practice of Temperance and Sobriety, without the strong drink of injurious and excessive desires; grows up to a noble strength and perfection with those his illustrious and sunny locks the laws, waving and curling about this god like shoulders. And while he keeps them about him undiminished and unshorn, he may with the jaw-bone of an Asse, that is, with the word of his meanest officer, suppress and put to confusion thousands of those that rise against his just power. But laying down his head among the strumpet flatteries of Prelats, while he sleeps and thinks no harme, they wickedly shaving off all those bright and waigthy tresses of his laws, and just prerogatives which were his ornament and strength, deliver him over to indirect and violent counsels, which as those Philistims put out the fair, and farre-sighted eyes of his natural discerning, and make him grinde in the prison house of their sinister ends and practices upon him. Till he knowing his prelatical razor to have bereft him of his wonted might, nourish again his puissant hair, the golden beames of Law and Right; and they

sterely shook, thunder with ruin upon the heads
of those his evil counsellors, but not without
great affliction to himself.47

The implication seems clear enough. Theoretically the Crown should be
able to throw off the yoke of the prelates; in practice, however, King
Charles is but a dupe of the bishops.

In the anti-prelatical tracts Milton offers ample evidence that he
is keenly aware of the political problems which the religious contro-
versy has created. England is between Scylla and Charybdis. On the
one hand she is threatened by ecclesiastical tyranny; on the other, by
civil rebellion. To prevent either disaster from overtaking the
country, the King must take action against the bishops. And this is
precisely what Milton urges Charles to do, although he does not expect
the King to follow his advice.

We know that Monarchy is made up of two parts, the
Liberty of the subject, and the supremacy of the
King. . . . What more baneful to Monarchy then a
Popular Commotion, for the dissolution of Monarchy
slides aptest into a Democracy; and what stirs the
Englishmen, as our wisest writers have observ'd,
sooner to rebellion, then violent and heavy hands
upon their goods and purses? Yet these devout
Prelates, spite of our great Charter, and the
soules of our Progenitors that wrested their
liberties out of the Norman gripe with their dear-
est blood and highest prowess, for these many
years have not ceas't in their Pulpits wrinching,
and spraining the text, to set at nought and
trample under foot all the most sacred, and life-
blood Lawes, Statutes, and Acts of Parliament,
that are the holy Cov'nant of Union and Marriage
between the King and his Realme, by proscribing,
and confiscating from us all the right we have to

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C. E., III, 276-7.
our own bodies, goods and liberties. What is this, but to blow a trumpet, proclame a fire-crosse to a hereditary, and perpetuall civil warre. Thus much against the Subjects Liberty hath been assaulted by them.48

In making his analysis of the religious and political situation, Milton tries to be as objective as circumstances permit. The stench of ecclesiastical politics nauseates him to such an extent that he cannot control his indignation. As a result his criticism of the prelates is always harsh and frequently unfair. Toward the King he tries to maintain a more neutral tone. None of his statements in the anti-prelatical tracts can be construed as overtly prejudicial to the Crown. On the other hand, his attitude can hardly be called pro-monarchial. He is ready for the coming rebellion and is putting himself squarely in the middle of the fight. He sounds his trumpet with this clarion call:

And therefore if God afterward gave, or permitted this insurrection of episcopacy, it is to be fear'd he did it in his wrath, as he gave the Israelites a King.49

The figure is interesting in that it couples the idea of kingship with episcopacy, and both with the wrath of God. Since Milton later uses the same figure in The Readie and Eagle Way,

God in much displeasure gave a King to the Israelites, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one,50

49C. E., III, 211.
50C. E., VI, 119.
the quotation from The Reason of Church-Government offers food for speculation as to precisely what Milton was attempting to communicate when he employed the simile.

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From the testimony of his own words in the anti-prelatical tracts, it would appear that Milton's interest in the religious controversy of 1639-42 was at least partially stimulated by the political considerations involved. As he himself pointed out, his quarrel with episcopacy was administrative rather than doctrinal. And certainly his attack upon the English prelates revolved as much around their usurpation of civil power and meddling in secular affairs as it did around their pastoral errors and vices.

More than that, Of Reformation and The Reason of Church-Government offer evidence that his sympathies, both in ecclesiastical and civil matters, were inclined toward more democratic principles, at least in theory, than were being practiced at the time by either church or state. His argument for the suppression of the bishops was largely based upon his fundamental belief that all authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, should reside with the people. And it was this belief which led him to view the abuses of religious and secular powers by prelates and divines as inimical to the interests of both state and people.

Finally, the anti-prelatical tracts make clear that by 1641 Milton had certainly lost all confidence in the monarchy, if he was not
already spiritually in rebellion against it. While he did not overtly accuse the Crown of tyranny, by coupling the activity of the prelates with that of the state, he suggested that the King, by his failure to exercise his authority over his bishops, had permitted them to seize the reins of government and rule the country in a tyrannical manner. Further, he strongly implied that the Crown, by its pusillanimity in handling the volatile situation created by the prelates, had debased and derogated itself. And he repeatedly warned of a possible insurrection by the people as a reaction to this ecclesiastical tyranny.

It is interesting to note that nowhere in the anti-prelatical tracts did Milton claim that the people had an obligation to remain loyal and support their King. On the contrary, he cautiously suggested that the throne was not preserved through its own inherent right but through the will of the people. And such a suggestion may have carried with it the implication that a rebellion against ecclesiastical tyranny which was condoned if not supported by the Crown, could be morally justifiable.

The anti-prelatical tracts make it clear that for the moment Milton felt that the churchmen posed a greater danger to the state than did the King, but these same pamphlets also suggest that he was keenly conscious of the fact that both kings and prelates drew their power and authority from the same source: the medieval tradition of church-state rule.

In the anti-prelatical tracts, then, Milton struck at the very foundation of church-state relations. The theoretical grounds on which
he demolished the authority of the bishops embodied the same fundamental principle which he was to employ eight years later to destroy the theory of monarchy. In 1641 he was not yet prepared to advance a clear case for separation of church and state, as he later did in A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, but he strongly implied that such a separation was in order. Perhaps he himself was not quite ready to accept such a radical departure from established tradition, or it may have been that he felt the time was not ripe to push such a controversial point. In any event, he did not draw the inevitable conclusion from his premises.

Yet the solution he offered to the contemporary problem was eminently practicable: let Charles withdraw his support from the bishops and use his authority to destroy their political power.

Milton's solution was the only feasible alternative to civil strife. Since the second Bishops' War Charles could not hope to rule without the aid of Parliament and, in any conflict between the two, the scales of power would dip in favor of Parliament. The plain fact was that Charles could not attempt to restore his lost authority except through actions that would either be unconstitutional or ineffective, if not both. But were Charles to yield in the matter of episcopacy, he would break the link between church and state, thus removing the religious issue from the area of politics. There would no longer be any need for "champions of prelacy" to be identified as "champions of prerogative" and the threat of civil rebellion, over which Milton was so deeply concerned, could, for the time being, be averted. It is true
that such a concession would not restore to the King his lost prestige or authority, but it would give the precious time needed to effect a bloodless transition to a constitutional monarchy.

Of course, Charles would not, indeed could not, yield. If he was to be King, he would be King in the same way his father and the Tudors had been kings. And there is something pathetically heroic in Charles' romantic adherence to the traditional principles of monarchical rule. But his was the voice of the past. It was Milton, with his hand on the contemporary political pulse, who spoke for the present and the future. Already he was enunciating the principles upon which the civil liberties of his fellow citizens were to be secured and the very instrument of government itself reformed. His was, in one sense, the voice of rebellion; but, in another, it was the voice of destiny.
II

A PURITAN DILEMMA

To many of its original supporters the Puritan Revolution proved a grave disappointment. When Charles fled London in the spring of 1642, it had been hoped that Parliament would enact legislation providing for sweeping changes in civil and ecclesiastical administration, changes which would serve to bring about realization of the Renaissance ideals of liberty and reformation. But these sanguine expectations were not to be fulfilled. Parliament almost immediately showed itself more interested in reformation than in liberty. Unfortunately, most of the reforms it envisioned were not likely to win the approval of those who were impatiently waiting for the establishment of the New Jerusalem. By the summer of 1643 it had become apparent to all but the most enthusiastic admirers of the revolution that there was developing in Parliament a conservative bloc which, through its attempted repression of all dissenting voices, both political and religious, threatened eventually to transform the state into a modified theocracy. This conservative party, largely Presbyterian in religious sympathy, did not itself hold a majority in Parliament, but it was efficiently organized and capably led.\(^1\) And in times of crisis effective organization and

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\(^1\) After Pym's death in December, 1643, Presbyterian leadership began to falter. Baillie writes, "Since Pym died, no' a wise head amongst them; many were good and able spirits, but not any of so great and comprehensive a brain." (II, 216)
leadership pay rich political dividends. Thus, between the months of June and September, 1643, the Presbyterian party was able to maneuver through Commons three bills which, taken collectively, could be interpreted as a preliminary step to the establishment of a theocratic state. The three acts were the Ordinance for Printing (June 14), the calling of the Westminster Assembly (July 1), and the ratification of the Solemn League and Covenant with Scotland (September 21).

The Ordinance for Printing provided that everything published in England must be entered in the Stationers' Register and approved by one of the special licencers whom Parliament was appointing for this purpose. The act also reaffirmed the right and responsibility of the Stationers' Company to search for and seize all illegal publications and to prosecute offending authors and printers. The primary purpose of the ordinance was to stop the flow of Royalist pamphlets from Oxford to London, and to this end the act was at least partially successful. Most London printers tried to comply with the law, although some unlicensed printing did continue even among the Company's own members.

Censorship of the press was not a Puritan innovation. The 51st article of Elizabeth's Injunctions concerning Religion (1559) subjected

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2 J. Rushworth, Historical Collections of Private Passages of State (London, 1721), V, 335-6; and Masson, III, 269-70.

3 Ibid.

most of the books then published to censorship by royal or ecclesiastical authority. This statute was later reinforced by the more restrictive Decree of the Court of Star Chamber concerning Printing (1637), a law which in effect gave Archbishop Laud legal control over every press in the country, with the exception of the two university presses. Licensers were authorized to prohibit publication of any book which contained matter "contrary to Christian Faith, and the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England," or "against the State or Government," or "contrary to good life or good manners." Offenders were subject to fine, imprisonment, and corporal punishment at the discretion of the court. Most oppressive of all, the number of authorized printers was limited to twenty craftsmen, "who were invested with the right to search private premises without warrant in order to enforce their monopoly." With abolition of the Star Chamber in 1641 the decree became inoperative and, for the first time in almost a century, England enjoyed complete freedom of the press.

The reinstitution of press censorship put Parliament in a rather awkward position. Prior to the revolution the Puritans had incessantly clamored for official recognition of their natural right to free expression. Men like Burton, Bestwick, and Prynne had been subjected to

5 Since Laud was also Chancellor of Oxford, he could effectively control that university press.

6 Hughes, p. lxix.

7 Ibid.
savage and humiliating punishments for defying the Star Chamber. Now, when everyone was expecting a new order to come about, Parliament had suddenly adopted one of the most reactionary policies of the old regime. To most Englishmen it mattered little whether the ordinance was directed against the Royalist press or not. The law constituted an unwarranted infringement upon individual freedom. It provided for neither liberty nor reformation.

If the Ordinance for Printing aroused apprehension concerning Parliament's intentions, the actions of the Westminster Assembly gave even greater cause for alarm. Composed of ten Lords, twenty members of Commons, and 121 ministers, mostly Puritan, this commission was charged with responsibility for framing the future religious constitution of the country. Until ratified by Parliament, its decisions were not binding upon anyone; however, since great pains had been taken to insure representation in the Assembly for all the major Protestant sects, it was assumed that Parliament would speedily adopt the commission's recommendations.

The attempt to make the Assembly a representative body was doomed to failure. For one thing, only about half the members attended the sessions regularly. Those with strong Episcopalian sympathies refused to attend at all. Further, the Presbyterians enjoyed such a large majority in the Assembly that proposals put forward by the Erastians or Independents stood scarcely any chance of adoption. Indeed, after the first few months of deliberation, it became apparent that the
majority had no intention of compromising with the minority groups on any fundamental issue.

The situation was also complicated by ratification of the Solemn League and Covenant with Scotland. Under the terms of this agreement the Scots promised to renew their war against the King; for its part, Parliament pledged a thorough reformation of the English Church, "according to the example of the best reformed Churches." To the Scots and their English partisans this meant establishment of Presbyterianism as the state religion and the persecution of all unorthodox Puritan sects. For an Assembly already predominantly Presbyterian in sympathy the Covenant became a mandate for drawing up a religious program which would be conservative in principle and intolerant in execution.

By the end of 1643 the Westminster Assembly began to emerge as a body whose decisions might alter not only the religious, but also the political and social patterns of the nation. Theoretically, it was representative of the whole nation, and, consequently, it could claim to speak with an authority no other religious group could match. Further, it was the official organ through which the proposed reformation of the English Church was to be accomplished. Last, its reforms were, for the most part, in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of the Solemn League and Covenant.

This last is most important. Parliament could not summarily dismiss the Assembly's proposals without risking military and political...
repercussions in Scotland. As long as the outcome of the civil war was in doubt, Parliament needed the support of the Scottish armies. Thus a combination of religious, political, and military factors enabled the Westminster Assembly for a short time to occupy a position of power and prestige roughly comparable to that enjoyed by the episcopacy before the revolution.

To moderate and liberal groups, whose active participation in the Parliamentary cause had done so much to make the revolt possible, the actions of both government and Assembly appeared ominous. Some began to fear that they had possibly but exchanged one tyranny for another. Deeply disturbed over this prospect, five Independent members of the Assembly, under the leadership of Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye, on January 3, 1644, published and presented to the Parliament An Apologeticall Narration, in which they pleaded for a limited toleration of dissenting sects. So mild was this plea that Roger Williams later repudiated it for permitting too much magisterial interference in matters he conceived to be exclusively religious. Yet it was this

9 The membership of the Assembly was expanded to include eight Scottish Commissioners, who exercised an influence upon its deliberations far out of proportion to their numbers. See Masson, III, 15-26, and C. V. Wedgwood, The King's War (New York, 1958), pp. 275, 285.

10 Samuel Rutherford's Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland, or Modest Dispute touching Independency of particular Congregations (London, 1642) had made a strong case for Presbyterianism. The Narration, in part, answered some of Rutherford's arguments.

11 Roger Williams, Queries of Highest Consideration (London, 1644).
relatively innocuous pamphlet that touched off an extended and acri-
monious public debate on the question of toleration.

Carrying the case for limited toleration directly to both Parlia-
ment and people was a brilliant tactical maneuver. First, it embarrass-
ed the Assembly by calling attention to the lack of unanimity among the
members on a fundamental issue. Second, it provided a rallying point
for the minority groups in Commons. Since the Presbyterians did not
have a clear majority in Parliament, they needed the support of one or
more of these minority parties to insure passage of their legislative
program. Usually this support came from the Erastians, whose primary
objective was a quick settlement of the religious and political dis-
putes with the King. As far as religious reformation was concerned,
the Erastians were quite willing to accept any program which would
leave the church powerless to tyrannize or disturb the peace. However,
they were not prepared to set up the Assembly as the sole arbiter in
matters of conscience. Nor were the various sectaries, dedicated as
they were to the principles of separation of church and state and
liberty of conscience, likely to endorse the Assembly's recalcitrant
position on these questions. If both the Erastians and sectaries did
rally behind the Independents' proposal, the Assembly could con-
ceivably be forced to modify its uncompromising attitude concerning
dissenters.

Unfortunately, the publication of An Apologeticall Narration
coincided with the discovery of Brook's Plot, in which several
Independents were involved. In fact, both Nye and Goodwin had been approached by the King's agents, although there is no evidence to indicate that either reacted favorably to the royal proposals. Nevertheless, the revelation that a few Independents had directly conspired to overthrow Parliament served to arouse suspicions concerning the intentions of the Independent party. Consequently, when Nye and Goodwin presented their Narration, it was denounced by some, the Scottish Commissioners among others, as an integral part of Brook's "very wicked plot." For the moment, the question of toleration was shunted aside.

As long as the Independents were discredited, the Assembly could afford to be charitable toward the "five dissenting brethren." A number of rebuttals to the Narration were published, but in the Assembly itself no effort was made to deprive the Independents of their right to free expression of opinion. However, after Cromwell's victory at Marston Moor (July 2) had restored the Independents' prestige, the Presbyterians felt impelled to cast about for some issue on which to resist the challenge the Independents would inevitably present to their leadership. Such an issue was not difficult to find. What fundamentally divided the two parties were opposing views concerning religious toleration. If toleration could be shown up for arch-heresy,

12 Documents relating to the plot and Parliament's reaction are found in Rushworth, V, 379-81. Baillie's comments (II, 130 ff.) also shed some light on the matter.

13 Baillie, II, 134.

the political power of the Independents would be sharply reduced and the works of reformation could then go on in accordance with the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant.

In arriving at the decision to attack toleration, the Presbyterians were not solely motivated by political considerations. As we shall see presently, most members of the Assembly firmly believed toleration to be a pernicious moral evil which, if countenanced by the state, would eventually corrupt true religion. This belief was shared by the Scottish Covenanters, who, it will be remembered, had agreed to renew their war against the King only on the condition that the English Church be reformed along Presbyterian lines. Were the English to reneg on their pledge, the Scots might feel justified in making a separate peace with Charles, a move which could prove decisive in determining the outcome of the war. And an unconditional victory for the Crown would mean not only the restoration of episcopacy, but with it a renewed persecution of true religion. Thus, the conscientious Presbyterian felt morally bound to oppose toleration.

The Assembly launched its campaign by initiating an attack upon the Anabaptists and Antinomians. On August 9 Stephen Marshall informed both Lords and Commons that the Anabaptists had delivered "some blasphemous passages and dangerous opinions," and, on behalf of the Assembly, he petitioned Parliament, "to prevent the spreading opinions of Anabaptism and Antinomianism." "It is high time to suppress them," he declared.\(^\text{15}\) Parliament apparently agreed, for on the same day it

\(^{15}\) Masson, III, 161.
ordered that Roger Williams' *Bloody Tenent of Persecution* be burned. Encouraged by Parliament's compliance, the Assembly pushed its advantage. On August 13 Thomas Hill and Herbert Palmer preached sermons against toleration to both Houses of Parliament. Hill denounced Williams, the Erastians, and the Independents. Palmer rebuked Parliament for evading the articles of the Solemn League and Covenant, excoriated Goodwin and Milton, and implored the legislators not to fall into the snare of toleration, but to extirpate heresy and schism from the realm.\textsuperscript{16} Parliament listened attentively.

The finishing stroke was delivered eleven days later. On Saturday, August 24, the Company of Stationers petitioned Parliament for stricter enforcement of the Ordinance for Printing, citing Milton as one of the transgressors of the law.\textsuperscript{17} The following Monday Commons capitulated.

The Assembly had made a good beginning. In less than three weeks it had induced Parliament to initiate action to suppress the heresy of toleration. Further, it had instigated official inquiries into the activities of nine of the leading tolerationists, among them Roger Williams, John Goodwin, and John Milton. The moment of triumph, however, was brief. Before the Assembly could follow up its initial victory, Oliver Cromwell appeared upon the scene.

\textsuperscript{16} Of these sermons Masson writes, "Neither sermon impresses one very favorably in respect of either spirit or ability. I expected Palmer's to be better." (III, 164)

\textsuperscript{17} Masson, III, 164-5.
For more than a year Cromwell had been championing toleration. As a member of Parliament he was the acknowledged leader of the Independents; as Lieutenant-general in the Earl of Manchester's army he was the bulwark against all attempts to enforce Presbyterian conformity upon officers and men. "The State," he wrote, "in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions; if they be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies."\(^\text{18}\) His position on this question brought him into open conflict with his second in command, Scottish Major-general Crawford. It was to press for Crawford's dismissal that he came up to London in September, 1644.

Cromwell was a power to be reckoned with. His victory at Marston Moor coupled with Essex's defeat in Cornwall (September 1) had put him in an enviable bargaining position. He served Parliament an ultimatum: either Crawford went or he did. The Presbyterians, anxious to avoid offending the Scots, tried to reconcile the two commanders, but Cromwell would have none of it. For him the issue went far beyond a possible affront to the Scots; it was a question whether a commander had the right to impose a specific religious discipline on the Parliamentarian army.

The matter came to a vote on September 13. Unitimg Independents, Erastians, and the sectaries behind him, Cromwell pushed through Commons an order which did far more than settle the issue of toleration within the Army. It struck a telling blow for liberty of conscience throughout the land.

In essence the Accommodation Order provided that Parliament appoint a committee which, working with the Scottish Commissioners and the Assembly, should "endeavor the finding out some ways how far tender consciences, who cannot in all things submit to the common Rule which shall be established, may be borne with."19

The Presbyterians were stunned. They saw in this resolution a design to insert a toleration clause in the bill which would establish Presbyterianism as the state religion. "The great shot of Cromwell and Vane," wrote Baillie, "is to have a liberty for all religions without exceptions."20 And neither the Assembly nor the Covenanters would stand for that. There would be a fight—not at the moment; Cromwell was too strong. But later, when the hero's armor became somewhat tarnished, the adherents of true religion would make their move.

Thus matters stood in the fall of 1644. Two years of Parliamentary rule had failed to produce the millenium. The King was still in the field. The Parliamentary armies, their effectiveness weakened by bickerings among commanders and interference from the government in London, did not appear able to deliver the decisive blow that would end the war. On the home front dissension was rife. Parliament, hopelessly bound to the unpopular Covenant with Scotland, seemed irreconcilably divided over the question of toleration. The Westminster Assembly

20 Baillie, II, 230.
appeared more interested in establishing a Presbyterian Inquisition than in reforming the English Church. The situation was critical. And many sober Londoners debated within themselves whether the blood being spilled for the sake of liberty and reformation was not being spilled in vain.\textsuperscript{21}

The simple fact was that the revolution had come too quickly. The Puritans had developed no plan for civil and ecclesiastical administration which they could put into operation once Charles had been driven from his capital. Indeed, the only bond uniting the various Puritan sects was the common hatred of political and religious tyranny.\textsuperscript{22} Once the object of that hatred had been removed, it was inevitable that the differences should make themselves felt and create tension within the Puritan ranks. Likewise, in the absence of any concrete plan for reorganizing the government along democratic lines, Parliament was more or less compelled to administer national affairs according to the traditional English pattern.

It is easy to criticize the Presbyterians for being arbitrary and short-sighted in their handling of the toleration question. However, such criticism is not necessarily justified. Actually, the Presbyterians could not have done other than they did. As long as it was felt that the Scottish armies were needed to crush the King, Parliament

\textsuperscript{21} Wedgwood, p. 369.

\textsuperscript{22} Heller, pp. 173-6.
was forced to mollify the Covenanters. And even after Marston Moor there was no assurance that Charles was completely beaten. Indeed, Essex's catastrophe in Cornwall indicated that the war was far from over. With the military issue still in doubt, could Parliament afford to antagonize the Scots by granting religious toleration to dissenters? The Presbyterians thought not.

If the exigencies of the political situation demanded that the Presbyterians reject toleration, so did the theology of Calvinism.

The Puritan viewed the world as a twofold system, a scheme of nature and a scheme of grace. The two were interrelated; because God was the creator and supreme ruler of them both, and because they had a common object, the good. Man as man belonged to the natural order; the elect belonged also to the order of grace.23

However, man as man was naturally depraved; it was only the elect who were spiritually regenerative. And it was this concept of natural man as a depraved being which made it impossible for the orthodox Puritan to countenance official toleration of dissenting sects.

In civil affairs both the regenerate and the unregenerate were theoretically equal and could claim from the magistrates equal rights.24 But there was a rub. Since God was creator and ruler of both the natural order and the order of grace, and since both orders had the same object, namely, the good, it followed that natural good could not possibly be incompatible with spiritual good. Therefore, if


24 Barker, p. 91.
the two goods did appear to conflict, the apparent conflict must be caused by unregenerate man's misconception of what constituted natural good.

In terms of this theory it became a relatively easy matter to demonstrate that toleration was, in principle, inconsonant with the end of the natural order. Admittedly, natural man was entitled to freedom of speech and liberty of conscience; however, these freedoms were limited to speaking and believing what was true. To preach or practice what was false constituted an abuse of freedom, an offense against nature. Now in matters of religion, God had made His truth known to the elect and His truth was the only truth. Therefore, if anyone advocated religious doctrines inimical to those held by the elect, he was guilty of disseminating falsehood, of committing an offense against nature. And as an offender against nature, he was subject to punishment in the natural order.

That offenders against the natural order should be punished all men agreed. Indeed, it was for this very purpose that magistrates had been introduced among men. And since religious heretics were offenders against the natural order, they too must be punished. To the orthodox Puritans, those who argued in favor of toleration were unregenerate men who either failed to recognize that freedom of speech and liberty of conscience did not confer the right to believe or disseminate falsehoods, or they did not see that religious heresy, which was primarily an offense against the order of grace, was also an offense against the natural order. Once these errors were called to their attention, the
orthodox felt that even the tolerationists must concede that it was the duty of the magistrates to defend true religion and to restrain heresy.25

There was, however, another aspect of the question which seriously disturbed the orthodox Puritans. God made known His truth only to the elect and only through the order of grace. In the natural order there were no marks whereby the regenerate might be distinguished from the unregenerate. Consequently the elect could not, by purely natural means, demonstrate that they alone were possessors of the truth. And without such demonstration the elect could hardly hope to persuade the unregenerate voluntarily to accept the principle of a "holy community" regulated according to the doctrines of true religion. Confronted with this situation, the elect were obliged to choose between alternative courses of action: either let the world follow its own standard to ultimate perdition, or set up the "holy community," by force it necessary, and demand from the unregenerate at least an outward conformity to its standards. For orthodox Puritans to pursue the first course was, as we have seen, virtually impossible. On the other hand, if they followed the alternative, they must inevitably become involved in a theological tangle from which extrication would prove extremely difficult.

In the first place, to impose the "holy community" upon a reluctant or hostile world was implicitly to deny the existence of two

distinguishable orders in creation. It was all well and good to say that natural man and his institutions were to be subject to the Church or the Saints, but such an assertion carried with it a rejection of the concept that the natural order was in itself different from the order of grace. Indeed, according to the theory of the "holy community," the natural order became nothing more or less than the realization of the order of grace upon earth. One Puritan pamphlet put the matter thus:

There is a kingdom and dominion which the Church is to exercise on the earth. That extends to all persons and things universally, which is to be externally and visibly administered, by such laws and officers as Jesus Christ our Mediator hath appointed in his kingdom. It shall put down all worldly rule and authority (so far as relates to the worldly constitution thereof), though in the hands of Christians; and is to be expected about the time we live in. This kingdom shall not be erected by human power and authority, but Christ by his Spirit shall call and gather a people, and form them into several less families, churches, and corporations; and when they are multiplied, they shall rule the world by general assemblies, or church-parliaments, of such officers of Christ, and representatives of the churches, as they shall choose and delegate; which they shall do till Christ come in person.27

Under such a system not only would the natural order disappear altogether, but with it the theoretical equality which both the


27 Certain Queries Presented by many Christian People. Woodhouse, p. 246.
regenerate and unregenerate should enjoy before the magistrates. The elect would become a temporal as well as a spiritual aristocracy. The unregenerate would be compelled to conform to the standards prescribed by the elect although, despite their compliance, the unregenerate would still be damned eventually.

There were other difficulties. The concept of the "holy community" had to be substantially modified before it could be transformed into a practical institution. Theoretically, Ernst Troeltsch tells us,

Calvinism was obliged to make the bold attempt of constituting its national church as a church of professing believers, and of constituting its unity of church and state as a Christian society in the strictest sense of the personal faith and character of each individual member. In practice, however, church membership would comprise both professing believers and conforming non-believers, and church unity would derive not from the personal faith of each individual member but from coercion and the suppression of all dissenting views.

Indeed, the establishment of the "holy community" upon earth would require employment of the very tactics Charles and Laud had used in their ill-starred attempt to force Anglicanism upon the nation. The orthodox Puritans were well aware that they were leaving themselves open to the same charges that had been levelled against the King and the bishops; but they felt that they had no alternative.


29 Woodhouse, p. 247.
It was one thing to believe in reform by coercion and persecution and quite another to defend such belief on theological or philosophical grounds. The Presbyterians, the most militant advocates of the "holy community" in England, concentrated their fire on the practical aspects of the issue. According to Thomas Edwards, if "the door of toleration should be but a little opened, there would be a great crowding by all sorts to enter in at it," and as a result, "many errors and novelties broached and so greater contentions and breeches amongst us."30

The argument touched upon a vital point. Nothing would prove more disastrous to the Puritan movement than bitter dissonance among its religious leaders. If the Puritans could be united only in their hatred of episcopacy, if there were no fundamental principles upon which all groups could agree, then the movement must surely collapse. For, in such an atmosphere, no reform was possible. It was, therefore, necessary to curb those agitators who would split the English Calvinists into fragmentary groups.

The Presbyterians also emphasized the negative side of toleration.

This general toleration throws down all at once; it overthrows the Scriptures in that it allows a liberty of denying the Scriptures to be the word of God, in that it sets up the conscience above the Scriptures, making every man's conscience, even the polluted, defiled, seared consciences, the rule of faith and holiness before the pure and unerring word of God, crying out that men must do according to their consciences but never speaking of going according to the word of God; yea, setting up men's fancies, humours, factions,

lusts, under the name of conscience, above the word of God, which is to set up the creature, yea, the corrupted, defiled creature, above God, and to make man's conscience greater than God, whereas God is greater than men's consciences. 31

Although this attack grossly misrepresented the tolerationist position on conscience, it was, none the less, an effective argument; for it threw upon the tolerationists the almost impossible task of demonstrating the infallibility of conscience.

To the modern reader the Presbyterian case against toleration may not prove convincing. But for a seventeenth century Puritan who firmly believed in the dual orders of nature and grace and the ideal of the "holy community," and who was personally concerned with the outcome of the civil war and the future of religious institutions in England, these arguments carried far greater weight. For the Presbyterians were but attempting to put into practice essential tenets of Puritan doctrine.

The essential weakness of the Presbyterian position lay not in the unequivocal rejection of toleration, but in the unswerving adherence to the principle of union of church and state. Within the "holy community" itself there could be no question of toleration. But was it necessary to extend the boundaries of this religious commonwealth, so as to include the whole nation? Or, to put it another way, was it necessary that there be but one national church to which all citizens gave at

least nominal allegiance? It was the same question which had confronted
Elizabeth, James, and Charles. And to it the Presbyterians gave the
same answer the monarchs had given. An unqualified yes.

Milton appears to have been drawn into the toleration controversy
quite involuntarily. Indeed, there is scarcely any evidence to indicate
that he would have become involved at all, had not his hand been forced.
Certainly, he was no avid tolerationist, at least not in the beginning.
In the anti-prelatical tracts he had consistently played down liberty
of conscience, concentrating his fire upon the political and theological
aspects of episcopacy. And when Parliament passed the Ordinance for
Printing, he made an attempt to comply with the law. Both Of Education
and The Judgment of Martin Bucer were duly licensed, and there is
reason to believe that The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce was sub-
mitted for licensing prior to publication. It was only after he had
been rebuffed by the censors and personally attacked by Palmer and the
Stationers that Milton spoke out against the budding Presbyterian
tyranny.

In the end, what really prompted him to cast his lot with the
tolerationists was his disillusionment with the revolution. He himself
had not advocated revolt; far from it. His own program called for

32 See Barker's argument, pp. 355-6.

33 See Masson, III, pp. 262-75.
religious reformation without alteration of the basic political structure. But he had foreseen the possibility of revolt and, when it did come, he welcomed it as the beginning of a new era in English history, an era in which the mind could expand and give expression to new concepts, fresh ideas, without fear of political or religious reprisal. It was with this conviction that he wrote *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. In this tract the calm, gentlemanly method of argumentation, which contrasts so sharply with the acrimonious disputations found in the earlier *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant’s Defence* and in the later *Colasterion*, seems to imply that the author was confident his ideas would be given a fair and impartial hearing. He trusted that an England newly awakened to the concept of intellectual liberty and thoroughly dedicated to the reformation of outmoded political and religious institutions would carefully consider his demonstration concerning divorce. But he was doomed to disappointment. The doctrine was too bold to win popular approval and the government too conservative to countenance a theory which threatened to debilitate public morals. These reactions he might reasonably have anticipated, had he not been convinced, along with so many of his contemporaries, that the revolution was the harbinger of a new order.

The reception accorded *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* destroyed Milton’s illusions concerning the nature of the revolution. To be sure, the King and the bishops were gone, but the principles by which they had tyrannized over the nation were now being appropriated by their successors, the Parliament and the Assembly. In particular,
Milton resented the arbitrary treatment which his divorce pamphlet had received. As he himself points out, both Bucer and Erasmus had written upon the possibility of divorce without being subjected to official censure and abuse. Moreover, their works had been reprinted frequently.

And if these thir books, the one shall be printed often, with best allowance in most religious Cities, the other with express authority of Leo the tenth a Pope, shall for the propagating of truth be publisht and republisht, though against the receav'd opinion of that Church, and mine containing but the same thing, shall in a time of reformation, a time of free speaking, free writing, not find a permission to the Presse, I referre me to wisest men, whether truth be suffer'd to be truth, or liberty to be liberty now among us, and be not again in danger of new fetters and captivity after all our hopes and labours lost: and whether learning be not (which our enemies too profetically fear'd) in a way to be trodd'n down again by ignorance. Whereof while time is, out of the faith owing to God and my Country, I bid this Kingdom beware: and doubt not but God who hath dignify'd this Parliament already to so many glorious degrees, will also give them (which is a singular blessing) to inform themselves rightly in the midst of an unprincipl'd age; and to prevent this working mystery of ignorance and ecclesiastical thraldom, which under new shapes and disguises begins a-fresh to grow upon us.34

It should be noted that in this passage Milton does not complain about the public's response to his pamphlet; it is the refusal of the government to permit him to speak freely that arouses his ire. This in itself is significant. Milton was too much of a realist to expect his conception of marriage to go unchallenged.

My errand is to find the choicest and the learnedest, who have this high gift of wisdom to answer solidly, or to be convinc't. 35

But he did expect that a man living in a supposedly free society should have the right to express his ideas, however controversial they might be, without official harassment. Throughout the divorce tracts and Areopagitica he is careful to distinguish between the rectitude of his theories and his right as a citizen to express them.

Milton's brief campaign for toleration of minority or unpopular views was not primarily inspired by his personal grievances. Admittedly he had an axe to grind—and he did occasionally take time out to grind it—but, by and large, his purpose transcended petty self-justification and rebuke to his tormentors. His principal aim was to do what he could to prevent the new government from sinking into the kind of despotism which England had endured under Charles and Laud. What he could and did accomplish was very little. The question of toleration was not to be decided on the basis of reason or justice but rather by force of arms. None the less, Milton's views on the subject, offered at a time when the revolutionary government was becoming hopelessly divided over the issue, although military victory was as yet by no means certain, provided the foundation for a compromise solution to the problem. The fact that the toleration question was ultimately settled without reference to his opinions in no way diminishes their significance as contributions to the political thought of his time.

35 "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" in C. E., III, 378.
As we have seen, the Puritans became involved in an unsolvable dilemma because they felt obliged to realize the ideal of the "holy community" on earth; that is, to make the natural order a visible manifestation of the order of grace. Milton, on the other hand, approached the problem by distinguishing between the two orders. The order of grace was one thing; the natural order quite another. And it was upon the concept of the natural order that he built his theory of government. By confining himself to the order of nature he not only avoided many of the pitfalls which plagued the majority of his religiously minded contemporaries, but he also provided himself with an avenue of argument denied to most of his opponents, argument from pure, unaided natural reason.

The most obvious advantage deriving from his approach was that he need not worry about the elect and the "holy community." Since, in the natural order, there were no marks to distinguish the elect from the unregenerate, there was no rational justification for setting up any specific group as a spiritual aristocracy to whose standards in faith and morals all must conform. Such an aristocracy of the elect would constitute nothing more or less than a hierarchy equivalent to that of the deposed bishops, a fact Milton rather savagely notes in his sonnet "On the new forcers of Conscience under the Long PARLIAMENT."36

For all practical purposes, without the elect there could be no "holy community." Although Milton was not antagonistic to the idea of a "holy community" as such, his views on its modus operandi differed sharply from those of the more orthodox Calvinists. The orthodox, as we have seen, envisioned a theocratic structure in which the elect imposed their standards upon all. Milton, on the other hand, conceived of each congregation as "a little synod," and the general assembly as a congress of synods.\(^{37}\) For him the ultimate authority resided with each "parochial consistory." Under such a system unanimity on doctrinal and liturgical questions, while theoretically possible, was extremely unlikely. But for Milton unanimity on all matters of doctrine was a relatively unimportant concern. It was sufficient if there was a general agreement on the fundamental principles of Christianity.\(^{38}\) In the last analysis, Milton's version of the "holy community" was the only one which could be conceivably established in the natural order without recourse to coercion.

Freed from the necessity of incorporating the elect and the "holy community" into his concept of the civil state, Milton could concentrate his attention upon government as a purely natural institution. He could draw upon arguments from history and employ the light of reason, as well as the teachings of Scripture. From these sources he could develop a theory of government which would guarantee liberty of conscience, while at the same time restraining vice.

\(^{37}\)The Reason of Church-Government" in C. E., III, 217.

\(^{38}\)See Barker, p. 78.
The fundamental problem confronting any political theorist who sets out to establish the function and end of government is to determine the power and limitation of civil law. Milton had investigated this question in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, months before he became involved in the toleration controversy. At that time his position coincided to a large extent with that of the Presbyterians.

The Judicail law can serve to no other end then to bee the protector and champion of Religion and honest civility, as is set down plainly, Rom. 13. and is but the arm of morall law, which can no more be separate from justice then from virtue; their office also in a different manner steers the same cours; the one teaches what is good by precept, the other unteaches what is bad by punishment. But if we give way to politick dispensations of lewd uncleanness, the first good consequence of such a relaxe will bee the justifying of Papal stews, joyn'd with a toleration of epidemick whordom. Justice must revolt from the end of her authority, and become the patron of that wherof she was created the punisher.39

Still Milton recognized that there are obvious limits to what the law itself can achieve.

. . . It must be remember'd that all law is for some good that may be frequently attain'd, without the admixture of a worse inconvenience; and therfore many grosse faults, as ingratitude and the like, which are too farre within the soule, to be cur'd by constraint of law, are left only to be wrought on by conscience and perswasion.40

More important, he maintained that "to interpose a jurisdictive power upon the inward and irremedial disposition of man, to command love and

40c. E., III, 501.
sympathy, to forbid dislike against the guiltles instinct of nature, is not within the Province of any law to reach. To be sure, Milton was here primarily concerned with the problem of divorce, but the principle he invoked extends to all serious matters of conscience. Civil law cannot compel the soul to either good or evil.

Thus, in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Milton faced up to the dilemma inherent in the concept of civil law. It must, on the one hand, restrain vice and promote the good of family, church, and commonwealth; on the other hand, it cannot coerce the honest conscience. But the dilemma is only apparent. The law can fulfill its function without resorting to coercion if the lawgiver has an acute understanding of the scope and limitation of civil law.

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 loos'n'd, as to loos'n that which he hath bound. The ignorance and mistake of this high point, hath heapt up one huge half of all the misery that hath bin since Adam.

However, if the lawgiver is to attain a proper understanding of law, he must first break away from those traditional errors which have been the cause of so much confusion on the subject.

... Error supports Custome, Custome count'nces Error. And these two betweenes them would persecute and chase away all truth and solid

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41 C. E., III, 500.

42 C. E., III, 467-8.

43 C. E., III, 373.
wisdom out of humane life, were it not that God, rather than man, once in many ages, calls together the prudent and Religious counsels of Men, deputed to represse the encroachments, and to worke off the inveterate blots and obscurities wrought upon our mindes by the subtle insinuating of Error and Custome: Who with the numerous and vulgar train of their followers, make it their chiefe designe to envie and cry-down the industry of free-reasoning, under the terms of humor, and innovation; as if the womb of Truth were to be clos'd up, if shee presume to bring forth ought, that sorts not with their unchew'd notions and suppositions.44

Only through the exercise of "free reasoning" can man hope to arrive at a just and equitable concept of law.

The results of Milton's own examination of law according to the light of reason are reported in Tetrachordon. Although here again he is primarily concerned with the question of divorce, some of his observations have a far more general application.

Of the greatest significance is the distinction he makes between the letter and spirit of the law.

Men of most renowned vertu have sometimes by transgressing, most truly kept the law; and wisest Magistrates have permitted and dispens't it; while they looke not peevishly at the letter, but with a greater spirit at the good of mankind, if alwayes not writ'tn in the characters of law, yet engrav'n in the heart of man by a divine impression.45

But if this is true, then it follows that

44 C. E., III, 368.

45 C. E., IV, 75.
it is unjust that any Ordinance ordain'd to the good and comfort of men, where that end is missing, should be forc't upon him to an unsufferable misery and discomfort, if not commonly ruin. All Ordinances are establish'd in their end; the end of Law is the vertu, is the righteousness of Law. And therefore him wee count an ill Expounder who urges Law against the intention thereof.\(^{46}\)

In the last analysis, therefore, "the Law is to tender the liberty and the human dignity of them that live under the Law."\(^{47}\)

To say that the law must respect human liberty and dignity, however, is not to imply that the law must wink at evil.\(^{48}\) And still less can it endorse evil.\(^{49}\) Quite the contrary.

And although mans nature cannot beare exactest lawses, yet still within the confines of good it may and must; so long as less good is far enough from altogether evil.\(^{50}\)

According to Milton, then, those who are charged with the responsibility of enforcing the law do not discharge their obligations by demanding merely an outward conformity to its precepts. Rather it is their duty to determine, by the light of natural reason, what is the spirit of the law and to see to it that the citizenry conforms to that.

\(^{46}\) C. E., IV, 117.
\(^{47}\) C. E., IV, 121.
\(^{48}\) C. E., IV, 156.
\(^{49}\) C. E., IV, 157.
\(^{50}\) C. E., IV, 158.
If the magistrates conduct their offices properly, they will neither "bind that which God hath loos'n'd," nor "loos'n that which he hath bound."

Milton defends his own conception of law by pointing out that the doctrine which the orthodox Puritans were advocating could only lead to disaster:

In every common wealth when it decayes, corrupution makes two maine steps; first when men cease to doe according to the inward and un-compell'ed actions of vertue, caring only to live by the outward constraint of law, and turne the Simplicity of reall good, into the craft of seeming so by law... The next declining is, when law becomes now too straight for the secular manners, and those too loose for the cincture of law. This brings in false and crooked interpretations to eke out law, and invents the subtle encroachment of obscure traditions hard to be disprov'd.51

Milton, however, recognizes that no system of natural law could hope to guarantee perfect equity to all citizens. As he writes in the Areopagitica:

For this is not the liberty which wee can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth, that let no man in this World expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply consider'd, and speedily reform'd, then is the utmost bound of civill liberty attain'd, that wise men looke for.52

The legislator must face up to this fact and attempt to devise a legal code which can be practically applied and, at the same time, afford

51 C. E., IV, 137-8.
52 C. E., IV, 293.
maximum protection of the rights and liberties of all the citizens.\textsuperscript{53} The task is not an easy one: the law must not only protect, it must also restrain. And it is in determining the extent of restraint which the law can legitimately exercise that the legislator experiences the greatest difficulty.\textsuperscript{54} However, the lawgiver's problems can, to a large extent, be reduced if he will remember that the world is and always has been a mixture. This is the way God created it, and this is the way it will remain.\textsuperscript{55} Nor is it altogether to man's disadvantage that good and evil should be intermixed. The very mixture gives man an opportunity to develop and practice virtue.

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That vertue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank vertue, not a pure; her whitenesse is but an excremental whitenesse.\textsuperscript{56}

The wise lawgiver, pondering over these facts, will come to realize that "Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards."\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{53} C. E., IV, 318.  
\textsuperscript{54} C. E., IV, 318-9.  
\textsuperscript{55} C. E., IV, 310-11.  
\textsuperscript{56} C. E., IV, 311.  
\textsuperscript{57} C. E., IV, 327.
When Milton applies his concept of law to the contemporary situation he finds that Parliament must grant toleration to minority voices. To do otherwise, to revert to the old prelatical policy of suppression and intimidation, would be to defeat the purpose of the revolution.

Under these fantastic terrors of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after knowledge and understanding which God hath stirr'd up in this City. What some lament of, we rather should rejoice at, should rather praise this pious forwardnes among men, to resume the ill deputed care of their Religion into their own hands again. A little generous prudence, a little forbearance of one another, and som grain of charity might win all these diligences to joyn, and unite into one generall and brotherly search after Truth; could we but forgoe this Prelatical tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men.58

Further, he argues, such a spirit of toleration cannot but give strength and vigor to the commonwealth.

... When the cherfulnesse of the people is so sprightly up, as that it has, not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the solidest and sublimest points of controversie, and new invention, it be-tok'ns us not degenerated, nor drooping to a fatal decay, but casting off the old and wrincl'd skin of corruption to outlive these pangs and wax young again, entring the glorious waies of Truth and prosperous vertue destin'd to become great and honourable in these latter ages.59

58 C. E., IV, 341-2.

59 C. E., IV, 344.
Milton concedes that granting toleration to minority viewpoints does involve some risk. Without doubt falsehoods will be disseminated. But he takes the position:

Let her \( \sqrt{\text{Truth}} \) and Falshood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter. 60

Moreover, it is more advantageous for the nation to accept what risk toleration involves than to attempt to control the free exchange of ideas. 61

Although Milton carefully and convincingly demonstrates that toleration follows as a just and necessary consequence from his concept of civil law, his most telling argument in favor of intellectual liberty is more rhetorical than logical. In an impassioned address to the Lords and Commons he points out that the only alternative to a policy of toleration is a return to the immoral tyranny from which the nation has just been rescued.

. . . Liberty which is the nurse of all great wits; this is that which hath rarify'd and en-lighn'd our spirits like the influence of heav'n; this is that which hath enfranchis'd, enlarg'd and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves. Ye cannot make us now lesse capable, lesse knowing, lesse eagerly pursuing of the truth, un-lesse ye first make your selves, that made us so, lesse the lovers, lesse the founders of our true liberty. We can grow ignorant again, brutish, formall, and slavish, as ye found us; but you then must first become that which ye cannot be, op-pressive, arbitrary, and tyrannous, as they were

60 C. E., IV, 347.
61 C. E., IV, 350.
from whom ye have free'd us. That our hearts are now more capacious, our thoughts more erected to the search and expectation of greatest and exactest things, is the issue of your owne vertu propagated in us; ye cannot suppress that unlesse ye reinforce an abrogated and merciless law, that fathers may dispatch at will their own children. 

... Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties.62

In making this emotional appeal, Milton obviously overstates his case. Ostensibly the actions of Parliament up to the time Areopagitica was published (November, 1644) did not warrant his taking such an extreme view of the situation. As we have seen, the conservative bloc in Commons could not muster sufficient support to put across any legislation which would effectively stifle any and all dissent from the majority position. The Ordinance for Printing had been enacted largely as a war-time measure to curb the flow of Royalist propaganda; properly administered, it would not necessarily impede the free exchange of ideas. The burning of The Bloody Tenent was, to be sure, an unfortunate violation of freedom of the press, but Parliament had made amends by passing the Accommodation Order of September 13. The Parliamentary investigations of Williams, Goodwin, and Milton had produced no arrests, much less any convictions. All things considered, there appeared to be little cause for believing that Parliament would revert to the type of tyranny which had cost Charles his throne.

Despite these reassurances, Milton's appraisal of the political situation proved to be essentially correct. Once a state claims for

itself the right to suppress all opposition, it depends entirely upon
the composition of the government whether or not that right will be en-
forced. In practice, recognition of such a right substitutes government
by men for government by law. And history reveals that government by
men usually eventuates in tyranny, whether benign or oppressive.
England was to prove no exception. Within two years of Areopagitica
the very Parliament which Milton was addressing showed him to be a
rather accurate prophet.

What is more impressive about Milton's writings on civil liberty
is the practicality of his approach. He was one of the few disputants
of his time who realized the futility of arguing about the nature and
function of civil government from purely theological perspectives. He
developed his theory of government logically and consistently from the
belief that civil government is a part of the natural order and, there-
fore, its nature and function must be determined by purely natural
means, the light of human reason. Since God is the author and ruler of
the natural order, His word cannot be ignored; but it must be His word,
not as revealed to the elect through the order of grace, but as revealed
to the elect and unregenerate alike through the medium of the Scrip-
tures. Hence civil government must be founded not on Calvin's
Institution of Christian Religion but on the dictates of human reason,
aided and supplemented by the teachings of the Bible.

Milton was also one of the very few who did not expect the Puritan
Revolution to produce a utopia, a visible communion of saints, or even
a consistently wise and judicious government.
This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almost incident; for what Magistrate may not be mis-inform'd; . . . but to redresse willingly and speedily what hath bin err'd, and in highest authority to esteem a plain advertisement more then others have done a sumptuous bribe, is a vertue (honour'd Lords and Commons) answerable to Your highest actions, and whereof none can particip but greatest and wisest men.63

What he expected was statesmanship of the highest order. An England given this type of leadership would not "forget her precedence of teaching nations how to live."64

To say that Milton offered a practical solution to the contemporary problem of civil liberty is not to claim that he was entirely satisfied with his own program. When he came to write De Doctrina Christiana and the epics, he reverted to the concepts of the "holy community" and the visible communion of saints. But it must be emphasized that in these later works Milton was dealing with an ideal state, a state which he knew could never become a political reality, however desirable it might be in theory. Indeed, what is most significant in Milton's practical political thought is his recognition of the fact that all too frequently doctrines which appear perfectly just and equitable in theory become inequitable and tyrannous when practically applied.

Unfortunately we have no means of knowing precisely what were Milton's political ideals during the period 1643-5. With the exception

63 E., IV, 354.
64 "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" in E., III, 377.
of the first edition of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, all the tracts published during these three years deal realistically with contemporary problems. Even Of Education is tailored to meet the needs of the times. Only in the first divorce pamphlet and the minor poems written between 1632 and 1645 does Milton deal with questions of human conduct from an abstract rather than concrete point of view. What can be inferred from these earlier works is that theoretically he countenanced less toleration than he prescribes in his polemical writings, although the standards he sets are perhaps less exact than those he proposes in De Doctrina Christiana and the major poems. In all events, from a comparison of the poems, 1632-45, with the polemical tracts, 1643-5, it would appear that Milton did to some extent modify his idealistic theories in order to arrive at a practical solution to a pressing contemporary problem. And the compromise was well worth the effort. For the solution which he did propose, although rejected at the time it was first offered, was eventually to become one of the foundation stones in the modern theory of government.

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The toleration question was not destined to be settled during Milton's lifetime. In less than a year after the publication of Areopagitica it became but one of many issues dividing the Puritan ranks. In the face of military disaster, Parliament was forced to postpone consideration of this touchy problem. After victory had been achieved, the points of disagreement between Parliament and Army,
Presbyterian and Independent, Scot and Englishman became so involved that it required a second civil war to settle the differences. With the ultimate triumph of Cromwell the cause of toleration appeared to have won the day. But appearances were deceptive. The majority of Englishmen in their hearts had never really accepted the principle of toleration and, with the Restoration, England reverted, at least nominally, to the old principle of church and state. Indeed, Milton lived to see the passage of the Test Act (1672), which required all who held civil or military office under the Crown to take Communion in the Anglican Church.

Still Milton did not fight in vain. Although men are slow to give up their ancient customs and traditions, the truth of new ideas inevitably compels even the most recalcitrant to reject the old standards. And so it was to be with England—eventually.
III

THE BLOOD OF KINGS

In the Spring of 1646 the first Civil War came to an end. "You have done your work, boys," Sir Jacob Astley told the triumphant Roundheads, "you may go play, unless you fall out among yourselves." ¹

With the cessation of hostilities Parliament was faced with the formidable task of reconstruction. There was a breach to be sealed between Puritan and Cavalier, a new constitutional government to be erected, a burning religious question to be settled, and a huge army to be demobilized. It is doubtful whether any government could have successfully resolved all these matters; certainly the Long Parliament could not. By a series of egregious blunders, it not only threw away the fruits of the military victory but so disrupted the country that it required the employment of a despotic military power to save England from anarchy.

The primary cause of Parliament's failure to settle the nation's domestic affairs lay in its erroneous assumption that Parliament itself embodied both the authority and the power to administer the government without the consent of King and people. In some respects the assumption was natural enough. For more than four years Parliament had conducted the business of the state without recourse to any

¹Rushworth, VI, 140.

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outside agency. And throughout that period it had received solid support from both the military and civilian populations. Further, recent elections, held to fill the Royalist vacancies in Commons, had done little or nothing to change the balance of power in the Lower House. The Presbyterians continued to enjoy their plurality, although the Independents had shown some gains at the expense of the splinter parties. On the basis of this evidence, Parliamentary leaders apparently took it for granted that public sentiment would not alter radically.

But appearances were deceptive. In 1641 the people had rallied to the support of Parliament because they hated episcopacy and feared the personal rule of the King. Now that episcopacy had been abolished and the King's power broken, there was no longer any unifying principle to which Parliament could appeal. No longer could unpopular legislation be enacted as wartime emergency measures. No longer could discontented crowds be mollified by patriotic speeches and proclamations. Public enthusiasm for Parliamentary rule was waning and, as it waned, the authority of Parliament itself began to ebb. If the leaders in Commons noticed this change in the political climate, they did not permit it to influence their policies. Nothing was done to conciliate a populace growing daily more restless. On the contrary, Parliament promulgated a series of laws which could not fail to arouse considerable antagonism. For example, such heavy fines were imposed upon the defeated Cavaliers that, to meet the assessment, some were forced to sell their property to their recent conquerors or to war-profiteers. As
a result the rift between Puritan and Royalist became irreconcilable.

Not content with alienating the Royalist gentry, Parliament proceeded to effect a religious settlement which stirred bitter resentment among the sectarians. Presbyterianism was established as the state religion; use of the English Prayer Book in church services was prohibited; laymen were forbidden to preach in public; and the practice of the Baptist faith was made punishable by life imprisonment. Both the Accommodation Order (1644) and the toleration provisions of the ordinance creating the New Model Army (1645) were abrogated. By these incredible acts of folly, Parliament managed to estrange the huge body of non-conformists which made up more than half of the country's Puritan population.

What makes the religious settlement appear even more rash is the fact that at this moment Parliament needed all the support it could muster, for constitutionally it stood on very shaky ground. At the outset of the war Sir John Oxinden had given voice to a political theory which distinguished between Charles as a person and Charles as King. The King, said Sir John, could not exist as King except in relation to the Commonwealth; therefore, those who in the current crisis stood for the Commonwealth, "in so doing stand for the King and consequently for both King and Commonwealth." ² Interpreted by Pym and

Hampden, this doctrine had come to mean that Parliament was acting for both King and Commonwealth until such times as the King came unto his own again. It was a convenient bit of legal fiction which gave a superficial constitutionality to Parliament's wartime legislation, and as long as the fighting continued, no one except the Royalists seriously challenged the validity of the argument. But with the war over, the bishops crushed, and the evil advisors removed from the sovereign's ear, it was expected that the traditional balance between King and Parliament would be swiftly restored. The public was no more prepared to bear with equanimity the rule of Parliament without the King than it had been to accept the rule of the King without Parliament. It was, therefore, mandatory that Parliament reach some agreement with Charles at the earliest possible moment.

The Parliamentary leaders, however, again failed to recognize the intrinsic weakness of their position. Confident that they were in complete control of the nation, they tried to negotiate with the King, not as their lawful sovereign, but rather as the leader of the defeated enemy. The proposals they offered Charles at Newcastle were wholly unrealistic. It was stipulated that the King himself take the Covenant and sanction its imposition upon all his English subjects; that he consent to the abolition of episcopacy and agree to the reformation of the English Church along such lines as Parliament in consultation with the Westminster Assembly might direct; that he relinquish control over the militia and fleet for a period of twenty years; and that he approve the punishment of many of his Royalist supporters. As G. M. Young has
put it, "Charles had only to abandon his Crown, his Church, and his friends, and he might, for what it was worth, be King of England still." Since he had nothing to gain by accepting such terms, the King temporized. Any deadlock in negotiations, he felt, should prove more disadvantageous to Parliament than to himself.

For once Charles' judgment proved correct. The failure to reach a quick settlement with the King did indeed work to the disadvantage of Parliament. With its popularity waning and its constitutional position somewhat doubtful, Parliament soon found that the principal prop to its authority was the Army. The realization of this fact, however, provided no cause for rejoicing. The Army was filled with sectarians, and its most influential leaders were as much opposed to the Presbyterian Establishment as to episcopacy. Although Cromwell assured his colleagues that the troops were loyal to the government, the Presbyterians viewed with alarm the predominance of Independents among officer personnel. Arguing that the military forces must be kept the servants of the civil power, the Presbyterian leadership induced Parliament in March of 1647 to vote a reduction in the size of the Army. Suitable garrisons were to be maintained in England and some regiments, under Presbyterian command, were to be sent to Ireland. The remaining corps were to be disbanded. Further, all general officers, with the exception of Fairfax, were to be relieved of command, and all Independent officers, regardless of rank, were to be cashiered.

This bold attempt to insure control over the armed forces might very well have succeeded. Within the Army itself there was no organized opposition to Parliament. Offensive as the Presbyterian Establishment may have been, it did not engender sufficient hostility to cause an irreconcilable breach between the military and civil powers. Both officers and men were tired of fighting and were quite content to disband under honorable conditions. As for those who wished to remain in the ranks, they could look forward to rich plunder in Ireland.

Unfortunately, Parliament made one fatal miscalculation. The Army's pay was in arrears: the foot were owed for eighteen weeks and the horse for forty-three. Parliament proposed to discharge the debt by paying each man six weeks' wages. The Army rejected the offer. Parliament then ordered each regiment to proceed to a different center, either for discharge or shipment to Ireland. The order was disregarded and the Army began to concentrate at Newmarket. Parliament, now seriously disturbed, sent Cromwell to negotiate with the discontented troops.

Cromwell managed to patch together an agreement with the "Agitators" at Saffron Walden, but it was obvious to all that the truce was only temporary. The authority of the government had been openly defied and in response all the government could do was make concessions. It was becoming painfully evident, even to the leaders in Commons, that the once all-powerful Long Parliament could no longer control the country. In desperation the government reopened negotiations with the Scots to protect it from its own Army.
With quiet confidence King Charles watched relations between Parliament and the Army deteriorate. The tide was finally turning in his favor. Because he now held the balance of power, both sides were making advances to him. If he supported Parliament, he would cut away all moral grounds from the Army's protest. The discontented regiments would be reduced to the status of rebels. The Army would find itself opposed by Royalist and Parliamentary factions alike, not to mention the Scots in the north. Under such circumstances the rebellion would quickly collapse. On the other hand, if he cast his lot with the Army, he could by force dissolve the odious Long Parliament and secure the election of a legislative body more favorably disposed toward his policies.

Before Charles could decide which course to follow, the Army made its move. Recognizing the danger which a union between King and Parliament might pose, Cromwell and Ireton seized the person of the King (June, 1647). In August they presented him with a document drawn up by Ireton and subsequently known as the "Heads of the Proposals." It provided for a constitution where power was balanced between King and Parliament, an equitable religious settlement which recognized the rights of individual consciences, and a plan for rewards and punishments which was generally fair to Cavaliers and Roundheads alike.

The "Heads of the Proposals" offered by far the most satisfactory solution to the problems which had been created by the Civil War. Had the proposals been accepted, England might have entered upon a period of peace and prosperity. But both King and Parliament rejected the
Army's scheme, and for precisely the same reasons. Both claimed the right to exclusive administration of the state's affairs without interference from the other. Both clung to the idea of a national church and repudiated toleration as an abomination wholly incompatible with Christian principles. Both resented the Army's attempt to dictate policy. And most important of all, both expected help from the Scots.

For Charles the rejection was literally to prove fatal. Although he could not have known it at the time, he had thrown away his last chance to remain King of England. From the great rebellion he had learned nothing. He still adhered to the belief that his was the only method whereby the kingdom could be successfully governed, and the collapse of Parliamentary rule merely served to confirm this conviction. He utterly failed to perceive that Parliament had ruined itself by practicing the very principles which he advocated. Tragically blind to the political realities, he continued trifling with representatives of both Parliament and Army, hopefully awaiting the hour when his beloved Scots would be able to restore his autocracy.

Meanwhile the Army had come to believe that further negotiation with the King would be fruitless. Many of the rank and file looked upon Charles as "the Man of Blood" and strongly objected to their leaders' having any dealings with him. As long as there existed the possibility of reaching an agreement with the King, Cromwell and Ireton managed to keep the men in line; but once it became apparent that Charles was merely playing for time, the troops refused to be controlled any longer. In September the Army held a debate at Putney to determine its
future course of action. From the outset it was obvious that sentiment was strong against both King and Parliament. Cromwell and Ireton were shocked to hear liberals like Sexby, Rainborough, Wildman, and Goffe advocate the doctrine of the individual's right to political equality. The theory these liberals advanced implied the continued existence of Commons, but it completely undercut the monarchy. When, in October, the "Agitators" put forward their revolutionary plan in the Agreement of the People, they called for universal manhood suffrage, biennial election of Parliaments, and redistribution of constituencies. Significantly, they made no mention of either the King or the House of Lords.

Once the Army had declared itself so strongly against Charles, Cromwell and Ireton could no longer continue negotiating with him. In November they permitted him to flee to Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight. There he concluded with the Scottish Commissioners an Engagement, under the terms of which he promised to establish Presbyterianism as the state religion for a period of three years and rigorously to suppress the sectarians. In return for this promise the Scots agreed that their army should restore him to his throne. The second Civil War was about to begin.

King, Lords and Commons, landlords and merchants, the City and the countryside, bishops and presbyters, the Scottish army, the Welsh people, and the English fleet, all now turned against the New Model Army. The Army beat the lot.  

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4 Woodhouse, pp. 1-124.

5 Churchill, p. 274.
On Tuesday, January 30, 1649, King Charles was led to the block. Edmund Ludlow⁶ extenuated the regicide by appealing to the Bible:

"That blood defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood thus shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."⁷ However, the mass of the English people recoiled in horror before the deed. By law the King was inviolable; his person sacred. Yet against his will, the will of Parliament, and the will of the people, the Army had tried, convicted, and executed the lawful sovereign "as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy."⁸ The whole country wept. This was not justice; it was simply murder.

To its credit, Parliament did its best to save the King. It rejected Ireton's "remonstrance," demanding justice upon Charles and the establishment of a republic, on the grounds that the King's acceptance of the Newport treaty offered an adequate basis for negotiation. The Army replied by ordering Colonel Pride to purge Parliament. After the purge only a sectarian "Rump" of some fifty to sixty members was left to carry on the business of the state.


⁷ Numbers, xxxv, 33.

Yet even the "Rump" was reluctant to try the King. The motion to set up a High Court of Justice was carried by the slim margin of twenty-six votes to twenty. Further, from the 135 commissioners chosen to sit in judgment on Charles, barely sixty were found willing to serve, and of these many refused to sign the death warrant. In fact, it was only through the intervention of Cromwell himself that a sufficient number of signatures was obtained.

Equally repelled at the thought of killing their sovereign were the members of the British bar. Not a single English jurist proved willing to draw up the indictment. As a result, the unhappy task of formulating charges against the monarch fell to the Dutch expatriate, Isaac Dorislaus. It was a most difficult assignment, for there existed in British law and tradition no precedent for the lawful execution of a King. It is true that both Edward II and Richard II had been deposed and put to death, but no one had ever attempted to invest these murders with the trappings of legality. In the end Dorislaus was obliged to invoke the authority of antiquity, the decrees of the Roman Senate endorsing tyrannicide. From a strictly legal point of view, arraignment on such grounds hardly squared with the concept of English justice. But it was the best Dorislaus could do and, all things considered, it served the purpose.

9 Ashley, p. 87.

10 Churchill, p. 278.

11 Gardiner, Civil War, III, 571.
The execution of Charles I stands out as one of the blackest pages in English history, and the rash attempt to clothe the deed in the garb of justice has succeeded only in pointing up more clearly the degree to which the act violated every precedent in British law and tradition. Not even Cromwell's contemporaries were deceived by the facade of legality. When, at the trial, Lady Fairfax cried, "Oliver Cromwell is a traitor," she spoke for an entire nation. Indeed, had the Army commanders secretly authorized the assassination of the King, they could not have inspired in the people greater horror than they did by the public trial and execution. Whatever Charles may have done, to his subjects he was still King, and still above the law.

Why, against all law and precedent and in the face of such heavy opposition from all classes of English society, the generals should have found it necessary to behead the King, remains a moot question. Gardiner has argued that the affair was dictated by "cruel necessity," the welfare of the state. On the other hand, Godfrey Davies has maintained that "the regicides did not order the king's execution as a measure of safety, but as a righteous judgment, a just retribution upon the author of the civil wars." The more ardently royalist historians tend to consider Charles' death a sacrifice on the altar of Cromwell's

\[\text{12}\text{Gardiner, Civil War, III, 572.}\]
\[\text{13}\text{Churchill, p. 278.}\]
\[\text{14}\text{Gardiner, Civil War, III, 604.}\]
\[\text{15}\text{Godfrey Davies, The Early Stuarts, 1603-1660 (Oxford, 1937) p. 156.}\]
ambitions. It was all of these things, but it was something more. From the scaffold Charles himself stated the overriding cause of his own fate, "He did not believe the happiness of people lay in sharing government, subject and sovereign being clean different." He tenaciously clung to "the conception of kingship to which he was born and which had long been the settled custom of the land." For this reason, above all others, he had to die.

Charles was the last English king who tried to rule according to the precepts of what conveniently may be designated the Tudor theory of monarchy. And he proved to be its most loyal, if least successful exponent. Every official act throughout his tragic reign was dictated by some principle derived from that theory. His mistakes and wrong deeds, his cravings for personal power, his obstinacy, his duplicity—all were justified in terms of the theory. Even his death constituted a bloody testament to the system by which he had governed.

The system by which Charles ruled and for which he died was not the creation of ambitious monarchs any more than it was a necessary consequence of divine law, King James notwithstanding. Rather the Tudor theory of government developed in the aftermath of the Wars of the Roses (1455-85), and was specifically designed to combat any further outbreak of those civil wars which had periodically plagued England since the deposing of Richard II (1399). Although the theory itself was primarily


17Gardiner, Civil War, III, 596.

18Churchill, p. 280.
a product of the English Renaissance, it incorporated principles and practices which had a long historical sanction.

It is easy to understand why the Tudor theory should have evolved during the sixteenth century. At no other time in its history was the English monarchy more vulnerable to attacks from both foreign and domestic enemies. The country was irreconcilably divided over the burning religious issue; the legitimacy of the royal succession was in doubt; and, across the seas, the King of Spain was threatening to add England to his growing list of dominions.

Between the foreign and domestic evils which imperiled England during this period, by far the greater danger lay in the ever-present possibility of internal rebellion. With the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) and the subsequent rise of British naval power, the English began to feel confident that they could successfully turn back any assault launched by their continental enemies. On the other hand, the threat which a potential internal insurrection posed to the national security remained, throughout the century, undiminished. The only effective deterrent to such rebellion was a powerful, centralized government which could, if necessary, rigorously supervise or restrict all political, religious, and social activities which might tend to promote disunity.

Yet even a strong centralized authority could not always prevent insurrections. During the Tudor era England witnessed the religious struggles under Mary (1555-8) and Elizabeth (1575), the Northern uprising (1569) and the Irish rebellion (1595). These bitter
experiences, coupled with the periodic discovery of seditious plots against the Crown, caused Queen, court, and populace to live in constant apprehension of a renewal of civil disorder.

By the close of the sixteenth century these fears had multiplied. Elizabeth was an aging monarch. It was obvious to all that England must soon have a new sovereign, but the Queen stubbornly refused to name a successor. Rumor favored James VI of Scotland as the next English King, although powerful factions throughout England strongly opposed a Scottish succession. From the death of Lord Burghley (1598) to the accession of the Stuarts (1603) palace intrigue was rife: plots, counter-plots, seditions, treasons, accusations, executions—these were the order of the day. No wonder so many Englishmen could visualize, on the Queen's death, an internecine war which would rip the land asunder.

Besides the tense political situation, there was also the volatile religious question. Hostilities between Catholics and Protestants might flare up at any moment and the whole of England thus become engulfed by a horrible carnage such as had wasted France for nearly forty years (1562-98).

Subsequent events proved that the Elizabethans' fears were not without foundation. Both Essex's rebellion (1601) and the Gunpowder Plot (1605) were poorly planned and executed. Whether more careful preparation would have produced different results is uncertain. In any

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19 See Katherine Drinker Bowen, The Lion and the Throne (Boston, 1957), pp. 76-176.
event, these premature attempts at rebellion indicate that there existed a very genuine cause for alarm among the English people.

This concern of sixteenth century Englishmen for their political welfare was expressed in a flood of books, tracts, and pamphlets on the nature and operation of government. Written by bishops, lawyers, soldiers, philosophers, historians, poets, and literary hacks, these political treatises attempted to provide a cure for civil disorders through an examination of the structure of the state in relation to society, in order that both government and populace might come to understand their proper functions and henceforth work in harmony for the common welfare.

As might be expected, there was a wide divergence of opinion among Elizabethan thinkers as to what constituted the best modus operandi of government. There were bitter disputes concerning the duties of princes and subjects, the moral justification of civil war, and the relations between church and state. The disagreements, however, were largely over the practical applications of a single political philosophy, the Tudor theory of monarchy.

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According to this theory,

God in the creation of man, imprinted certaine rules within his soule, to direct him in all the actions of his life: which rules, because we took them when we took our being, are commonly called the primary law of nature: . . .

To worship God: to obey parents and governors, and thereby conserve society; lawful conjunction of men and women: succession of children: education of children: acquisition of things which pertain to no man: equal liberty for all: to communicate commodities: to repel force: to hurt no man and generally to do another as he would be done unto.22

This was the essential nature of society. In order to achieve the ends of society, governments were instituted.

As in the creation of man God conioined a soul for action, in a body passive: so in his ordinance of mans sociable conversing. . . he hath knit together a passive subjection to an active superioritie: and as every man is both a quickening and ruling soule, and a living and ruled bodie; so, in every civill state, there is a directing and commanding power, and an obeying and subiected allegiance.23

There was no doubt in the Elizabethan mind as to what should be the form of that "directing and commanding power." The chief danger of aristocracy, as Thomas Elyot warned was that

some, beinge persons in authoritie, be incensed with glories; some with ambition; others with covetise and the desire of treasure or possessions: whereby they fall into contention.24

22John Haywood, An Answer to the First Part of a Certaine Conference Concerning Succession Published Not Long Since under the Name of R. Dolman (London, 1603), sig. A, 4, r.


As for democracy, William Fulbecke expressed the prevailing Elizabethan sentiment when he remarked that it was

no forme of a commonweale, if it be properly
taken for the equal swaye of the people without
any superiorities: . . . it is against the nature
of the people to beare rule; for they are unfitte
for regiment, as a mad man to give counsaille.25

With the rejection of these two forms of government, for the
Elizabethan only one other possibility remained. Wherefore, concluded
Elyot,

undoubtedly the best and most sure governance is
by one kyng or prince, which ruleth onely for
the weale of his people to him subiecte: and
that maner of governance is best approud, and
hath longest continued, and is moste auncient.26

The duties and functions of monarch and subject were perfectly
clear. To quote from the anonymous Institution of Christen Men (1534):

It apperteyneth unto the office of princis, to se
that the ryght religion and true doctrine of
Christe may be maytained and taught, and that
theyr subiectes may be well ruled and governed by
good and iuste lawes, and to prouyde and care for
them, that all thinges necessarie for them may be
plentuse, and the people and commune weale may
increase and to defend them from oppression and
invasion as well within the realms without, and
to see that justice be administered unto the
indifferently.27


26 Elyot, pp. 8-9.

27 The Institution of Christen Men (London, 1534), fol. 82 r.
If he was to discharge his obligations properly, the prince had to possess certain traits of character. "You cannot be a king," advised Erasmus, "unless reason controls you. . . . You cannot rule others until you have obeyed the course of honor."28

As for the prince's subjects, nature herself had so arranged things that every man, from his station in life, could perceive his duty easily. Some men were born to be kings and princes.

Other some she hath not framed in such perfect wyse, . . . yet she hath imparted unto them a most sharp wit and ready capacity, great value and singular providence. Herehence the justicier and souldair springeth . . . . On other she hath bestowed a mind and courage that . . . . adventure strainge and untried voiges. Herehence ye fames companies of adventuring Marchaunts. . . . Other she hath made more simple of understanding, more cold of courage, and therefore justly hath appointed unto them, to toyle in servile arts.29

Thus every man had his station and function. The duty of the citizen was to accept the state in life which nature had ordained for him, loyelty to serve his king and country, his relatives and neighbors.30 As long as this natural order was preserved, all would be well; once it was disturbed, trouble became inevitable.

Sir John Cheke neatly summed up the situation:

It is plainly impossible that the Countrye shall well stand in government and the people grow to

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29 William Blandy, The Castle, or Picture of Policy (London, 1581), fol. 27 r.

wealth, where order in every state is not fitly observed, and that body cannot be without much grieve, where any least part is put out of joint, or not duly set in his own naturall place. Wherefore order must be kept in the Commonwealth like health in the body, and all the drift of policie looketh to this end, how the temper may be safely maintained, without any excesse of unmeasurableness, either of one side or the other.31

These concepts afforded philosophical justification for the Elizabethans' implacable hatred of revolution. Rebellion was something more than an attack on the indispensable institution of monarchy; it was a violation of natural order and degree.32

Rebels to Prince, rebels to native home,  
Traitors to Prince, traitors to countries due,  
Supplanters of all rule and government,  
Infringing lawes, the waste of Commonweale:  
The broode of wolves, the elder sonnes of Cain,  
The impes of hell, and very marks of shame.33

Such, in brief, was the Tudor theory of government. As practised by Henry VIII and Elizabeth, the method proved successful in achieving the ends for which it had been conceived, and consequently became acceptable to the large majority of the people. But this same method, applied by Charles I, not only failed to preserve civil order, but directly led the nation into the Great Rebellion.


33 Ralph Birchensha, A Discourse Occasioned upon the Late Defeat, Given to Arch-Rebels Tyrone and Odonnell (London, 1602), sig. C, 1 r.
How did it happen that a system which had effectively combated internal dissension for more than a century should suddenly break down and become the cause of the very evil it was designed to prevent? The answer lies in the rise of Puritanism and in an extensive shift in the economic structure.

In the sixteenth century the chief threat to the security of the Crown came from the nobility. The nobility had the wealth, the power, and the prestige to challenge the authority of the King. But, generally speaking, both King and nobles agreed on the same principles. Apart from the friction caused by an occasional conflict of interests, the major source of discord between monarch and peer was religion. Officially the state was Protestant; nevertheless, a considerable number of the nobility remained Catholic. In a period when religion so profoundly influenced the thoughts and actions of men, such a difference was of major importance. Still, in England the breach between Anglican and Catholic was by no means so wide as the gulf between Catholic and Protestant on the continent. When Henry VIII broke with Rome, unlike Luther and Calvin, he did not attempt to institute a new religion. Rather, he tried, as far as possible, to carry over into the new Establishment the traditional dogmas and liturgy of the Catholic Church. His quarrel with the Pope was a personal one; whether the

34 Excepting the brief reign of Mary I (1553-5), when the Queen was Catholic and many of her noblemen Protestant.

Bishop of Rome or the King of England was to be the acknowledged head of the English Church.

It must be remembered that throughout the sixteenth century theologians continued to debate the question of Papal Supremacy. It is true that in 1439 the Council of Florence had defined the doctrine of Papal Primacy; it is likewise true that the Popes had always claimed for themselves, by virtue of their office, supreme power in spiritual affairs, and that Christian princes had acknowledged, at least in theory, Papal Supremacy. Still there was some dispute among theologians concerning the practical application of the doctrine.37: Christian rulers had always taken a hand in administering ecclesiastical affairs and continued to do so, even after the Council of Florence. The Catholic princes, while they did not deny Papal authority, nevertheless maintained that inasmuch as they were morally obliged to foster and defend the Faith, they had a right to some voice in Church government. So many and bitter were the quarrels between Popes and potentates that the faithful came to look upon such disputes as a natural concomitant of the Church-State relationship.

The revolt of Henry VIII, however, involved a far more fundamental issue. The King explicitly denied that the Pope had any authority in the spiritual affairs of England. The few who understood the import of Henry's Act of Supremacy (1534) were compelled to take a stand either

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37 Delloc, pp. 66-7.
for or against the King. But most of the laity did not comprehend the
significance of the Crown's action. For them this was only another
jurisdictional dispute between King Harry and Pope Clement. And as long
as liturgy and dogma were left virtually untouched, they were not
greatly concerned whether Pope or King headed the English Church.

When these religious sentiments are translated into political
terms, it becomes easy to understand why most Elizabethans felt so
hostile toward those Catholics who attempted to restore the old religion
by force. As far as the average Englishman could see, the exchange of
a Protestant prince for a Catholic would produce no substantial change
in the political, religious, or social patterns of the country. On
the other hand, the change itself could be effected only by means of a
destructive civil war which could conceivably leave the nation so weak
that it would become as easy prey for England's foreign enemies. The
English, therefore, rallied around their monarch. They accepted the
doctrine that every man had a specific function in life, that kings
were born and not made, and that, consequently, to depose a lawful
monarch was immoral. Thus, to sixteenth century Englishmen the Tudor
philosophy of government offered a sound moral justification for pro-
moting what they conceived to be their own best interests.

But with the rise of Puritanism, an important change in religious
sentiment occurred. In liturgy and dogma Calvinism differed from
Anglicanism almost as much as it differed from Catholicism. The Pur-
tans might agree in principle that "it apperteyneth unto the office of
princis, to se that ryght religion and true doctrine of Christe may be
maintained and taught," but they could not in conscience accept the Episcopal Establishment as "ryght religion and true doctrine." Hence they were morally obliged to resist the Crown's efforts to promulgate what they believed to be heretical doctrine and ritual. We have seen how that resistance eventually led to the two Bishops' Wars and, ultimately, to the Great Rebellion itself.

The only solution to the problem posed by the Puritans lay in the modification, if not the abandonment, of the Tudor principle concerning the national church. But James feared that certain democratic principles inherent in Calvinism might eventually work against the interests of the Crown; and Charles believed that as King he had a moral obligation to suppress heresy and foster the Episcopal Establishment. Therefore, neither was willing to make any concessions to the Puritan sects. Rather, each asserted his right as sovereign to impose the state religion upon all his subjects. Such an inflexible policy necessarily weakened the monarchy. The majority of the people, Puritan in sympathy, would not suffer themselves to be denied their natural right to practice what they believed to be the one true faith. Not only did they resist all attempts to stuff Anglicanism down their throats, but they ultimately came to deny that in spiritual matters their King had any authority over them.

The second and more important cause of the breakdown in the Tudor system was the shift in the balance of economic power which occurred toward the end of Elizabeth's reign. At the beginning of the sixteenth century most of England's wealth was concentrated in the hands of the
Crown, the Church, and the nobility. After the break with Rome, Church property was confiscated and the spoils divided between the King and his supporters. Under ordinary circumstances such looting would have insured the financial stability of the government; for the King's share of the plunder could be directly added to the royal treasure-hoard left by Henry VII, while the nobles' portion would provide the state with additional revenue through the process of normal taxation. Unfortunately, the last seven years of Henry VIII's reign were marred by a succession of foreign wars which seriously depleted the royal coffers. Further, his heirs, Edward and Mary, did nothing to repair the financial damage; rather they increased the deficit. As a result, when Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, she discovered that she had inherited a national debt in excess of a quarter million pounds.

Still the situation was not critical. Elizabeth proved a good manager and, had England enjoyed an extended period of peace, she might have succeeded in making the government economically solvent again. But during the forty-odd years in which she ruled, the English engaged in no less than ten major wars. No country, however sound financially, can hope to fight that many wars without seriously draining its economic resources.

To meet the tremendous expenditures of her government Elizabeth was forced to tax and tax. As long as her revenues were derived mainly from the incomes of the nobility, she was able to govern without much

38 Trevelyan, p. 122.
serious opposition from Parliament. But there was a limit to what could be obtained from the great estates and before the end of her reign that limit was reduced.

Meanwhile, there was arising in England a middle class composed primarily of enterprising merchants and landed gentry, whose combined wealth would soon outstrip that of the declining nobility. At first the new magnates had little voice in national affairs. Both Henry and Elizabeth tried, as far as possible, to rule without the assistance of Parliament. Indeed, throughout the greater part of the sixteenth century Parliament was subservient to the Crown and what little influence it did possess was exercised almost exclusively by the House of Lords. But the rise of the middle class changed all that. Having assumed the heavy burden of taxation which had formerly fallen to the nobility, the well-to-do commoners began demanding that their interests be given serious consideration in the shaping of official policy. Their forum, the House of Commons, soon superseded the House of Lords as the more important branch of the legislature. Indeed, before the end of the century, one wit was to advocate abolishing the House of Lords altogether on the grounds that Commons so far outstripped it in wealth.39

This shift in economic power sounded the death-knell for the Tudor method of government. No longer could the King hope to rule without the consent of Parliament, and for one simple reason: the interests of the monarch and those of the commercial classes from whom he derived

39 Bindoff, p. 214.
the major portion of his revenues too often collided. The only way the
King could govern the country without arousing the bitterest resentment
among his people was to give the taxpayers a voice in the framing of
policy. Yet this was the very thing James and Charles were most re-
luctant to do. They continued to cling to the Tudor tradition and
looked upon Parliament as a subservient body created for the sole pur-
pose of voting taxes. When at length Parliament refused to appropriate
any more funds until it had been given a share in the government, the
Crown was placed in an impossible position. Without money it could not
operate the machinery of government; at the same time, it could not
obtain the money it needed without yielding up some of its preroga-
tives. At this point the Tudor theory of rule collapsed completely.
Because Charles failed to recognize the inherent weaknesses in the
Tudor concept of kingship, because he believed that "it apperteyneth
unto the office of princis, to se that ryght religion and true
doctrine of Christe may be maytained and taught," and because "he did
not believe that the happiness of people lay in sharing government,"
he had to die. Had it been possible to eliminate the system without
at the same time liquidating the King, England might have been spared
one of its greatest tragedies. But Charles had clearly demonstrated
by all his words and actions that, as long as he lived, he would work
for the restoration of the Tudor-type monarchy. His attitude left his
enemies no choice. And so they murdered him, out of "cruel necessity."
While the King's trial was being conducted at Westminster Hall, John Milton, at his house in High Holborn, was composing what was to become his most important contribution to political theory, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. The slim pamphlet was published on February 13, 1649--only two weeks after Charles had gone to his death--and its publication gave the author the distinction of being "the first Englishman of mark, out of Parliament, that signified his unqualified adhesion to the Republic."^40

Since his return from the Continent in the summer of 1639, Milton had observed with dismay the cataclysmic struggles between Prelate and Presbyter, Presbyter and Independent, Parliament and Crown. He had watched the egregious blunders of Commons and the wily machinations of the King plunge his country into a tragic Second Civil War. And all these calamitous events had served to convince him that any future government of England, if it was to function effectively and justly, could not be patterned after the concept of rule which had precipitated the late civil commotions. The actions of the Long Parliament had clearly demonstrated that merely abolishing kings and prelates was not enough. The entire political structure needed to be overhauled. The new commonwealth had to be founded upon theoretically sound principles which would take into account the cold political realities, however unpleasant some of these might be.

^40 Masson, IV, 64.
What these principles were Milton attempted to explain in The
Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. Many of the more significant ideas he
had already expressed or implied in his earlier tracts on religious and
civil liberty. Now these ideas were incorporated as integral parts of
a comprehensive theory of government. In a very real sense The Tenure
of Kings and Magistrates constituted a synthesis of all that Milton had
learned about the nature of government.

The choice of title suggests the scope of the work. The author
did not confine his attention solely to the institution of monarchy.
Naturally enough, much of what he said pertained directly to the
policies and beliefs of the late King, but the general principles were
applicable with equal validity to any legal form of government. In The
Tenure of Kings and Magistrates the primary concern was the rights and
obligations of governments in relation to their people.

In this connection, the use of the term magistrates is most inter­
esting. Magistrates are, by definition, civil officers charged with
the administration of the laws, or members of the executive govern­
ment.\(^\text{41}\) Thus, in February, 1649, the term could appropriately have
been employed to designate both the Parliament and the Council of State.
Milton was, of course, far too politic an author to preach directly to
the forces that were framing the new Commonwealth. Nevertheless, his
title subtly implies, and the treatise itself supports the implication,
that the work was intended, among other things, for the instruction of

those charged with the responsibility of creating the Republic. In fact, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* offers nothing less than a blueprint for the governmental structure Milton confidently expected Parliament and the Council of State to erect. Although the blueprint is presented in theoretical rather than in practical terms, the author leaves his readers in little doubt that he believed the new regime, if it were to succeed, had to translate his ideas into concrete realities.

Fundamental to Milton's theory of government was the conviction that sovereign power resides ultimately with the people and that, consequently, all political authority derives directly from the people as the result of a social contract.

> No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men were borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey; and that they liv'd so. Till from the root of *Adams* transgression, falling among themselves to doe wrong and violence, and foreseeing that such courses must needs tend to the destruction of them all, they agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement. Hence came Citties, Townes, and Common-wealths. And because no faith in all was found sufficiently binding, they saw it needfull to ordaine some authoritie, that might restrain by force and punishment what was violated against peace and common right.42

It should be noted that Milton's explanation of the origins of political authority implicitly repudiates the Calvinist conception of rule. As we observed in the preceding chapter, orthodox Puritans felt

42 *C. E., V, 8.*
that the state must, in practice, exercise authority both in temporal and spiritual affairs, and, by imposing the "holy community," serve as the link between God's natural and supernatural dispensations. But Milton described temporal governments as wholly human institutions whose purposes and functions are purely secular. If, as he affirms, kings and magistrates derive their authority exclusively from the common consent of the people, it necessarily follows that the powers of princes and parliaments must be limited to those which the people can legitimately delegate to their rulers. In practice, this theory would deny the state the right to meddle in purely spiritual affairs, since authority in matters of religion resides not with the people but with God. And, it will be remembered, this is substantially the same position Milton took in Tetrachordon and Areopagitica, although in these earlier tracts he approached the problem from a slightly different perspective.

The doctrine that sovereign power remains ultimately with the people also struck at the heart of the Tudor concept of kingship. The view that nature has ordained some few to be rulers and the remainder of mankind to be subjects carries with it the necessary implication that political authority comes as a natural birthright from the Creator Himself. From such a theory two corollaries logically follow: first, since the ruler has received his authority from God, he is accountable for his action only to God; second, since the ruler has received his authority from God, his subjects are morally obliged to honor and obey that authority, no matter how wicked or tyrannical the ruler may be.
Thus the ruler is elevated to a position above all human laws and institutions, while his subjects are denied any right to restrain or depose him. This is the political philosophy by which James and Charles ruled and it is precisely the philosophy which Milton set out to destroy.

It being thus manifest that the power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferr'd and committed to them in trust from the People, to the Common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be tak'n from them, without a violation of thir natural birthright, ... it follows from necessary causes, that the Titles of Sov'ran Lord, natural Lord, and the like, are either arrogancies, or flatteries. ...

Secondly, that to say, as is usual, the King hath as good right to his Crown and dignitie, as any man' to his inheritance, is to make the Subject no better than the Kings slave. ...

Thirdly it follows, that to say Kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all Law and government. ...

It follows lastly, that since the King or Magistrate holds his autoritie of the people, both originaLly and naturally for their good in the first place, and not his own, then may the people as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retaine him or depose him though no Tyrant, meerly by the liberty and right of free born Men, to be govern'd as seems to them best.43

The type of government which Milton conceived to be most just and practical was one in which the limits of political authority are clearly defined by law and the rulers held strictly accountable to the people. History, he argued, shows that government by men soon tends to become corrupted; only government by law can effectively protect the rights and liberties of the people.44 What Milton ultimately desired was a

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43 C. E., V, 10-14.
44 C. E., V, 9-10.
political structure wherein the people are governed by magistrates who are in turn held in check by the laws which the people themselves have enacted.

The method of government which he envisioned should, theoretically, insure a just and efficient administration of national affairs. But history has shown that, in practice, no system of checks and balances can of itself provide an effectual safeguard against political corruption. Competent, equitable government is possible only so long as both the people and the magistrates maintain a constant and earnest solicitude for the public welfare. Once self-interest is elevated above the common good, the state no longer conducts affairs with perfect impartiality towards all its citizens. As a result, injustice flourishes and the government becomes infected with a decay which, if unchecked, eventuates in the establishment of a despotism, benevolent or malignant.

Of all this Milton was well aware. A tyranny, he argued, arises when the ruler, "regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction." However, the responsibility for sustaining a tyranny resides not with the tyrant but with the people themselves. It is their apathy or, what is worse, their condonation of misrule, that enables a despotism to become firmly entrenched.

If men within themselves would be govern'd by reason, and not generally give up thir understanding to a double tyranny, of Custom from without, and blind affections within, they

45 C. E., V, 18.
would discern better, what it is to favour and uphold the Tyrant of a Nation. But being slaves within doors, no wonder they strive so much to have the public State conformably govern'd to the inward vicious rule, by which they govern themselves.46

The importance of this observation can scarcely be overlooked. If the people have the right to delegate political authority to their kings and magistrates, they also have a corresponding obligation to see that their public officials do not abuse the authority delegated to them. If the people fail to discharge their responsibilities, if because of cowardice, complacency, or self interest, they submit to tyranny, they must share in their tyrant's guilt.47

In pointing up this obligation of the people to resist tyranny, Milton was advancing what was for England a new political concept. The Tudor theorists had emphasized that it was the duty of the sovereign to rule for the common good, not his own; but they had been equally insistent that subjects were morally bound to obey their monarch in all things. Pym and Hampden had attempted to justify the revolt of Parliament against the Crown on the grounds that King and Commonwealth were indivisible, with the implication that anyone who fought on behalf of Parliament was, in reality, also fighting on behalf of the King. Even the High Court of Justice which condemned Charles to death had pretended it was the government of England that was prosecuting a private traitor and public enemy, Charles Stuart. What Milton advocates, therefore,

46B. R., V, 1.

47Ibid.
was for his time a radical doctrine to which few of his countrymen could subscribe.

Milton permitted himself no illusions about the matter. His conception of the nature of government necessarily involved a justification of what his contemporaries conceived to be the greatest disaster which could befall a nation, civil war. But he had no alternative. Tyrannies do not dissolve merely because people want them to do so; they must be destroyed, usually by force of arms. While rebellion is not something to be entered upon lightly, occasions do arise when the people must resort to it, if they are faithfully to discharge their moral obligations.

Therefore when the people or any part of them shall rise against the King and his authority executing the Law in any thing establish'd civil or Ecclesiastical, I doe not say it is rebellion, if the thing commanded though establish'd be unlawful, and that they sought first all due means of redress (and no man is furder bound to Law) but I say it is an absolute renouncing both of Supremacy and Allegiance, which in one word is an actual and total deposing of the King, and the setting up of another supreme authority over them.  

Under the circumstances which he outlined, civil war becomes merely the means whereby the people assert their right as "free born Men, to be govern'd as seems to them best." However, in cases where the ruler has proved himself to be an out-and-out tyrant, civil rebellion must be considered an instrument of Divine Justice, inflicted to chastise the malefactor for his wickedness.

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C. E., V, 32.
If such a one there be, by whose Commission, whole mas­sachers have been committed on his faithfull Subjects; his Provinces offerd to pawn or alienation, . . . be he King, or Tyrant, or Em­perour, the Sword of Justice is above him; in whose hand soever is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion, and so great a deluge of innocent blood. For if all human power to execute, not accidentally but intendedly, the wrath of God upon evil doers without exception, be of God; then that power, whether ordinary, or if that faile, extraordinary so executing the intent of God, is lawfull, and not to be resisted. 49

But if the people have the right and obligation to resist and de­pose tyrants, they must also have the right to punish public officials who have abused their trust.

. They tell us that the Law of nature justifies any man to defend himself, eev'n against the King in Person: let them shew us then why the same Law, may not justifie much more a State or whole people, to doe justice upon him, against whom each privat man may lawfully defend himself; seing all kind of justice don, is a defence to good men, as well as a punishment to bad; and justice don upon a Tyrant is no more but the necessary self-defence of a whole Common wealth. 50

The question is, to what extent may the people punish kings and magis­trates who betray their offices? Milton argued for execution.

. . . Whom they may defiance, and meet in battell, why may they not as well prosecute by justice? For lawfull warr is but the execution of justice against them who refuse Law. Among whom if it be lawfull . . . to slay the King himself comming in front at his own peril, wherfore may not justice doe that intendedly, which the chance of a defensive

49. C. E., V, 7.

50. C. E., V, 55.
warr might without blame have don casually, may purposely, if it finde him among the rest.51

The main lines of the argument are clear enough. Kings and magistrates are not entitled, by virtue of their offices, to any immunity for their official conduct. By the very act of deposition they are shorn of all rank and privilege and must stand accountable for their crimes, the same as any private citizen who violates the law. Further, when the offences of public officials are of such a serious nature as to endanger the laws and liberties of the land, the state is justified in exacting the death penalty in retribution for those offences.

Milton viewed this right of the people to punish tyrants as one of the strongest deterrents to abuse of political authority. More than that, he felt that the execution of a wicked despot was an exemplary act which brought honor and glory to the people who had shown both the moral and physical courage not only to resist tyranny but also to strike down the evil-doer who had threatened to enslave their country. It was at once a just and patriotic action.52

These, then, are the political principles upon which Milton hoped the new commonwealth would be built: sovereignty residing with the people, who delegate authority to their kings and magistrates; political authority defined and limited by laws which the people themselves enact; rulers bound by covenant to govern in accordance with these laws.

51 C. E., V, 54.
52 C. E., V, 41.
Should any governor overstep or abuse his authority, the people would have the right and obligation to restrain him. In the event he would not be restrained peacefully, the people might depose and punish him, and for such purposes might resort to civil war, if necessary.

It was a cold, practical philosophy of government, shorn of all the theological and traditional trappings which marked the Puritan and Tudor concepts of rule. Milton took into account all the hard facts of political life—the collapse of Charles' personal rule, the shortcomings of the Long Parliament, the devastation of two civil wars—and attempted to explain these facts in terms of a theory which graphically pointed up the inadequacy of England's political leadership during the decade 1639-49. But his concern was not so much with the past as it was with the future. A new commonwealth was being formed. If it was constructed along the lines suggested in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, the country would enjoy every opportunity of prospering under a just and stable government. On the other hand, if the new state was not so modelled, there was every chance that the disasters of the past ten years would recur.

Specifically, Milton envisioned two serious threats to the new republic. The first came from those politicians who would have restored the Tudor-type monarchy, even King Charles himself; the second, from those Protestant divines who claimed for themselves the temporal power and prestige which the Anglican bishops has enjoyed prior to the revolution.
The politicians whom Milton assailed were not the Royalists who had fought the civil wars on the side of their King. Rather he attacked those Parliamentary leaders who, having defeated Charles in the field, betrayed the principles for which they had fought by trying to restore him to his throne.

... After they have juggl'd and palter'd with the world, banded and born armes against thir King, devested him, disannointed him, nay curs'd him all over in thir Pulpits and thir Pamphlets, to the ingaging of sincere and real men, beyond what is possible or honest to retreat from, not only turne revolters from those principles, which only could at first move them, but lay the staine of disloyaltie, and worse, on those proceedings, which are the necessary consequences of thir own former actions; nor dislik'd by themselves, were they manag'd to the intire advantages of thir own Faction.53

What made these men so dangerous was not their misguided adhesion to Tudor principles, or even their base hypocrisy; rather it was the self-interest which motivated their actions. Such leaders are not concerned with the common good; all their efforts are engaged in advancing their personal schemes and ambitions, even to the detriment of their country. It was against such self-seekers and those who joined with them in their attempt to save Charles that Milton sounded a note of warning.54

It is easy to understand why he was so antagonistic toward those who sought to reestablish the monarchy. Apathy, weakness, emotion, self-interest, and custom--these are all contributory factors in the

53 C. E., V, 2.

54 C. E., V, 2-3.
rise of a tyranny, and are, consequently, inimical to the idea of ef-
icient and equitable government. Yet these were the causes underlying
the clamor for the King's restoration. If the King's republican adher-
ents, motivated as they were, had succeeded, the conditions which had
existed before 1641 would again have prevailed, and all that had been
gained through the revolution would have been irrevocably lost.

Equally dangerous to the state, from Milton's point of view, was
the threat posed by those clergymen who would establish Presbyterianism
as the national religion. In their zeal to impose the "holy community"
upon all Englishmen, they would create a religious tyranny which, for
Milton, was every bit as malignant as a political despotism.

... There arose a covetous and ambitious gener-
ation of Divines (for Divines they call themselves)
who feining on a sudden to be new converts and
proselytes from Episcopacy, under which they
had long temporiz'd, op'nd thir mouthes at length,
in shew against Pluralities and Prelacy, but with
intent to swallow them down both; gorging them-
selves like Harpy's on those simonious places and
preferments of thir ou ted predecessors, as the
quarry for which they hunted, not to pluralities
onely but to multiplicitie: for possessing which
they had accusd thim thir Brethren, and aspiring
under another title to the same authoritie and
usurpation over the consciences of all men.55

He was especially disturbed by the expediency which the divines
practiced. At the beginning of the revolution they were militant
Parliamentary partisans; but once Charles had agreed to a Presbyterian
Establishment, they changed colors and rallied to his support.56

55 C. E., V, 52-3.

56 C. E., V, 6.
Milton found in the Presbyterian divines all the vice and hypocrisy he had once discovered in the Anglican prelates. He saw the ministers as a destructive element in the state and, consequently, on them he poured his most bitter invective. It was his hope that in time these ignorant assertors in thir own art will have prov'd themselves more and more, not to be Protestant Divines, . . . but rather to be a pack of hungrie Churchwolves, who . . . have got pos­session or seiz'd upon the Pulpit, as the strong hold and fortress of thir sedition and rebellion against the civil Magistrate.57

Although he obviously believed them to be deficient as spiritual leaders, Milton was nevertheless willing to permit these ministers to exercise their religious functions, providing they did not meddle in politics.

I have something also to the Divines, though brief to what were needful; not to be disturbers of the civil affairs, being in hands better able and more belonging to manage them; but to study harder, and to attend the office of good Pastors, knowing that he whose flock is least among them hath a dreadfull charge, not performd by mounting twice into the chair with a formal preachment huddl'd up at the odd hours of a whole lazy week, but by incessant pains and watching in season and out of season, from house to house over the soules of whom they have to feed.58

Milton, then, disapproved of the activities of the divines for precisely the same reason he took exception to the efforts of the politicians to restore the King. If the clergymen had their way, they


58 C. E., V, 44.
would bring about a return of conditions which originally provided the
spark for the great rebellion. As far as Milton could see—and in this
conviction he never wavered—any return to the church-state institution
of the past must inevitably lead to disaster for the country. From his
point of view, only an unqualified and irrevocable rejection of Tudor
policies, both secular and religious, could insure for England a
tranquil and prosperous future.

Although his contemporaries must have deemed *The Tenure of Kings*
and *Magistrates* a rather radical document, Milton himself did not feel
that his theory of government involved any marked departure from the
traditional English concept of rule. If anything, he believed that the
Tudor-Stuart monarchy itself was a perversion of the natural political
order. This he makes clear in *Eikonoklastes*, the pamphlet which, at
the order of Parliament, he reluctantly penned in refutation of the
Royalist tract, *Eikon Basilike*.

In *Eikonoklastes* Milton asserts that, historically, England has
been a commonwealth, not an autocracy; consequently, any attempt by an
English monarch to set himself up as the sole organ of government,
responsible to no human authority, must constitute a severe violation
of the rights of the English people. The traditional government of


60 *C. E.*, V, 175-6.
England is composed of King and Parliament, acting jointly for the welfare and security of the state and its citizens. Such being the constitution of the government, neither legally nor logically can the King treat Parliament as an instrument subservient to his will, accepting or rejecting its proposals as they suit his pleasure.

For the Law, it ordains a Parliament to advise him in his great affairs; but if it ordains also that the single judgement of a King shall outbalance all the wisdom of his Parliament, it ordains that which frustrates the end of its own ordaining. For where the Kings judgement may dissent, to the destruction, as it may happ'n, both of himself and the Kingdom, there advice, and no furder, is a most insufficient, and frustraneous means to be provided by Law, in case of so high concernment. And where the main & principal Law of common preservation against tyranny is left so fruitless and infirm, there it must needs follow that all lesser Laws are to thir severall ends and purposes much more weak, and uneffectual. For that Nation would deserve to be renownd and Chronicl'd for folly & stupidity, that should by Law provide force against privat and petty wrongs, advice only against tyranny and public ruin.61

In fact, he continues—and here he employs Oxinden's theory—it is only by virtue of his relation to Parliament that the King of England can be said to be a king at all.

... For if the Parliament represent the whole Kingdom, as is sure enough they doe, then doth the King represent onely himselfe; and if a King without his Kingdom be in a civil sense nothing, then without or against the Representative of his whole Kingdom he himself represents nothing, and by consequence his judgement and his negative is as good as nothing.62

From this chain of reasoning Milton derives the inescapable conclusion that, in the last analysis, it is to the Parliament rather than to the King that the people have delegated the bulk of political authority.

In all wise Nations the Legislative power, and the judicial execution of that power have bin most commonly distinct, and in several hands: but yet the former supreme, the other subordinat. If then the King be only set up to execute the Law, which is indeed the highest of his office; he ought no more to make or forbid the making of any law agreed upon in Parliament . . . . Neither can he more reject a Law offerd him by the Commons, then he can new make a Law which they reject.  

Thus, in Milton's view, the King can legitimately function only as the chief administrator in the commonwealth. He cannot of himself enact new legislation, repeal existing laws, or levy taxes. And, above all, he cannot employ the militia without the consent of his Parliament.  

There is one further limitation to the King's power. Since he is subordinate to the Parliament and, indeed, cannot rule without its consent, then it follows that he cannot have the right arbitrarily to dissolve his legislature.  

If the powers of the Crown are limited, so also are the powers of Parliament. Although in Eikonoklastes Milton is directly concerned

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63 C. E., V, 132.

64 C. E., V, 170-1.

65 C. E., V, 120-1.
with the abuses of royal authority, he none the less makes it manifestly clear that Parliament is elected by free-born citizens and is, therefore, responsible to them for its actions. Parliament may indeed "represent the whole Kingdom," but it can no more identify itself with the kingdom than can the King. The political philosophy, "L'Etat c'est moi," whether uttered by King or Commons, is wholly antithetical to the English concept of rule. In England the people alone have the right to delegate or reserve political authority as they see fit.

One power which Milton believes the people have so reserved to themselves is freedom of conscience in matters of religion.

. . . Nothing can be to us Catholic or universal in Religion, but what the Scripture teaches; whatsoever without Scripture pleads to be universal in the Church, in being universal is but more Scismatical. Much less can particular Laws and Constitutions impart to the Church of England any power of consistory or tribunal above other Churches, to be sole Judge of what is Sect or Schism. 66

Although he is ostensibly attacking the abolished Anglican Establishment, Milton obviously has in mind both the Prelats and thir fellow-teachers, though of another Name and Sect [the Presbyterian divines], whose Pulpit stuff, both first and last, hath bin the Doctrin and perpetual infusion of servility and wretchedness to all thir hearers; whose lives the type of worldliness and hypocrisie, without the least true pattern of vertue, righteousness, or self-denial in thir whole practice. 67

66 C. E., V, 206.

67 C. E., V, 69.
The government has neither the legal nor moral right to set up a national church to which all citizens must submit, or to persecute those who follow the purely religious dictates of their respective consciences. Over matters of faith the people have not given, indeed could not give, the state any authority.

In describing what he claims to be the fundamental English concept of monarchy, Milton makes no attempt to convince his readers that either Kings or Parliaments have ever scrupulously adhered to the principles he has set down. "All men," he writes, "by thir own and thir Childrens interest are oblig'd to honestie and justice: but how little that consideration works in privat men, how much less in Kings, thir deeds declare best."68 And, he argues, it was precisely this disregard of the traditional constitutional framework, coupled with the establishment of a personal rule which was neither honest nor just, that ultimately led to the Puritan Revolution. Conceding that the Tudor system may have given England a lengthy period of prosperity, Milton nevertheless maintains that "wealth and plenty in a land where Justice reignes not, is no argument of a flourishing State, but of a neerness rather to ruin or commotion."69

To some readers it may appear that in framing his indictment against Charles and the Tudor theory of monarchy, Milton was merely

68 C. E., V, 80.
69 C. E., V, 154.
following the party line set down by Cromwell and the Council of State, rather than presenting his own convictions. Superficially such suspicions are natural enough. *Eikonoklastes* was "Published by Authority."\(^{70}\) and Milton himself admits that the treatise was "a work assign'd rather, then by me chos'n or affected."\(^{71}\) But the fact that *Eikonoklastes* was an official pamphlet does not necessarily carry with it the implication that the author did not himself believe in the truth of what he was writing. To the contrary, all available evidence seems to indicate that Milton wholeheartedly subscribed to the position taken by his superiors. There is nothing in *Eikonoklastes* which appears materially inconsistent with either *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* or *The History of Britain*, neither of which can be classified as an official document, the former having been completed before Milton assumed the office of Secretary for Foreign Tongues, while the latter was composed at intervals from 1648 onward. Further, the principles enunciated in *Eikonoklastes* Milton continued to advocate, not only in the Latin *defensiones* but also in those last tragic pamphlets written on the eve of the Restoration. As E. M. W. Tillyard has correctly observed:

> Although Milton may have written *Eikonoklastes* with small relish, there is every reason to believe that he trusted and admired his employers. These, it must be remembered, were not Parliament but the Council of State, the executive authority and a body of men contrasted in their integrity with the corrupt members of Parliament. Through the Council

\(^{70}\) Title-page, C. E., V, 62.

\(^{71}\) C. E., V, 64.
of State he sees the hand of God working and on it he focuses his hopes. Because he believes in it, he can once again speak of his country with enthusiasm when called on to answer the attacks of Salmiasi on the regicides.\(^72\)

If, then, Milton did subscribe to the official position concerning Charles and the Tudor-Stuart monarchy, he did so because he believed that position to be accurate, honest, and just. The views expressed in *Eikonoklastes* may coincide with those of his superiors; none the less, they remain Milton's own.

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Undoubtedly, the most unpleasant aspect of Milton's political tracts is the unashamed justification of the execution of King Charles as a noble and glorious action. Modern readers, chiefly interested in the delineation and application of a political theory which anticipates many current democratic ideas, may tend to play down the defense of regicide. But for Milton's contemporaries the vindication of Charles' murder overshadowed all other elements. If, as I have suggested, Milton was primarily concerned with the rights and obligations of governments in relation to the people, why did he find it necessary to justify the execution so eloquently and at such length?

First of all, we know that as a political theorist Milton embraced the principle of tyrannicide. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* he demonstrated, from historical and philosophical perspectives that

\(^72\) Tillyard, pp. 183-4.
"it is Lawfull, and hath been held so through all Ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked KING, and after due convicion, to depose, and put him to death; if the ordinary MAGISTRATE have neglected, or deny'd to doe it."^73 And in Eikonoklastes he offered a very practical reason for his position:

For so long as a King shall find by experience that doe the worst he can, his Subjects, overaw'd by the Religion of thir own Covment, will only prosecute his evil instruments, not dare touch his Person, and whatever hath bin on his part offended or transgress'd, he shall come off at last with the same reverence to his Person, and the same honour as for well doing, he will not faile to find them worke... And they in that Superstition neither wholly yeilding, nor to the utmost resisting, at the upshot of all thir foolish Warr and expence, will finde to have don no more but fetched a compass only of thir miseries, ending at the same point of slavery, and in the same distractions wherein they first begun.^74

Given these convictions and the circumstances of Charles' reign, Milton could hardly have failed to approve, at least in principle, the King's execution.

But privately to approve the execution was one thing; to justify it in print, quite another. Hence we must try to determine why Milton gave public approbation to a deed which all Europe damned as an horrendous crime. And the answer is not hard to find.

We know what high hopes Milton placed in the new commonwealth. Now, if the new republic was to survive, it needed support from both

^73 Title-page, C. E., V, xii.

^74 C. E., V, 303.
the people at home and governments abroad. But Charles’ execution had
done much to alienate support from all quarters. In the seventeenth
century, civilized Christian subjects simply did not go about lopping
off their kings’ heads. When such an unprecedented event did occur,
it required elaborate justification. From the English government, how­
ever, no satisfactory explanation was forthcoming. The King’s trial
had been a mockery; the whole affair badly botched. The prestige of
the new commonwealth was at low ebb. Recognizing the urgency of the
situation, Milton took it upon himself to write The Tenure of Kings and
Magistrates, as he tells us, “rather to compose the minds of men, than
to settle any thing relating to Charles; that being the business of the
magistrates instead of mine, and which, at the time I speak of, had been
already done.” What could not be defended in law, he tried to
vindicate by philosophy and history. The attempt was not wholly suc­
cessful, with the result that Milton spent the better part of the next
six years responding to the odious charge that the English barbarians
had wantonly murdered their King. If, in the long run, Cromwell’s
military exploits rather than Milton’s polemic restored England’s
political reputation, the fault was certainly not Milton’s. At a time
when his country desperately needed moral support, he did everything
possible to aid the cause. In defending the regicide he was acting the
patriot as much as any soldier in the ranks.

There was yet another reason which made Milton’s public approval
of Charles’ death mandatory. He tells us in Eikonoklastes:

75"Defensio Secunda," C. E., VIII, 137.
But the People, exorbitant and excessive in all thir motions, are prone ofttimes not to a religious onely, but to a civil kinde of Idolatry in idolizing thir Kings; though never more mistak' n in the object of thir worship; heretofore being wont to repute for Saints, those faithful and courageous Barons, who lost thir lives in the Field, making glorious Warr against Tyrants for the common Liberty. . . . But now, with a besotted and degenerate baseness of spirit, except some few, who yet retain in them the old English fortitude and love of Freedom, and have testifi'd it by thir matchless deeds, the rest, imbastardiz'd from the ancient nobleness of thir Ancestors, are ready to fall flatt and give adoration to the Image and Memory of this Man, who hath offer'd at more cunning fetches to undermine our Liberties, and putt Tyranny into an Art, then any British King before him. 76

The point is clear enough. This tendency of the English to idolize their kings makes them blind to their political responsibilities. According to Milton's theory of government, the people must hold kings and magistrates accountable for their actions. Obviously, the people will be unable to discharge that obligation as long as they venerate the memory of such a tyrant as Charles. It becomes, therefore, imperative to disabuse the popular notion that kings are, by virtue of their office, inviolable heroes, above the law. Until the people come to realize that they have not only the right but the duty to depose and execute wicked kings and magistrates, they will continue to be victimized by unscrupulous despots. In exposing Charles' misdeeds, Milton intends "no injurie to the dead, but a good deed rather to the living, if by better information giv'n them, . . . they may be kept from entring the third time unadvisedly into Warr and bloodshed." 77

76C. E., V, 68-9.
77C. E., V, 64.
It was, then, political necessity which impelled Milton publicly to justify the killing of King Charles: the need to exonerate the new English government accused of brutal murder, and the need to awaken a sentimental English citizenry to a sense of political responsibility. However Milton may have felt about the manner in which Charles was tried and convicted, there is no doubt that he was firmly convinced that the execution itself was a just and necessary act. More than that, he believed that the new government, if it was to survive, must openly applaud the execution as a vital blow struck in the cause of liberty.

The defense of regicide looms large in the anti-monarchical tracts because upon it rests the whole of Milton's political theory. Either kings receive their power directly from God and thus are accountable only to Him, or they derive their authority from the people and hence are responsible to the people. There is no middle ground. Consequently, Milton could not advocate his concept of rule without at the same time emphasizing the right of the people to depose and punish wicked princes. This is the rock upon which his political structure is built.

The year 1649 marks the high point in Milton's career as a political pamphleteer. All that a decade of revolution had taught him about political and religious institutions he summarized in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates and Eikonoklastes. Henceforward he would explain, expand, or modify the ideas contained in these two treatises. But never again would his political vision be as clear or as penetrating.
This is not to suggest that the later political tracts are without interest. Both the Latin _defensiones_ and the pamphlets of 1659-60 contain important material; indeed, the _Defensio Secunda_ is, in some respects, Milton's most compelling prose work. But, generally speaking, the _defensiones_, whatever they may have done for Milton's continental reputation, are marred by the recurrent note of personal controversy; and the pre-Restoration pamphlets are obviously the work of a rather desperate polemicist vainly battling on behalf of what he himself must have known as a lost cause. In none of these later writings do we find the objectivity or the depth of political insight that Milton displays in _The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates_ and _Eikonoklastes._

The pamphlets of 1649 stand apart as the work of a mature political thinker who, with no personal axe to grind and no commitments to existing institutions, can clearly and forcefully outline a concept of rule that assuredly anticipates the modern idea of democratic government. Milton saw England on the threshold of a political Renaissance. The revolution had finally succeeded: king, court, prelates, the loathsome corruption of the Tudor system had all been swept away. The past was dead. Now Cromwell and the Council of State could create a new governmental structure, a commonwealth in which the rights and dignity of men would be cherished and protected. It was a beautiful dream. Unfortunately, for Milton and for England the dream did not come true.

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78 See W. R. Parker, _Milton's Contemporary Reputation_ (Columbus, 1940), pp. 33 ff.
IV

THE LAST RALLY

The English Republic was proclaimed on January 4, 1649. Both the monarchy and the House of Lords were abolished. To carry out the executive duties formerly discharged by the Crown there was created a Council of State, whose forty-one members were to be elected annually by Parliament. Legislative authority remained in the hands of the Rump Parliament which, after a succession of purges, had now been reduced to some ninety members. The Judiciary was, for the time being, left untouched, although six of the twelve judges resigned their commissions rather than serve the new Commonwealth.

In the eyes of most Englishmen the form which the republican government had taken left much to be desired. No number of clever phrases could disguise the fact that the new state was essentially oligarchical. It was obvious to everyone that all real political power rested with the great generals and their civilian supporters. The Council of State might prove fearless, diligent, and incorruptible, but neither it nor the Parliament represented the masses. Indeed, with the new government constituted as it was, the establishment of anything remotely resembling a democratic state was virtually impossible.

Under the circumstances opposition to the new government became inevitable. The first signs of unrest were displayed by the Levellers,
the largest and most influential of the left-wing parties which had arisen during the Puritan Revolution.1 Shortly after the Republic had come into being, John Lilburne, noisy and aggressive as ever, published a pamphlet entitled *England's New Chains*, in which he pleaded with Parliament not to abandon its traditional rights to the Council of State, roundly abusing Oliver Cromwell in the process. For his efforts Lilburne was carted off to the Tower. But the incarceration of the author could not check the enthusiastic response which *England's New Chains* had evoked. Mutinies broke out among the rank and file in the Army; groups of veterans came forward, advocating popular sovereignty, universal manhood suffrage, and annual election of Parliaments. Nor was the protest confined to the soldiery. Gerrard Winstanley boldly announced in favor of equal rights in property and led his group of Diggers2 into Surrey, where they planned to cultivate common lands on a communal basis. To the immense relief of the government, wealthy landlords in the district soon descended on these "True Levellers," demolishing their houses and destroying their crops.

Although the mutinies were quelled and the Diggers routed, the general discontent remained to plague the government. Conservatives

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like Cromwell and Ireton, while they may have feared that adoption of
the Leveller program would lead to government of the rich by the poor
and the ultimate extinction of private property as an institution, at
the same time realized that some sort of constitutional reform was
mandatory. The question was, could there be devised any form of govern­
ment which would satisfy both army and people without placing the landed
aristocracy at the mercy of their less fortunate countrymen. To this
problem Cromwell and his friends never found a satisfactory answer.

For a while the constitutional issue hung fire. England had to
contend with the Irish rebellion (1649-52), the Scottish uprising
(1650-51), and the naval war with the Dutch (1652-54); and these matters
took priority over a constitutional settlement. While Cromwell and his
generals were fighting the Irish and the Scots, the Rump, the surviving
embodiment of the Parliamentary cause, ruled England through its chosen
instrument, the Council of State. The rule was strong, practical, effi­
cient. But it was odious to the people. Consequently, when the Round­
head armies returned fresh from victories in Ireland and the North and
added their clamor to that of the civilian population, it became im­
perative to get rid of the unpopular and unrepresentative Parliament.

But with what could the Rump be replaced? Cromwell, by now the
most important figure in England, did not know. The Army, upon whose
whole-hearted support the survival of any new government would largely

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and Ashley, p. 90.
depend, was itself divided over the issue. The Fifth Monarchy Men, led by Major-General Thomas Harrison, proposed that an assembly of saintly men should govern the country until Christ Himself came to rule His people. A more sensible approach was offered by Major-General John Lambert, who suggested that Parliament be reformed along lines indicated in the "Heads of the Proposals." Unable and unwilling to choose between two military factions, Cromwell desperately cast about for an alternative solution. For a time he even contemplated a quasi-restoration of the monarchy with Henry, youngest son of Charles I, as puppet-king.

In the end he decided to let Parliament take the lead in reforming the government. As early as November, 1651, the Rump had agreed to dissolve itself within three years. Acting on this resolution, in the Spring of 1653 Cromwell began pressing for a new assembly. The Rump countered his demands by suggesting that the Lord General be dismissed from his command. On April 19th Cromwell for the last time urged that the House nominate a committee to draw up a new constitution. The following day, convinced that the Rump meant to perpetuate its own existence, he led some thirty musketeers from his own regiment into the House and forcibly cleared the chamber.

Having expelled the Rump and dissolved the Council of State, Cromwell was confronted with the onerous task of creating a new government. At first he followed Harrison's advice and tried to set up an Assembly of Saints. The independent churches drew up a list of notable Puritans with acceptable political records, from which a council of officers
chose 140, including five Scottish and six Irish representatives. The group thus nominated is known to history as "Barebone's Parliament," after the name of a representative from London, Praise-God Barebone or Barebone.

The Assembly of Saints proved a grave disappointment. Whatever else the Saints might have been, they were certainly not practical politicians. They abolished the Court of Chancery without providing any substitute for it. They tried to disestablish the Church and abolish tithes, but they offered no other formula for paying the clergy. They attacked the institution of private property, so dear to Cromwell's heart, and advocated Leveller ideas. Worst of all they followed the advice of the city preachers rather than the suggestions of the Lord General. When the Saints brought forward a tax reform bill which appeared to threaten the security of the soldiers' pay, Cromwell and the Army decided they had had enough of these dangerous fools. Accordingly, on December 12, 1653, the more moderate members of the Assembly were persuaded to convene before the others had awakened and pass a resolution yielding their authority back to the Lord General.

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5 A full account of these proceedings is contained in H. A. Glass's The Barebone Parliament (London, 1899), and S. R. Gardiner's History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, Vol. II (London, 1903).

Cromwell now turned to Lambert, who, with other Army leaders, had prepared an "Instrument of Government." This was England's first written constitution. Under its provisions Cromwell was named Lord Protector of the Commonwealth. Executive power was divided between the Protector and a Council of State comprising eight civilian and seven military members, all of whom were nominated for life. The Protector could not declare war, make peace, or approve ordinances without the consent of the Council. Legislative and taxation authority was conferred upon a unicameral Parliament which was to be elected by voters who possessed real or personal property valued at 200 pounds or more. Finally, religious liberty was guaranteed to all except Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

The "Instrument of Government" was designed to please the Lord General: it protected the rights of property owners and it assured religious toleration, the two principles he held most dear. He gladly accepted the "Instrument," feeling that it both justified his rule and offered a system of government calculated to appeal to all the people except the Levellers and extreme Royalists.

But once again he was doomed to disappointment. Parliament had no sooner met in September, 1654, than it began to take apart the new constitution. Despite the voting restrictions a lively Republican bloc had been elected and it took the initiative in pushing forward

7 Churchill, p. 308.

8 S. R. Gardiner, Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-60 (Oxford, 1905), 405-17.
constitutional reforms. Cromwell felt compelled to warn the legislators against interfering with the Protectoral administration. In the end he was forced to exclude the Republican members from the House.

Getting rid of the Republicans did not solve all of Cromwell's problems. There remained a large group of Presbyterians which sought to limit the degree of toleration granted by the "Instrument." If this were not bad enough, the majority of the members, hoping to avoid the fate of their predecessors, favored restricting Cromwell's control over the Army and reducing the size and pay of the military establishment. Incensed by the recalcitrance of his legislature, Cromwell dissolved Commons at the first opportunity permitted by the "Instrument." It was January, 1655.

For the next twenty-one months Cromwell and the Council of State ruled alone. By the summer of 1656, however, the government's treasury had been so depleted that it was found necessary to summon another Parliament. Again every effort was made to secure the election of representatives favorable to the Protectorate. But, as in 1654, a number of Levellers, Roya lists, and Republicans were elected, with the result that Cromwell once more was compelled to purge about a hundred members before he could obtain an acquiescent legislature. It was during this session that a group of lawyers and gentry offered Oliver the crown, arguing that "the title of Protector is not limited by any rule or law; the title of King is."⁹ Cromwell himself felt that transforming the Protectorate into a monarchy might give to the government

⁹ Churchill, p. 310.
greater stability, but the Army was hostile to the idea. Consequently, it was rejected in May, 1657. Instead the "Instrument of Government" was replaced by a new constitution known as the "Humble Petition and Advice," under the terms of which the powers of the Council of State were reduced and those of Parliament enlarged. The Lord Protector was granted the right to name his own successor and the authority to nominate the members of a second legislative chamber which was to be the equivalent of the old House of Lords. Further the Lord Protector was given the title, "His Highness." The wheel had come full circle. The monarchy had been restored in all but name.

The new government proved no more successful than the previous ones. When Parliament met on January 20, 1658, most of Cromwell's supporters were sitting in the second chamber; in Commons sat most of his enemies. The Republicans, who had resumed their seats in the Lower House, were not long in launching a vigorous attack on the other legislative body. Cromwell, fearing a coalition between the Republicans and discontented military elements was imminent, immediately dissolved the session. The last expedient had failed. Although the country was at war--and had been almost continuously for the past twenty years--the government impoverished, and the people confused and divided over political issues, no means of bringing about congenial working relations between the executive and legislative branches had been found. In the nine year period following the death of the King, four systems of government had been introduced; five Parliaments had been summoned--all to no avail. The breach remained. What little had been accomplished since
the proclamation of the English Republic had come about through the agency of a military dictatorship which was every bit as absolute as had been the personal rule of King Charles. The sad fact is that, at the death of Cromwell, England was no closer to a democratic form of government than she had been before the Revolution.

Oliver Cromwell died on September 3, 1658. On his deathbed the Lord Protector exercised the authority granted him in the "Humble Petition and Advice" and nominated as successor his oldest surviving son, Richard. The choice was unfortunate, for Richard, although not wholly devoid of political astuteness, lacked those qualities of leadership necessary to direct England's destiny at this critical hour. None the less, his accession was ratified by the Council of State and he was duly installed in office.

From the beginning things went badly. The Army soon made it clear that it was not prepared to extend to Richard the same authority it had given to his father. Although the generals would have been content to control the Army and act as principal advisors to the Protector, the junior officers and the rank and file wanted to limit the authority of the new regime. And it was these latter who were calling the tune. On October 8th they presented the Protector with a petition which requested, first, that Fleetwood be named commander-in-chief, and, second, that all future military appointments be ratified by a council of
For a few days Richard resisted this attempt to wrest control of the military from his hands, but ultimately he was compelled to name Fleetwood lieutenant general of all the Army.

Throughout October and November Richard tried to arrive at a modus vivendi with the Army, but as pressures from the military increased, it became apparent that only an appeal to the civil power could preserve the Protector's authority. Consequently, on December 3rd Richard took the advice of his brother Henry and the Council of State, most of whose members still supported the Protectorate, and summoned Parliament. The move proved to be his undoing.

The Parliament which convened on January 27, 1659, was not directly antagonistic toward the Protector, but it was extremely hostile toward the Army; indeed, from the viewpoint of the Parliamentary leaders, the primary object of the session was to return control of the Army to the civilian authority, and it was this purpose which governed all their actions. Unfortunately, Parliament's methods of achieving its objective proved more embarrassing to the government than to the military. First, Commons called into question the validity of all Acts since Oliver's last purge of Parliament, among which Acts was the ratification of Richard's succession by the Council of State. Second, they tried to place active command of all military forces in the hands of the Protector, although the Protector himself had delegated that authority to Fleetwood. Third, they decreed that no council of officers should meet...

10 Godfrey Davies, The Restoration of Charles II (San Marino, Calif., 1955), p. 34.
without the consent of the Protector and Parliament; this despite the fact that, since his assumption of office, Richard had countenanced such meetings and given them quasi-official status. Fourth, they ordered that any officer who refused to pledge himself not to interfere with the free assembly of Parliament should be dismissed from his command.¹¹

These Parliamentary actions put Richard in an impossible position. On the one hand, he could scarcely disapprove of legislation designed to bolster his legal authority. On the other hand, he could not afford to offend the Army, which alone had the power to enforce the legislation. His only hope of resolving the dilemma lay in reconciling the civil and military disputants. But this he could not achieve. The Army, determined to preserve its independence as a separate estate of the realm, angrily demanded that Parliament be dissolved. Richard, finding that even his personal guards had defected, capitulated on April 22nd.¹²

The dissolution of Parliament left England without any legal government. Richard remained nominally Protector but he had been shorn of even the semblance of authority. The Army had boldly taken over control of the country and it meant to establish a pure republic in which military interests and sectarian doctrines would occupy the first place.


¹² Ibid, p. 84.
The first step in creating the new government was to secure a legislature which would be sympathetic toward the Army's purposes. To this end the old Rump Parliament, which Oliver Cromwell had dissolved in 1653, was recalled. The military leaders reasoned that the Rump shared with the Army responsibility for the execution of King Charles; consequently, it should be willing to indemnify the soldiers for whatever acts they had committed on behalf of Parliament and the Commonwealth. Further, while in power, the Rump had shown itself to be the most republican of Cromwell's Parliaments, and this fact should make it acceptable to the rank and file of the Army. With a legislature congenial to the Army and a Council of State composed of military and civilian members, England, for the first time in twenty years, would be able to enjoy stable, equitable government.

The Army was, however, doomed to disappointment. No Parliament led by Vane, Hazelrigg, and Scott would complacently become a rubber stamp for the Army brass. The Rump proved as irritating to Fleetwood and Lambert as it had to Oliver Cromwell. First, it passed an indemnity act which, according to Lambert, granted officers no immunity for what they had done but rather made them liable to be called in question for everything they had received. Second, although Fleetwood was recognized as commander-in-chief of the Army, a procedure was set up whereby the commissions of high-ranking officers would henceforward be signed by the Speaker of the House. Third, a commission of twelve M.P.'s,


14 Ibid, pp. 105-106.
colonels, and merchants was appointed with authority to eliminate all abuses and corruptions within the Army, to prevent waste and embezzlement, and to dismiss unsatisfactory officers under the rank of captain.\(^{15}\) Thus, in the first six weeks of its session the Rump delivered three stinging rebuffs to the military powers which had recalled it from exile.

The Army accepted these decrees of Parliament only with the greatest reluctance. The only alternatives to the Rump were a Stuart restoration or the naked rule of the sword. To the rank and file neither of these alternatives proved appealing; consequently, the Army acceded to the Rump's edicts, albeit with bitterness and rancour.

Meanwhile, the process of organizing the new government went on. A Republican constitution was drawn up and accepted. The debts of Richard and Henry Cromwell were paid on the condition that they quietly retire to private life. Freedom of the press was guaranteed.\(^{16}\) A "Humble Representation and Petition," requesting the abolition of tithes, was rejected,\(^{17}\) but otherwise toleration was granted to most of the religious sects.\(^{18}\) Finally, a resolution that this Parliament should not sit after May 7, 1660, was passed on June 6th.

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\(^{16}\)Ibid., pp. 118-119.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 120.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 119-121.
Although relations between the Rump and the Army were inimicable, the new government appeared to be firmly established. After Sir George Booth's uprising had been crushed, any further Royalist effort to overthrow the Republic became unthinkable. It remained only for Parliament and Army to settle their differences and England could at long last embark upon a period of peace and prosperity.

As in the past, however, appearances once again proved deceptive. The Army had no intention of subordinating its interests to the authority of Parliament. Said General Lambert, "I know not why they [i.e. Parliament] should not be at our mercy as well as we at theirs."\(^{19}\) For its part, the Rump refused to recognize the Army as a separate estate of the realm but insisted upon looking at the military establishment as merely an instrument at the disposal of the civil government. Although the attitude of neither party was well-advised, that of Parliament was by all odds the more foolish. The Army could possibly get along without the Rump, but the Rump could not possibly get along without the Army.

The dispute came to a head in mid-October. On October 5th, Disbrowe, with Lambert's blessing, presented to Commons a petition which requested, among other things, that anyone levelling defamatory imputations in Parliament against the Army should be punished, that members of the Army be permitted to exercise their right as freemen to petition the Parliament, and that no officer be cashiered except by

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\(^{19}\) Davies, *The Restoration of Charles II*, pp. 113-114.
action of a court martial. The Rump began considering the petition on the 8th. On the 12th it revoked the commissions of Lambert, Disbrowe, and seven other high-ranking officers. At the same time, Fleetwood's commission as commander-in-chief was annulled and the entire Army was placed in the hands of seven commissioners, among them Fleetwood, Monck, and Hazelrigg. On the following day Lambert took up the Rump's challenge. His regiments formed a ring around Westminster and turned back members who tried to reach the House, among them Speaker Lenthall. The Rump Parliament had once again been forcibly dissolved.

England now entered upon a period of anarchy. Lambert embarked upon hazardous and secret negotiations to effect the restoration of the King; Fleetwood, suspicious of Lambert's intentions, fretted and fumed; Hazelrigg fled to Portsmouth where he rallied the garrison on behalf of the Rump; and in Scotland George Monck announced for Parliament and Law, informing Fleetwood and Lambert by letter that he was prepared to fight, if necessary, for the restoration of the Rump. Meanwhile, in London, the Committee of Safety, which had replaced the expelled Rump as the organ of government and whose membership included Fleetwood, Lambert, Disbrowe, Vane, and Harrington, attempted vainly to bring order out of chaos.

For the next two months England lay under the rule of the sword. In November Lambert marched north to answer the threat posed by Monck,


21 Ibid., p. 151.
taking with him most of the troops stationed in London. The following month, the forces sent to besiege Hazelrigg's garrison at Portsmouth changed sides and began advancing on London. The news of this defection greatly disheartened the Committee of Safety. It was obvious that Fleetwood could no longer control the forces under his command. On December 23rd the Army drew up before the house of Speaker Lenthall in Chancery Lane and submitted itself to his authority and that of the Parliament. The following day Fleetwood advised the Speaker that the House might convene without interference from the military. Two days later the Rump began its final session.

The restoration of the Rump, however, did not resolve England's political crisis. Although the Army no longer posed a threat to its existence, the Rump felt severe pressures from other quarters. In England, the people, their patience finally exhausted by the long succession of unsuccessful constitutional experiments, began to clamor for a stable government and the election of a free Parliament. In Scotland, General Monck, pledging his supporters a free Parliament and the re-establishment of law and order, prepared to invade England.

On January 1, 1660, Monck, meeting with no resistance from Lambert's forces, crossed the Tweed and began his famous March on London. At York he was joined by Fairfax, who had rallied a large following for free Parliamentary elections. The Rump, realizing that it could not hope to withstand Monck's forces, invited the general to come to London. On February 3rd Monck entered the capital and immediately demanded the election of a new assembly. The Rump did what it could to resist. It
was manifestly clear to the Republican members that a free election
would return a sufficient number of Cavaliers and Presbyterians to in-
sure restoration of the Stuart monarchy, and this they were determined
to forestall at all costs. Consequently, action on Monck's proposal was
delayed until the general became so exasperated that, on February 21st,
he recalled to their seats all members of Parliament who had been ex-
cluded at the time of Pride's Purge. The return of the secluded mem-
bers gave the Royalists a majority in the House, a majority they swiftly
used to advantage. All legislative and executive acts which postdated
Pride's Purge were declared invalid; Monck was named commander-in-chief
of all the armed forces; and new elections were called for. The last
of its business having been dispatched, the Long Parliament was finally
dissolved by its own consent on March 16, 1660.

The new Parliament, which convened April 25th, quickly invited
Charles Stuart, the Pretender, to occupy the throne of England. But
the invitation was conditional. The new King must offer a general
pardon to all those who had fought against him and his father--excep-
tions to this amnesty would be determined by Parliament. Further, he
must promise to settle in full arrears in the soldiers' pay, and to
confirm all land sales involving private property which were transacted
during the interregnum. The conditions were accepted, and on May 29,
1660, King Charles II entered his capital. The Republic was dead.
The collapse of the English Republic can be traced to many factors: political, social, religious, economic; but the primary cause lay in the failure of the regicides to win from the people at large enthusiastic support for any of their governments. As we have seen, most Englishmen who supported the Parliamentary cause in the Puritan Revolution did so in the belief that they were fighting to restore the traditional balance of power between King and Parliament. At the cessation of hostilities they fully expected the King to be restored to his throne. Consequently, Charles' execution and the abolition of the monarchy came to them as a sickening surprise. Along with the Royalists they were revolted at what they considered the heinous barbarism of the regicides. They had not bargained for a republic and they felt instinctively hostile toward the new Commonwealth.

For all that, the situation was not beyond redemption. It was obvious to all that England must have some form of government and, since Cromwell's army precluded the Royalists from restoring the monarchy, a republic could have served the turn. Indeed, it seems likely that, had the regicides proposed a reasonably democratic constitution, the people would have reluctantly accepted it. But this is precisely what the regicides did not do. Each of their successive governments was, in reality, an oligarchy every bit as autocratic as the monarchy which had been overthrown. Parliament arbitrarily denied to Royalists, Anglicans, and Catholics any voice in the government, while
Cromwell, in his concern for private property rights, disenfranchised thousands of otherwise eligible voters. The net result was that, throughout the Commonwealth period, England was governed by a coalition of Puritan gentry and military leaders who served the interests of their own groups at the expense of the majority of the English people.

Nor was this all. To many who had supported the Puritan revolt, the republican governments appeared to betray the "good old cause." During the interregnum Parliaments were dissolved as soon as their deliberations displeased either Cromwell or the Army; religious settlements, unsatisfactory to orthodox Puritans and Sectarians alike, were effected; and economic policies which were every bit as odious as those of King Charles were pursued. In short, the very abuses which had inspired the nation to take up arms against its lawful King were being practiced by governments supposed to bring about the millennium.

But most disappointing of all was the woeful lack of leadership exhibited by the regicides. Cromwell, for all his genius, could never become a constitutional ruler. His guiding principle in conducting affairs of state was expediency. Once he became convinced that a given course of action would prove beneficial to England, nothing could prevent him from speedily putting that policy into effect. Such an approach to government necessarily led him to treat the various constitutions under which he ruled as so many bits of paper. It was not that Cromwell hungered after power. On the contrary, he continually sought a constitutional basis for his regime, and had he found a Parliament which subscribed to the principles that were closest to his heart, in all
probability he would have shared with it the burden of government, as he did with the major-generals during the early years of his Protectorate. Unfortunately, his Parliaments always advocated constitutional programs which differed sharply from his own; consequently, Cromwell was continually forced to choose between abandoning one or more of his principles or dismissing the offending Parliament. He invariably selected the latter alternative.

As Protector, Cromwell failed England because he tried to apply to civil administration the principles by which he had achieved greatness as a military leader. On the field of battle, following the expedient course of action, however much it may differ from the original tactical plan, more often than not spells the difference between victory and defeat. In civil affairs, however, sacrificing constitutional procedures for the sake of expedient action only serves ultimately to undermine the stability of the government. Again, in time of war a military commander must demand explicit obedience to his commands, since the responsibility for victory or defeat rests with him and him alone. But in a commonwealth the responsibility of government is shared by the executive and legislative branches; therefore, if one branch reduces the other to a state of complete subservience, the commonwealth must, for all practical purposes, disappear and be replaced by either an autocracy or an oligarchy. By elevating expediency above constitutionality, and by subjugating Parliament to his will, Cromwell transformed the English Republic into a dictatorship whose authority was derived from the swords of his followers rather than from law.
If Cromwell failed the Republic, so did the Parliamentary leaders. Throughout the Commonwealth period the principal figures in Parliament acted as if, with the execution of Charles I, the mantle of sovereignty had descended upon their shoulders. It is understandable that Parliament should have fought to maintain its independence in the legislative sphere; it is likewise understandable that it should have sought to exercise some control over the armed forces. What is not understandable is why each Parliament felt obliged to amend or revise the constitution under which it was summoned or to meddle in what were purely administrative or military affairs. It was abundantly clear that Cromwell and the Army could not be legislated out of existence and that in any show of strength Parliament was bound to emerge the loser. For all that, the Parliamentary assemblies continued to bring forward legislative programs calculated to antagonize the Protector and the military. Had any of these programs advocated the establishment of a more democratic form of government, one might at least admire the courage of its proponents; but the fact of the matter is, Parliament never advocated anything of the sort. The Parliamentary concept of reform was to appropriate to the legislature much of the authority which had been constitutionally invested in the Protector and to set up electoral machinery whereby the currently sitting body could perpetuate its own existence.22 Throughout the interregnum each Parliament by legislative action sought to acquire for itself the absolute power which Oliver Cromwell had obtained through force of arms.

22 Paul, pp. 287-295; 301-312.
The reluctance of the Commonwealth Parliaments to share the responsibility of government with any agency outside themselves contributed as much to the collapse of the Republic as did the high-handed tactics of the Lord Protector. The disgraceful struggle for power which was waged first between Cromwell and his Parliaments and later between Parliament and the Army did more to undermine public confidence in the Republic than did any other factor. At a time when England desperately needed statesmen of vision, she could find only dogmatic generals and quarrelsome politicians.

And so the Republic fell. Eleven years of inept administration had been sufficient to convince all but the most hardened Republicans that only a King could provide the leadership necessary to restore the traditional balance between the executive and legislative branches of government, and thereby bring the nightmare of the past two decades to an end.

Although the vast majority of Englishmen were convinced that only the restoration of Charles II could provide a cure for the anarchy into which England had fallen, there was a militant, if relatively small, minority who sincerely believed that a reversion to monarchical government could only bring upon the country greater evils than it presently endured. Among this minority was John Milton. For him, the restoration of the hated Stuarts would nullify all that had been gained by the Puritan Revolution; more than that, it would represent a flying in the
face of that benign Providence who had freed England from the chains of tyranny. As he himself put it:

If we returne to Kingship, and soon repent, as undoubtedly we shall, when we begin to finde the old encroachments coming on by little and little upon our consciences, which must necessarily proceed from king and bishop united inseparably in one interest, we may be forc'd perhaps to fight over again all that we have fought, and spend over again all that we have spent, but are never like to attain thus far as we are now advanc'd to the recoverie of our freedom, never to have it in possession as we now have it, never to be vouchsaf't heersafter the like mercies and signal assistances from heaven in our cause, if by our ingratiufull backsliding we make these fruitless; flying now to regal concessions from his divine condescensions and gracious answers to our once importuning prayers against the tyrannie which we then groaned under; making vein and viler then dirt the blood of so many thousand faithfull and valiant English men, who left us in this libertie bought with thir lives...

In strongly denouncing the proposed restoration of the Stuarts, Milton was not arguing for retention of the English Republic as it then existed. On the contrary, he was quite willing to concede that not one of the republican governments had realized the objectives for which the Commonwealth had been established. What he was not prepared to admit was that the only solution to England's political difficulties lay in the restoration of Charles II. From his point of view, such an admission was tantamount to saying that England must choose between anarchy and slavery, and he refused to believe that his countrymen were politically that bankrupt. He preferred to believe that an intelligent and resourceful people, profiting from the mistakes of the past eleven

23
C. E., VI, 118.
years, could yet devise a method of government whereby the ideals for which the Puritan Revolution had been fought might be transformed into political realities.

Milton attributed the collapse of the English Republic to three factors: faulty leadership on the part of those charged with the responsibility of administering national affairs; failure to adopt policies consonant with the objectives of the Commonwealth; and the general apathy of the public concerning political matters. As early as 1654 he had recognized these as fundamental weaknesses in the commonwealth structure and had tried to warn the nation of the threat they posed to the Republic. In the Defensio Secunda he had advised Cromwell that his high-handed tactics in administering affairs of state were likely to prove disastrous to the country.

Without our freedom, you yourself cannot be free: for such is the order of nature, that he who forcibly seizes upon the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own, is the first to become a slave: and nothing can be more just than this. But if the patron himself of liberty . . . should at last offer violence to her whom he has defended, this must, of necessity, be destructive and deadly not to himself alone, but, in a manner, to the very cause of all virtue and piety.24

At the same time he had urged the Lord Protector to use his influence as chief of state to push forward a program of constitutional reform. Separation of church and state; a simple code of laws calculated to restrain vice without unduly restricting the freedom of the individual citizen; a system of education designed to develop the

24 C. E., VIII, 226-7.
country's best minds to their fullest capacity; freedom of speech, including (although Milton does not explicitly mention it) free Parliamentary debates; and public policies based upon the needs of all the people rather than upon the interests of any single sect or faction—these were the reforms which Milton had felt must be swiftly effected if the Republic were to survive. While his program would not have cured all of the nation's ills, it would have provided a firm foundation for a more democratic governmental structure. At the time he could not have proposed any more sweeping changes, since, as he himself observed, the people were still "agitated with so many factions."

Having called attention to the need for constitutional reform, Milton, in one of the most memorable of his prose passages, had concluded the Defensio Secunda with an admonition to the people for their seeming indifference concerning matters which so vitally affected their lives:

And as for you, citizens, it is of no small concern, what manner of men ye are, whether you acquire, or to keep possession of your liberty. Unless your liberty be of that kind, which can neither be gotten, nor taken away by arms; and that alone is such, which, springing from piety, justice, temperance, in fine, from real virtue, shall take deep and intimate root in your minds; you may be assured, there will not be wanting one, who, even without arms, will speedily deprive you of what it is your boast to have gained by force of arms. ... If it be hard, if it be against the grain, to be slaves, learn to obey right reason, to be masters of yourselves; in fine, keep aloof from factions, hatreds, superstitions, injuries,

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26 C. E., VIII, 239.
lusts, and plunders. Unless you do this to the utmost of your power, you will be thought neither by God nor men, not even by those who are now your deliverers, to be fit persons in whose hands to leave liberty, the government of the commonwealth, and what you arrogate to yourselves with so much eagerness, the government of others, when like a nation in pupillage, you would then want rather a tutor, and a faithful and courageous superintendent of your own concerns. 27

The argument was essentially an amplification of the doctrine first expressed in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, that responsibility for the nature and methods of any government ultimately resides with the governed. If the people remain indifferent to, or actively support, corrupt governments, the country must eventually fall into either slavery or anarchy.

Little heed had been given to the warning contained in the Defensio Secunda: Protectors, generals, and Parliaments had continued their unholy struggle for supreme power, while the people remained as self-seeking and indifferent as before. And John Milton, perhaps more than a little disgusted by the behavior of his countrymen, after finishing the Defensio Pro Se (1655), had retired from the political arena, resigning himself, as he explained later, "to the Wisdom and Care of those who had the Government; and not finding that either God, or the Publick requir'd more of me, than my Prayers for them that govern." 28

But events turned out as he had predicted. After the death of Cromwell, all the evils he had foreseen descended upon the nation. Now

27 C. E., VIII, 239-41; 250-2.
28 C. E., VI, 101.
the country was reduced to a state of anarchy, and the people, at long last aroused from their lethargy, in their panic were clamoring for restoration of the Stuart monarchy as the only means of bringing order out of chaos.

Milton, however, could not share his countrymen's pessimistic views concerning the Commonwealth. He knew why the Republic had failed and he thought he knew how to prevent another such failure in the future. The disasters which had befallen the state he could look upon as blessings in disguise, since they provided the nation with one more opportunity to create a republican type of government. Hence, on the eve of the Parliamentary elections which were to insure the return of the exiled King, he could enthusiastically write:

Now is the opportunitie, now the very season wherein we may obtain a free Commonwealth and establish it for ever in the land, without much difficulty or delay. Writs are sent out for elections, and, which is worth observing, in the name, not of any king, but of the keepers of our libertie, to summon a free Parliament; which then only will indeed be free, and deserve the true honor of that supreme title, if they preserve us a free people. Which never parliament was more free to do, being now called not as heretofore, by the summons of a king, but by the voice of liberty. And if the people, laying aside prejudice and impatience, will seriously and calmly now consider thir own good both religious and civil, thir own libertie and the only means thereof, as shall be heer laid before them, and will elect thir Knights and Burgesses able men, and according to the just and necessary qualifications,...men not addicted to a single person or house of lords, the work is don; at least the foundation firmly laid of a free Commonwealth, and good part also erected of the main structure.29

The Commonwealth which Milton now proposed was a far different instrument from the one he had envisioned in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. Eleven years of republican rule had bred in him a distrust both of Parliaments and the electorates by which they were chosen. Where formerly he had advocated a democratic form of government under which public officials were always subject to recall by the people, he now thought in terms of an aristocracy over which the public would exercise little or no control.

The central organ of government was to be a general council elected by the people, but not by all the people. On the contrary, Milton sought to well-qualify and refine elections: not committing all to the noise and shouting of a rude multitude, but permitting only those of them who are rightly qualified, to nominate as many as they will; and out of that number others of a better breeding, to choose a less number more judiciously, till after a third or fourth sifting and refining of exactest choice, they only be left chosen who are the due number, and seem by most voices the worthiest.

Once chosen, the members of the general council were to occupy their seats for life.

That this proposal of a perpetual council was largely inspired by his disgust at the activities of the previous Commonwealth Parliaments, Milton makes manifestly clear.

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30 C. E., VI, 125-6.

31 C. E., VI, 131.

32 C. E., VI, 126-7.
I see not therefor how we can be advantag'd by successive and transitorie Parliaments; but that they are much likelier continually to unsettle rather than to settle a free government, to breed commotions, changes, novelties, and uncertainties; to bring neglect upon present matters and opportunities, while all minds are suspense with expectation of a new assembly, and the assembly, for a good space, taken up with the new settling of it self. After which, if they finde no great work to do, they will make it, by altering or repealing former acts, or making and multiplying new; that they may seem to see what their predecessors saw not, and not to have assembled for nothing; till all law be lost in the multitude of clashing statutes.33

He is willing to concede "that long continuance of power may corrupt sincerest men,"34 but, on the other hand, he argues that new elections may bring in as many raw, unexperienc'd, and otherwise affected, to the weakning and much altering for the wors of public transactions.... Safest therefor to me it seems and of least hazard or interruption to affairs, that none of the Grand Council be mov'd, unless by death or just conviction of som crime: for what can be expected firm or stedfast from a floating foundation?35

The danger of corruption was to be diminished further by severely circumscribing the powers of the Grand Council. Unlike the Councils of State which, throughout the period of the Republic, had exercised supreme administrative authority, the Grand Council would be required to share its jurisdiction with local governments.36

33 C. E., VI, 127.
34 C. E., VI, 127.
35 C. E., VI, 128.
36 C. E., VI, 143-4.
Under such a scheme of government, all major decrees of the Grand Council would be subject to ratification by the individual commonalties; so that, should a majority of the county assemblies fail to concur in approving a law promulgated by the Grand Council, that law would become null and void. Thus, final responsibility for important domestic policies would rest with the local governments rather than with the Grand Council.

Only in the sphere of foreign affairs was the General Council to exercise independent authority. Milton found little fault with the foreign policies of Cromwell and his successors. Further, he did not foresee any great division arising among the English people as a result of any foreign policy decision the Council might make. Consequently, he felt little need to alter the traditional system whereby the conduct of foreign affairs was entrusted to the national executive body.

The instrument of government which Milton proposed in The Readie and Easye Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth was specifically designed to eliminate those evils which had plagued the English Republic almost from its inception. By "qualifying and refining" elections, he hoped to insure the selection of only the most competent leaders to seats on the Grand Council. By making the Council perpetual, he expected to elevate it above the plane of ephemeral politics, so that the members could go about the work of reform as their judgments directed without fear of reprisal from disgruntled or fickle constituents. By dividing responsibility for domestic policies between the Council and local

37 C. E., VI, 136.
governments, he thought to remove the danger of dictatorship; and by
leaving the administration of civil affairs in the hands of local
authorities, he sought to safeguard the religious and civil liberties
of every citizen.

There was, as Milton well knew, one serious flaw in the system he
was advocating: the reformation of government was to be achieved
through the disfranchisement of the vast majority of English voters. He
was substituting a civilian aristocracy for a military oligarchy. Yet,
from his point of view, he had no other choice.

If the people be so affected, as to prostitute
religion and liberty to the vain and groundless
apprehension, that nothing but kingship can restore
trade,...if trade be grown so craving and importunate
through the profuse living of tradesmen, that nothing
can support it, but the luxurious expenses of a
nation upon trifles and superfluities; so as if the
people generally should betake themselves to fru-
galitie, it might prove a dangerous matter, lest
tradesmen should mutinie for want of trading, and
that therefore we must forego & set to sale religion,
libertie, honor, safetie, all concernsments Divine
or human, to keep up trading, if lastly, after all
this light among us, the same reason shall pass for
current, to put our necks again under kingship, as
was made use of by the Jews to return back to Egypt,
...because they falsely imagind that they then liv'd
in more plentie and prosperitie, our condition is
not sound, but rotten, both in religion and all
civil prudence; and will bring us soon, the way we
are marching, to those calamities which attend
slaveries and unavoidably on luxurie, all national
judgments under forein or domestic slaverie....38

That the multitudes were motivated solely by self-interest their
clamorings for restoration of the monarchy amply demonstrated.

38 C. E., VI, 147-8.
Consequently, to entrust them with the selection of their own governors was unthinkable. They must be disfranchised.

Milton, however, did not envision his commonwealth as a perpetual aristocracy. On the contrary, he believed that in due time, with proper guidance, the people at large might qualify both as electors and candidates for public office.

To make the people fittest to chuse, and the chosen fittest to govern, will be to mend our corrupt and faulty education, to teach the people faith not without vertue, temperance, modesty, sobriety, parsimonie, justice; not to admire wealth or honour; to hate turbulence and ambition; to place every one his privat welfare and happiness in the public peace, libertie, and safegtie.39

But all this lay in the future. For the present, an aristocracy of the few, chosen by the few, must be accepted as a necessary evil.

In proposing his idea of a commonwealth, Milton was well aware that he was flying in the face of public opinion. He expected neither the politicians nor the populace to abandon their plans for restoring King Charles in order to adopt his scheme of government. Quite the contrary: he knew that only a small minority of his countrymen would embrace his position and that, consequently, if his system were to become operable at all, it must become so through the use of force.

Whether they for kingship be the greater number, who can certainly determin? Suppose they be; yet of freedom they partake all alike, one main end of government; which if the greater part value not, but will degenerestly forgoe, is it just or reason-able, that most voices against the main end of government should enslave the less number that would be free? More just it is doubtless, if it

39C. E., VI, 131-2.
come to force, that a less number compell a greater to retain, which can be no wrong to them, thir libertie, than that a greater number, for the pleasure of thir bseness, compell a less most injuriously to be thir fellow slaves. They who seek nothing but thir own just libertie, have alwaies the right to winn it and to keep it, when ever they have power, be the voices never so numerous that oppose it.

However much Milton may have detested the use of force to achieve the end he so much desired, under the circumstances he was left with no other alternative. At any cost, the people must be saved from themselves.

The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth represents Milton's last great effort to prevent the restoration of the Stuarts. It is at once a confession and an affirmation: a confession of the failure of the English people to realize the objectives for which they had fought the Puritan Revolution, and an affirmation of his own unshakeable confidence in the ability of his countrymen ultimately to attain the goals "of that which is not call'd amiss the good Old Cause." If the commonwealth he proposed is essentially undemocratic, the times demanded that it be so; and if the means he would employ to establish his commonwealth were cruel and extreme, the times demanded them also. In The Readie and Easie Way Milton was not playing the role of a creative politician, as he had in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. He was fighting a defensive war and he knew it. What is more, he knew that he was going to lose.

\[40\]
C. E., VI, 140-1.

\[41\]
C. E., VI, 148.
It is difficult not to admire Milton's courage in publishing The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth at a time when it had become apparent to even the most inexperienced politician that restoration of the Stuart monarchy was inevitable. While other republican leaders were scrambling about in a desperate effort to win from the new King amnesty for their past offenses, Milton was deliberately exposing himself to the royal wrath by steadfastly adhering to the principles of the Puritan Revolution, crying down monarchy as a base institution.

God in much displeasure gave a king to the Israelites, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one; and ridiculing kings as worthless rascals:

Nay, it is well and happy for the people, if thir king be but a cypher, being oftimes a mischief, a pest, a scourge of the nation. To the end he remained the staunch advocate of republicanism. Indeed, while the Convention Parliament was in the process of inviting Charles II to ascend the English throne, Milton was defiantly offering a second edition of his Readie and Easie Way. In the England of 1660 such bold integrity was difficult to match.

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42 C. E., VI, 119.

43 C. E., VI, 121.
But if we must admire Milton's moral courage, we must at the same time question his political wisdom in proposing a commonwealth which he must have known would not, indeed could not, be established. As Godfrey Davies has observed, "He probably did his cause no good, and perhaps some harm. It was beyond redemption. By presenting the hopeless alternative, he may well have made monarchy seem the more desirable." 44

Surely it was clear to Milton that the return of Charles II did not herald a restoration of the autocracy which the Puritan Revolution had overthrown. The Tudor theory of monarchy was dead and no one, least of all Charles himself, had any intention of reviving it. On the contrary, the very process of restoration indicated that England was establishing a new system of government rather than reverting to an old institution. 45 Indeed, if the Restoration could be considered a reversion to anything in the past, it would be to what Milton, in Eikonoklastes, had with some admiration described as the traditional balance between Parliament and King; a balance in which Parliament, as the legislative authority, took the initiative in government, while the King functioned primarily as the executor of Parliament's will. Thus, in the last analysis, it would seem that Milton, by opposing the Restoration, was opposing a form of government he had once considered acceptable.


45 See Trevelyan, p. 237.
But if Milton was aware of all this, why did he persist in his futile antagonism toward the King? In recent years a number of competent scholars have wrestled with this problem. Significantly, all of their conclusions appear to be based on the assumption that Milton either misinterpreted the current political situation or was not really concerned with it at all. E. M. Clark dismisses The Readie and Easie Way as a wholly impractical solution to the problems then besetting the English Republic. Less kindly, S. B. Liljegren suggests that Milton was a crass hypocrite who completely misjudged Monck and his intentions. Others have chosen to interpret the pre-Restoration tracts as idealistic appeals designed to rally splinter groups within the Republic. Thus, Don Wolfe identifies The Readie and Easie Way with the program of the Fifth Monarchy men, while Ernest Sirluck sees it as reflecting the position of the Puritan Center parties. Howard Schultz and Arthur Barker, following the lead of Masson, have

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47 S. B. Liljegren, Studies in Milton (Lund, 1918), pp. xvi-xix.

48 Don Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution, p. 287.


51 Barker, p. 288.

52 Masson, V, 645-75.
refused to consider any practical purpose underlying the composition of
The Readie and Easie Way. Schultz considers the model of government
which Milton proposes a naturalistic utopia; Barker, on the other hand,
views it as a theocracy. Even those critics who attempt to chart a
middle path between idealism and practicality seem forced to conclude
that, although "Milton's political thought was constantly affected by
practical circumstances, it was based ultimately upon principles, not
mere expediency."53

What is fundamentally wrong with all these interpretations of
Milton's political objectives in 1659-60 is that they fail to take into
account the one fact which most satisfactorily explains his persistent
hostility toward kingship. His political convictions made it impossi-
ble for him to accept the idea of the Restoration because he actually
feared the return of the King. And his sense of public duty made it
mandatory that he publicly proclaim that fear.

From The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates and Eikonoklastes we
know Milton believed that power tends to corrupt, and that the greater
the concentration of power in the hands of a few, the greater the
chance for corruption. His plan for lessening the possibility of cor-
ruption, as proposed in The Readie and Easie Way, was to limit severely
the powers of the national administration by investing local governments
with greater authority. In this way he hoped eventually to make the
establishment of an autocracy or dictatorship impossible. Now

53 Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton: Politics and Polemics," PMLA,
restoration of the monarchy, even along the lines suggested in *Eikonoklastes*, was wholly inconsonant with this idea of decentralization of government. The joint rule of Parliament and King by its very nature demanded concentration of power in the hands of a small ruling group, and with such concentration the opportunity for corruption appreciably increased. Even if a delicate balance of power between King and Parliament was rigorously maintained, there was no assurance that the national government would respect the rights and liberties of the people. Indeed, under a constitutional monarchy, it would be quite possible for the abuses which had precipitated the catastrophe of 1641 to creep in again. Consequently, Milton could not in conscience support the Restoration.

If his political convictions forced him to oppose the Restoration, his sense of public responsibility compelled him to make his opposition known to his countrymen. How keenly Milton felt this sense of responsibility, what pride and satisfaction he took in discharging his public duty, he makes known in his "Letter to a Friend, concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth":

You have the sum of my present Thoughts, as much as I understand of these Affairs; freely imparted, at your request, and the Perswasion you wrought in me, that I might chance herby to be some way serviceable to the Commonwealth, in a time when all ought to be endeavoring what good they can, whether much, or but little. With this you may do what you please, put out, put in, communicate or suppress; you offend not me, who only have obey'd your Opinion that, in doing what I have don, I might happen to offer something which might be of som use in this great time of need. However, I have not bin wanting to the opportunity
which you presented before me of shewing the readiness
which I have in the midst of my Unfitnes, to what
ever may be requir'd of me, as a publick Duty. 54

This was the same sense of public duty which had prompted him to
write The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Nikonoklastes, and the Latin
Defensiones. However, Milton's attitude toward the Republic has
changed considerably since 1649. In the early days of the Commonwealth,
he had been confident that the Council of State would speedily put into
effect the reforms necessary to establish a democratic state. But as
the years rolled on and the regicides continued to flounder, that con­
fidence began to dwindle. The nation was either unable or unwilling to
take the steps required to set up a truly republican form of government.

This failure of his countrymen to realize the objectives of the
Puritan Revolution disgusted and angered Milton.

Where is this goodly tower of a Commonwealth, which
the English boasted they would build to overshadow
kings, and be another Rome in the west? The foundation
indeed they laid gallantly; but fell into a worse con­
fusion, not of tongues, but of factions, than those at
the tower of Babel; and have left no memorial of thir
work behind them remaining but in the common laughter
of Europ. 55

Yet he realized that, as a private individual, he could do little to
alter the course of political events. The Army and Parliament were
engaged in a suicidal struggle for power and neither he nor anyone else
could reconcile their differences. Indeed, the only service he could
perform was to keep before the minds of his countrymen the objectives

54 C. E., VI, 106.

55 C. E., VI, 117-8.
for which the Puritan Revolution had been fought. His efforts were not likely to produce any tangible political results, but he could take some consolation in the knowledge that he had done all he could for his country in her "great time of need."

Thus, in February, 1659, he published *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes*, in which he advocated complete separation of church and state. At the time this pamphlet appeared, Richard Cromwell's Parliament was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Army. Then, if ever, did Parliament need unanimity among its members; yet nothing was so likely to provoke discord between the Presbyterians and sectarians as this question of disestablishment. Parliament simply could not afford to take up the matter at that moment. What is more, there appeared to be little need for Parliament to do so. Even Milton was willing to admit that "the governors of this commonwealth, since the rooting out of prelates have made least use of force in religion, and most have favored Christian liberty of any in this land before them since the first preaching of the gospel." 56 Nevertheless, Milton felt obliged to raise the issue:

Two things there be, which have bin ever found working much mischief to the church of God, and the advancement of truth: force on one side restraining, and hire on the other side corrupting the teachers thereof. Few ages have bin since the ascension of our Saviour, wherein the one of these two, or both together, have not prevailed. It can be at no time, therefore, unseasonable

56 C. E., VI, 4.
to speak of these things; since by them the church is either in continual detriment and oppression, or in continual danger.  

These are not the words of a politician expecting to influence his country's leaders at a time of crisis any more than they are the words of an impractical idealist totally blind to political realities. Milton was completely familiar with the political exigencies, but he also had his duty to perform.

Further evidence of Milton's political attitude can be deduced from the circumstances surrounding the publication of Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church, a pamphlet urging the abolition of tithes, which he brought out in August, 1659. The restored Rump Parliament had already settled the issue the preceding June by rejecting the "Humble Representation and Advice"; hence, Milton's treatise could have little political effect, except, perhaps, to antagonize those who favored the religious settlement which Parliament had made. For Milton, however, these considerations appear to have been of little importance:

This, I am not ignorant, will be a work unpleasant to some; but what truth is not hateful to some or other, as this, in likelihood, will be to none but hirelings. And if there be among them who hold it thir duty to speak impartial truth, as the work of thir ministry, though not performd without monie, let them not envie others who think the same no less thir duty by the general office of Christianity, to speak truth, as in all reason may be thought, more impartially and unsuspectedly without monie.  

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57 C. E., VI, 4.  
58 C. E., VI, 48.
His was a mission which transcended ephemeral politics.

Finally, there is the testimony afforded by The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth. As we saw earlier, Milton was painfully cognizant of the Royalist sentiment which was sweeping England. Consequently, he did not expect his countrymen to receive his proposals with any amount of enthusiasm. Quite the contrary. He explicitly stated that he felt that only through the use of force could his proposed commonwealth be established. Now at that time the only force capable of setting up such a government in England was Monck's army. But Monck was the very man who had called for the free Parliamentary elections which were almost certain to bring about the return of the King. Milton knew this and could hardly have counted on much support from the general. None the less, he issued two editions of The Readie and Easie Way and even wrote a letter to Monck, pleading with him to support the commonwealth. Had Milton misjudged his man? It is, of course, possible, but hardly likely. A much more plausible reason for his feverish activity on behalf of the Republic is contained in the concluding paragraph of The Readie and Easie Way:

Thus much I should perhaps have said though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones; and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, O earth, earth, earth! to tell the very soil it self, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. Nay though what I spoke, should hap'rn...to be the last words of our expiring libertie.59

His was the voice of liberty and he must speak out. Even if none would listen to him, he still had the obligation and the desire to speak.

59C. E., VI, 148.
From all this it seems not illogical to suggest that in writing the pamphlets of 1659-60 Milton was primarily concerned with something other than practical politics. None the less, he was dealing with matters which had grave political implications. Therefore, it becomes important to determine whether or not he was committing a political blunder by polemizing on behalf of disestablishment and opposing the Restoration; whether or not his activity did, as Davies has alleged, more harm than good to his cause.

In answering this question we must take into consideration two important factors:

First, Milton's ideas concerning the nature and practices of a commonwealth have proved both practical and successful in nations where they have been given extensive trial, and nowhere more conspicuously than in the United States. Separation of church and state, and division of authority between federal and state governments were written into the American Constitution by the founding fathers. Further, clergymen have found to their satisfaction that they can depend for their support upon the generosity of their congregations and do not really need tithes for their maintenance. Finally, while Milton's idea of a perpetual council has not been adopted by modern democracies, it should be noted that the United States Senate does sit as a continuing body and its method of rotation is similar to one
which Milton himself suggested as an alternative to the perpetual senate. 60

But there is an even more important factor. Milton's critics will affirm that the Restoration did in fact prove quite beneficial to England, that none of Milton's dire predictions ever came to pass, and that the present-day English system of government ultimately evolved from the Restoration. As far as it goes this argument is convincing enough. There is, however, one serious flaw which must not escape our attention. For three years (1685-1688) England was ruled by James II.

James was the true heir of Charles I. Like his father, he believed in the divine right of kings, union of church and state, absolute government. Like his father, he staked his crown on an effort to become a king, in the Tudor sense of the word. And like his father; he lost his gamble. But, as Hilaire Belloc has pointed out, 61 fewer miscalculations and he might just as easily have won. And had he won, the political structure in England would have been altered for the worse, and many, if not all, of the dangers of which Milton had warned could conceivably have become realities.

On what grounds, then, can we impugn Milton's political judgment? He was certainly aware of the political problems of his time and the

60 "...If it be feared that long continuance of power may corrupt sincerest men, the known expedient is, and by some lately propounded, that annually (or if the space be longer, so much perhaps the better) the third part of Senators may go out according to the precedence of this election, and the like number be chosen in their places,...and this they call partial rotation," Readie and Easy Way, C. E., VI, 127.

61 Hilaire Belloc, James II (London, 1928).
threat they posed for England. More than that, history has shown that
the solutions he offered to those contemporary problems have proved just
as workable as those of his opponents. To be sure, it would have been
more difficult to establish his system of government than to restore the
King, but who is to say that the Restoration was, in the long run, the
better solution?

In the last analysis, all that we can say concerning Milton's
political activity during 1659-1660 is this: It was as clear to him as
to everyone else that only a miracle could prevent the restoration of
the monarchy. With all his strength and energy he worked and prayed
for that miracle, but he did not really expect it. What drove him on
was his faith in the idea of a commonwealth and his faith in his coun-
trymen's ability eventually to realize the ideals of the "good old
cause." He had the moral integrity to fight for his convictions--and
they were sound convictions--even when he knew that such fighting would
prove futile. And if his zeal and courage did indeed prove detrimental
to the cause he had espoused, the fault cannot be imputed to him. He
did all that any man could do to preserve what he believed to be the
rights and liberties of his fellow-citizens, and by so doing showed
himself to be a politician in the noblest sense of the word.
The Restoration shattered Milton's last remaining hope of seeing a true commonwealth established in England. As he saw it, God had given the English people a glorious opportunity to assert their "natural birthright," but they, of their own free will, had chosen once again "to adore and be the slaves of a single person."\(^1\) Deliberately they had cast away all the political advantages which the Puritan Revolution had conferred upon them. To such foolish ingrates a second chance for political liberty was not likely to be given.

This failure of his countrymen to set up a democratic form of government disgusted and embittered Milton. More than that, it brought about a profound shift in his political perspective. Prior to the return of Charles II, Milton had always maintained that civil governments were natural and necessary institutions. Although it was true that "all men were naturally borne free... born to command, and not to obey,"\(^2\) nevertheless he had argued that, as a result of Adam's transgression, political authority, in one form or another, was essential to preserve order and to protect the common right. Indeed, all of his suggestions concerning religious and political reform had been

\(^1\)"The Readie and Easie Way," C. E., VI, 136.

\(^2\)"The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," C. E., V, 8.
based on the premise that civil governments, susceptible as they were to corruption, none the less could prove salutary in attaining the objectives for which God had established the natural order.

For almost twenty years Milton continued to maintain that a secular commonwealth which guaranteed both religious and civil liberty was the only feasible method of government. But the final collapse of the English Republic compelled him to reappraise the political doctrine he had advocated for so long a time. He could not escape the fact his beloved commonwealth had, in practice, proved as unsatisfactory as the monarchy which had preceded it. Moreover, he could not attribute its failure solely to inept leadership. To be sure, the military and civilian authorities had, in large measure, refused to take the steps necessary to make the Republic an effective instrument of government; but they were not responsible for the Restoration. In the end, it was the people themselves who demanded the return of the King; it was the people, "borne free, ... born to command," who clamored for a return to "slavery."

The public's refusal to accept the responsibilities and hardships of government pointed up the essential weakness in Milton's concept of rule. If the people refused to assume their natural political obligations, if they insisted upon delegating to "a single person" the authority which they should exercise themselves, their commonwealth must perish. Milton might argue, as he did in The Readie and Easye Way, that a commonwealth could be forcibly imposed upon the recalcitrant masses, but he knew that such an expedient would prove successful only
if the people, of their own free will, eventually came to accept the political responsibilities which a commonwealth necessarily thrusts upon them.

The Restoration, then, prompted Milton to effect sweeping modifications in his political theory, modifications clearly reflected in *Paradise Lost*. By the time he published his great epic (1667), he had come to believe that no purely secular government, however successful it might appear in preserving order and protecting right, could really achieve the ends for which it had been established. Indeed, the fall of the English Republic had at last led him to conclude that the order and harmony which civil governments were designed to promote could only be realized through the agency of Divine grace. It was a view which came perilously close to that of his old Puritan enemies, although there were, as we shall see, some marked differences between them.3

One might be tempted to suggest that, in turning his back on secular political institutions, Milton was giving vent to his own rancor and disappointment at the failure of the English Commonwealth. And, superficially, the argument does appear to have some substance. Certainly he had given too much of himself to "the good old cause" ever to accept the Restoration with equanimity. Moreover, there are passages in the major poems which seem to indicate that his bitterness

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3 See pp. 220-2 below.
toward the masses and his hatred of monarchy had not abated with time. But to conclude, on the basis of such evidence, that Milton's rejection of secular government was merely peevish, is to rob a great soul of its integrity and wisdom. More satisfactory, to my mind at least, is the view that Milton's later thought gestated in a political climate far different from the one which had spawned the prose tracts, and that, consequently, his perspectives and intentions must necessarily have changed.

In speculating about Milton's shift in political viewpoint, one important fact should always be kept in mind: the Restoration had put an end to his career as a political pamphleteer. The English people, for better or worse, had declined his suggestion and reinstated the monarchy. Thus the issue had been settled. To be sure, he was disappointed at the outcome, but his defeat offered at least one compensation. He was no longer obliged to play the practical politician, to devise workable solutions to immediate problems. He could now take a long objective look at political institutions without regard to emergent considerations. From historical and philosophical viewpoints he could analyze the strengths and weaknesses of civil governments. The results of his analysis led him to conclude that his previous political labors could not, under any circumstances, have produced any

\[4\] For some of Milton's anti-monarchical comments, see Paradise Lost (hereafter cited as P. L.), I, 505, 598-9; IV, 393; VII, 33; XII, 24 ff. Also Paradise Regained, IV, 10-20; and Samson Agonistes, 674-704. For his contempt toward the populace and his attitude toward empire, see Paradise Regained, III, 44-56, 71-87.
permanent effects. This was for him a discouraging fact, but it was inescapable.

Thus we find that there is a sharp difference between the political perspective of the prose tracts and that of *Paradise Lost*. In the former, Milton asks, "What, from a practical point of view, is the most feasible form of government?" In the latter, the question is, "Will any form of secular government achieve the ends for which it is established?"

As there is a difference in political perspective, so also is there a difference in intention. In the prose pamphlets Milton is attempting to persuade his countrymen to follow certain courses of action. Although he is at pains to demonstrate that his suggested reforms are sound in theory and workable in practice, such demonstration is secondary to his main purpose, which is to move his readers to act. Even the pamphlets defending regicide have as their ultimate objective acceptance of the English Republic both at home and abroad.

*Paradise Lost*, however, has no such hortatory purpose. Milton is not urging his contemporaries to repudiate all secular forms of government; he is merely trying to explain why all purely human institutions must fail to realize the goals for which they are established. And his own rejection of secular government as ultimately ineffectual is, in the last analysis, only an emphatic acknowledgment of man's inability to achieve, through his own effort, the ends for which he was created.

The great shift in Milton's political viewpoint, then, is primarily one of emphasis. In the prose tracts he stresses man's
capabilities rather than his weaknesses; in Paradise Lost he suggests that man's vices will inevitably prevent him from realizing the goals to which he aspires. The two views are not so much contradictory as complementary. The prose provides a practical guide for political action; the epic, a critical examination of man and his institutions. Taken together, the two views clearly reveal both the capabilities and limitations of political societies.

Milton's final judgments concerning civil institutions emerged as a result of his objective inquiry into the nature and significance of free will. According to Milton, the primary cause of natural man's difficulties—whether public or private, political, religious, or social—lies in his inability to understand the nature of freedom.

That God created man free he makes manifestly clear:

I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers
And Spirits, both them who stood and them who faild;
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
Not free, what proof could have given sincere
Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,
Where only what they needs must do, appeared
Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When Will and Reason (Reason is also choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoild,
Made passive both, had servd necessitie,
Not mee. They therefore as to right belonged,
So were created, nor justly can accuse
Thir maker, or thir making, or thir fate;
As if predestination over-rul'd
Thir will, dispose'd by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on thir fault,
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
So without least impulse or shadow of fate
Or ought by mee immutablie foreseen,
They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
Both what they judge and what they choose;
for so
I formd them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
Thir nature, and revoke the high decree
Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordaind
Thir freedom: they themselves ordaind thir fall.5

This freedom with which man is naturally endowed is, from God's point of view, essentially the right to serve the Creator without external compulsion. Such a right necessarily entails certain other freedoms, among them liberty of conscience, but it does not confer upon man license to violate the natural order with impunity.

In practice, man's freedom is severely circumscribed by the cosmic order. The universe, as Elizabethan thinkers saw it, is a great chain

5 P. L., III, 102-128.

of being in which each creature has a limited place and function. The order of the whole depends upon the order of the several parts. Consequently, any violation of the natural order by one of the parts tends to disrupt the harmony of the whole. Therefore, it is incumbent upon man to recognize the limits within which he can legitimately act as a free agent.\(^7\)

The application of this theory results in what C. S. Lewis calls the "Hierarchical conception."\(^8\)

According to this conception degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors. When it fails in either part of this twofold task we have disease or monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant being is either destroyed or corrected. One or the other it will certainly be; for by stepping out of its place in the system (whether it step up like a rebellious angel or down like an uxorious husband) it has made the very nature of things its enemy. It cannot succeed.\(^9\)

The concept of hierarchy is, for Milton, a cardinal point. To it he traces the root of natural man's troubles. Because he does not understand this concept, natural man develops false doctrines concerning not only moral freedom but also the nature and end of his own being.

What constitutes the false doctrine of freedom is revealed in the debate between Satan and Abdiel which occurs at the conclusion of

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\(^7\)See Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, I, iii, 75 ff.


\(^9\)Lewis, p. 72.
Book V in *Paradise Lost*. Satan,

fraught
With envy against the Son of God, that
day
Honourd by his great Father, and pro-
claim!
Messiah King anointed,\(^1\)

attempts to incite his fellow-angels to rebellion by pressing, in

Aristotelian fashion, the argument that God, in proclaiming the vice-
regency of His Son, has committed an act of tyranny:

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Vertues,
Powers,
If these magnific Titles yet remain
Not meerly titular, since by Decree
Another now hath to himself ingross't
All Power, and us eclipsst under the name
Of King anointed, for whom all this haste
Of midnight march, and hurried meeting
here,
This oneley to consult how we may best
With what may be devis'd of honours new
Receive him coming to receive from us
Knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile,
Too much to one, but double how endur'd,
To one and to his image now proclaim'd?
But what if better counsels might erect
Our minds and teach us to cast off this
Yoke?
Will ye submit your necks, and chuse to
bend
The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust
To know ye right, or if ye know your
selves
Natives and Sons of Heav'n possest before
By none, and if not equall all, yet free,
Equally free; for Orders and Degrees
Jar not with liberty, but well consist.
Who can in reason then or right assume
Monarchie over such as live by right
His equals, if in power and splendor less;

\(^{1}\) P. L., V, 661-4.
In freedom equal? or can introduce
L·w and Edict on us, who without law
Err not, much less for this to be our
Lord
And look for adoration to th' abuse
Of those Imperial Titles which assert
Our being ordaind to govern, not to serve?ll

Considered in the abstract the argument appears valid enough. But
in applying the hierarchical principle to the relation between God and
His angels, Satan misstates the facts concerning both the nature and
purpose of his own being, as Abdiel quickly points out.

Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou
dispute
With him the points of Libertie, who
made
Thus what thou art, and formd the Pow'rs
of Heav'n
Such as he pleas'd, and circumscrib'd thir
being?
... But grant it thee unjust
That equal over equals Monarch Reigne:
Thy self though great and glorious dost
thou count,
Or all Angelic Nature joind in one,
Equal to him begott'n Son, by whom
As by his Word the mighty Father made
All things, ev'n thee, and all the Spirits
of Heav'n
Crownd them with Glory, and to thir Glory
nam'd
Thrones, Dominations, Principoms, Vertues,
Powers,
Essential Powers, not by his Reign ob-
scur'd
But more illustrious made, since hee the
Head
One of our number thus reduc't becomes,' His Laws our Laws, all honour to him done
Returns our own,12

11 P. L., V, 772-802.

Angels are the equals of neither God nor His Son; hence adoration of the Messiah involves no violation of the hierarchical principle. On the contrary, since the Messiah is a natural superior to the angels, it is their duty to serve him.

The simple logic of Abdiel's refutation forces Satan to assume an even more untenable position:

who saw
When this creation was? rememberst thou
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee.
being?
We know no time when we were not as now;
Know none before us, self-begot, self rais'd
By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
Had circl'd his full Orbe, the birth mature
Of this our native Heav'n, Ethereal Sons.\(^\text{13}\)

This theory, ridiculous as it may appear, is, for Satan, a necessary hypothesis. Only if the angels are self-begotten can his doctrines concerning freedom and equality be logically maintained. It is important to note that Satan does not advance this absurdity in his first address to the angels. He bases his original argument on the supposition that the Son and the angels are equal in nature and, hence, equally free. However, once Abdiel points out the error of such a supposition, Satan is left with rather unappetizing alternatives. He can concede that the legitimate exercise of freedom is circumscribed by the will of the Creator and that, therefore, any rebellion against Divine Law is an abuse of freedom; or he can deny that he is a creature at

\(^{13}\text{P. L., V, 856-63.}\)
all, and claim that, consequently, there can be no limitations on his freedom. Satan chooses the latter course, adopting the silly "self-begotten" hypothesis.

Satan's refusal to acknowledge the nature and end of his own being ultimately involves him in two fateful fallacies. First, he is compelled to define freedom, not as the right to serve God without external compulsion, but as the right to do whatever he pleases. To put it another way, he must identify liberty with license. Second, in order to maintain his doctrine of freedom consistently, he is obliged to pervert the concept of hierarchy. It is, of course, obvious that Satan, by claiming equality with God, does not effect any change in the ontological order; God remains the Creator and the angels remain His creatures. What Satan does do is to reverse the hierarchical principle: according to his argument, obedience to natural superiors becomes servility, while obedience to natural equals constitutes no loss of freedom.

As the rebellion of the angels is prompted by a desire to step up the hierarchical ladder, so also is the rebellion of Eve. That woman is not the equal of man, Milton makes manifestly clear:

thir sex not equal seemd;
For contemplation hee and valour formd,
For softness shee and sweet attractiv grace,
Hee for God only, shee for God in him.14

14 P. l., IV, 296-9.
And Eve recognizes her inferiority, as she admits to Adam:

O thou for whom
And from whom I was formed flesh of thy
flesh,
And without whom am to no end, my Guide
And Head.\(^{15}\)

But the knowledge of her unequal position in relation to Adam rankles. When he attempts to dissuade her from pruning in the garden alone, she offers a rebuttal which strongly implies resentment at his lack of confidence in her ability to resist the onslaughts of Satan.

His fraud is then thy fear, which plain
inference
Thy equal fear that my firm Faith and
Love
Can by his fraud be shak'n or seduc't;
Thoughts, which how found they harbour
in thy brest,
Adam, misthought of her to thee so
dear?\(^{15}\)

And after she does yield to the subtle prompting of the serpent, she entertains the desire to use her new found "knowledge"

to add what wants
In Femal Sex, the more to draw his Love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesireable, some time
Superior; for inferior who is free?\(^{17}\)

It is her misconception of both hierarchy and freedom which causes her ruin. Like the fallen angels, she desires to occupy a higher position in the chain of being, but her desire is activated by the fear that

\(^{15}\) P. L., IV, 440-3.


\(^{17}\) P. L., IX, 821-5.
inequality with Adam necessarily involves unhappiness and loss of freedom. In a certain sense she is a victim, not only of the deceiving serpent, but also of her own husband, who fails to exercise over her the authority with which he has been invested.

In the last analysis, the responsibility for Eve's fall and that of all mankind rests with Adam. As the superior being it was his duty to rule his wife, to impose his will upon her. But this is precisely what Adam fails to do. Although he knows wherein his obligation lies, he is reluctant to discharge it. When Eve complains that he shows too little confidence in her, he responds as her superior:

Wouldst thou approve thy constancie,
   approve
First thy obedience; th' other who can know
Not seeing thee attempted, who attest?

But he immediately reverses his command by permitting her to decide for herself what course of action she will follow:

But if thou think, trial unsoughte may finde
Us both securer then thus warnd thou seemst,
Go; for they stay, not free, absents thee more.\(^\text{18}\)

It is this unwillingness to assume the responsibilities which his position as the superior imposes upon him that precipitates the catastrophe. Like Eve, Adam misconceives the natures of hierarchy and freedom. He shares her view that inferiors whose actions are controlled

\(^{18}\) P. L., IX, 367-72.
or dictated by superiors cannot be considered free agents, and his love
demands that Eve be free. Consequently, he attempts to treat her as an
equal. It is for both of them a fatal mistake.

The fall of man, then, is the result of a double violation of the
principle of hierarchy. Eve, by attempting to step up the ladder, and
Adam, by stepping down, disturb the natural harmony of creation. In
order to restore the balance, both efforts must be frustrated and the
violators punished. The chain of being could be preserved in no other
way.

As a result of Adam's transgression, the false doctrines of
hierarchy and freedom which Satan had propounded to the angels were
eventually adopted by natural man. As Michael explains to Adam:

Since thy original lapse, true Libertie
Is lost, which always with right Reason
dwells
Twinnd, and from her hath no individual being:
Reason in man obscur'd, or not obeyd,
Immeditely inordinate desires
And upstart Passions catch the Governmet
From Reason, and to servitude reduce
Man till then free. Therefore since hee
permits
Within himself unworthy Forces to reign
Over free Reason, God in Judgement just
Subjects him from without to violent Lords;
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom: Tyrannie must be,
Though to the Tyrant thereby no excuse.
Yet sometimes Nations will decline so low
From Vertue, which is Reason, that no wrong,
But Justice, and some fatal curse annexed
Deprives them of their outward Libertie,
Thir inward lost.19

Natural man, blinded by the effects of Adam's sin, either fails to understand or, understanding, rejects the true concept of liberty and its concomitant principles of ontological order. He builds his life and institutions upon false doctrines, with the result that the natural order as developed by man becomes a perversion of the natural order designed by God.

Among the unnatural institutions which have evolved as an inevitable consequence of Adam's fall is secular government. Milton indicts political government as unnatural on two counts: first, it involves a violation of the hierarchical principle that equals shall not serve equals; second, it attempts to realize its objectives by restraining man in the exercise of his God-given freedom.

Regarding the first charge, the case is neatly stated by Adam, when he describes political power as

\[
\text{Autoritie usurpt, from God not giv'n:}
\text{He gave us onely over Beast, Fish, Fowl}
\text{Dominion absolute; that right we hold}
\text{By his donation; but Man over men}
\text{He made not Lord; such title to himself}
\text{Reserving, human left from human free.20}
\]

Since any form of government, even a commonwealth, will be so constituted that some men will exercise authority over others, all secular governments, from Adam's and Milton's point of view, must be considered unnatural.

The second charge is more subtle, for it turns upon the nature and operation of law. Law has, by nature, only a negative function. It can,
by coercion, restrain people from committing evil, but it cannot of its own generate within them the moral force necessary to promote good. Consequently, any law, whether human or Divine, will remain effective only as long as it has behind it sufficient external authority to enforce compliance with its provisions. Law is, therefore, at best an imperfect instrument for regulating human conduct. To Adam Michael explains the relation between law and the people in this way:

Doubt not but that sin
Will reign among them, as of thee begot;
And therefore the Law was giv'n them to evince
Thir natural previtie, by stirring up
Sin against Law to fight; that when they see
Law can discover sin, but not remove,
Save by those shadowie expiations weak,
The bloud of Bulls and Goats, they may conclude
Some bloud more precious must be paid for
Man,
Just for unjust, that in such righteousness
To them by Faith imputed, they may finde
Justification towards God, and peace
Of Conscience, which the Law by Ceremonies
Cannot appease. Nor Man the moral part
Perform, and not performing cannot live.
So Law appears imperfect, and but giv'n
With purpose to resign them in full time
Up to a better Cov'nant, disciplind
From shadowie Types to Truth, from Flesh
to Spirit,
From imposition of strict Laws, to free
Acceptance of large Grace, from servil fear
To filial, works of Law to works of Faith.21

While Michael is specifically referring to the function of Divine law, the implications of his argument can be applied to all law. The main point is that law as such provides but an imperfect substitute for self-discipline; that is, the recognition and acceptance by natural man

of his obligation to serve God faithfully without external coercion. Once man had recognized and accepted this duty, law becomes unnecessary.

The substance of Milton's second charge, then, is that law, under which all forms of government operate, attempts to accomplish by restraint and coercion what can be accomplished only by the "free acceptance of Grace." To the extent that law or government succeeds in preventing evil and assisting man toward the recognition of his own nature and purpose, it performs a useful service. For all that, however, its method is both unnatural and inadequate for realizing the goal toward which it reaches.

In setting forth his views concerning the limitations of law and government, Milton may appear to be adopting the Orthodox Puritan position he attacked in the divorce tracts and Areopagitica. Certainly the passage cited above suggests that he believed an ultimate solution to the problems created by Adam's fall could be found only if the natural order became one with the order of grace. And this, of course, was the very doctrine the Presbyterians were advocating during the Long Parliament. There are, however, significant differences between the concept of Milton and that of his Puritan antagonists.

For one thing, it is clear that Milton did not believe that the order of grace could be imposed upon the natural order. His whole argument on the limitation of law is intended to demonstrate that any attempt to impose a rule of conduct upon natural man without his consent constitutes a violation of his natural right.

What will they then
But force the Spirit of Grace it self, and binde
His consort Libertie; what, but unbuild
His living Temples, built by Faith to stand,
Thir own Faith not anothers; for on Earth
Who against Faith and Conscience can be heard
Infallible? yet many will presume.22

If any union between the two orders is to be effected, it must come about through the "free Acceptance of large Grace" by natural man.

Another difference between Milton and the Puritans involves their attitudes toward predestination. Milton could not espouse the Orthodox Puritan doctrine that God had created some few for salvation and the rest of mankind for damnation. He was willing to concede that natural man needed the Redemption as an expiation for Adam's transgression, but he held fast to the belief that ultimately salvation or damnation was procured through the exercise of free will.

Best are all things as the will
Of God ordaind them, his creating hand
Nothing imperfet or deficien left
Of all that he Created, much less Man,
Or aught that might his happie State secure,
Secure from outward force; within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his power:
Against his will he can receave no harme.
But God left free the Will, for what obeyes Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,
But bid her well beware, and still erect,
Least by some faire appearing good surpris'd
She dictate false, and missinform the Will
To do what God expresly hath forbid.23

Natural man, then, does not become regenerate through an act of God, although God will accept Christ's Passion as sufficient atonement for

22 P. L., XII, 524-530.
23 P. L., IX, 343-356.
original sin. Natural man becomes regenerate through an act of his own free will, which, in Milton's terms, is obedience to "right reason."

Finally, Milton did not share the optimism of his Puritan contemporaries, who believed that the "holy community" could actually be established on earth.

So shall the World goe on,
To good malignant, to bad men benigne,
Under her own weight groaning, till the day
Appeal of respiration to the just,
And vengeance to the wicked, at return
Of him so lately promised to thy aid,
The Woman's seed, obscurely then foretold,
Now ampler known thy Saviour and thy Lord,
Lost in the Clouds from Heav'n to be revealed
In glory of the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted World, then raise
From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined
New Heav'ns, new Earth, Ages of endless date,
Founded in Righteousness and Peace and Love,
To bring forth fruits Joy and eternal bliss.24

He knew too much of the world and its history ever to expect that the natural order and the order of grace could eventually become one. Satan had done his work too well.

Milton's final view of government, then, is tinged with pessimism. Theoretically it is possible for natural man to recognize and accept his obligation to his Creator, thereby attaining that self-discipline which makes all government and law unnecessary. However, in practice, most men will continue to cling to false concepts of freedom and hierarchy, with the result that the continuance of political institutions becomes inevitable. Because these institutions are both in principle and

24 P. L., XII, 537-551.
method unnatural, they must always fall short of attaining the goals for which they are established.

If political institutions fail to produce any positive results, they have at least some negative value. Although they cannot promote good, they may, under favorable circumstances, prevent some evil. More important, their very failure to accomplish the ends for which they are created points up the basic fallacy in all philosophies of law or government: man cannot be coerced into becoming good. He must freely will to be good. And natural man will be unable to do this until he rids himself of his misconception of the nature and end of freedom.

In passing his final judgment on political institutions, Milton does not attempt to flee from reality. He does not place the blame for political disorders on tyrants who abuse the confidence of their innocent subjects. Rather he maintains that it is natural man himself who is responsible for the collapse of his own institutions. The major fault lies not in the tyrant's overreaching his authority but in man's surrender of his natural right to exercise the freedom with which God has endowed him. Unable to govern himself from within, he sanguinely expects to be governed from without. Inevitably he is doomed to disappointment.

From Milton's point of view, the very attempt to establish a political government demonstrates how very little man understands of the glory and significance of his own being. For man would voluntarily
surrender the use of that one faculty which distinguishes him from the beast.

So little knows
Any, but God alone, to value right
The good before him, but perverts best things
To worse abuse, or to their meanest use.25

It is a severe, though not an unfair judgment.

The political philosophy expressed in *Paradise Lost* does much to explain both Milton's failure and success as a political theorist. In the terms of his own doctrine, he failed because he advocated a political discipline which his countrymen in their hearts could not accept. His idea of a commonwealth represented a compromise between the natural anarchy which should prevail among men who obey right reason, and the unnatural sovereignty which, by man's own consent, usurps the human right to exercise free will without coercion. Consequently, his proposal could not possibly succeed. The majority of men, more than willing to abdicate their natural right to freedom, would overwhelmingly reject the moral responsibility his commonwealth would place upon them.

And there was something more. Milton's commonwealth, however democratic it may have appeared in aims and principles, remained, from his viewpoint, an unnatural institution; for it violated one of the fundamental laws of hierarchy, that equals shall not obey equals. It inherited from monarchy the taint of the Satanic fallacy, and this alone was sufficient to insure its eventual collapse. In the light of his own

25 *P. L.*, IV, 201-204.
philosophy, then, Milton could not have hoped to achieve the political goals after which he strove.

Yet the political activity which absorbed his energies for almost twenty years can hardly be considered futile. For if Milton necessarily failed to realize his ultimate political objectives, he at least succeeded in manifesting to his fellow citizens the inadequacies and abuses of the several governments under which they lived. He could not bring about the good he desired, but he could and did expose the evils which infested the political structure. In the end, what he offered his countrymen was a vision of a more equitable system of government than they had heretofore known. Although it was by no means a perfect vision, it did contain features which eventually proved attractive to most Englishmen. As a result, Milton had the final consolation of seeing most of his cherished ideas become political realities within his own lifetime. More than that, his views concerning natural human rights have been adopted by successive generations of free men and his name has become closely associated with the concept of political liberty. Thus, his political activity has ultimately borne the only fruit which he, by his own admission, could reasonably have expected it to produce.
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I, William John Roscelli, was born in New York City on March 26, 1927. I obtained my primary and secondary school education in Cleveland, Ohio. In June, 1949, I was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree from John Carroll University. From September, 1949, through June, 1951, I served as a teaching assistant in the Department of Classical Languages at Marquette University, from which institution I received a Master of Arts degree in February, 1952. Upon completion of the Master's program I entered upon extended active duty with the United States Air Force, remaining in service until December, 1955. In January, 1956, I enrolled at the Ohio State University to complete the requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy. Since 1958 I have held appointments as assistant and assistant instructor in the Department of English at this institution.