Milton, the Man, the Poet, the Philosopher: a Study in Patterns of Milton criticism From 1640 to 1700.

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GLEASON, Moriece, 1913-
MILTON, THE MAN, THE POET, THE PHILOSOPHER:
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FROM 1640 TO 1700.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1966
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
MILTON, THE MAN, THE POET, THE PHILOSOPHER:
A STUDY IN PATTERNS OF MILTON CRITICISM
FROM 1640 TO 1700

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of English

by
Moriece Gleason
B.A., Northwestern State College, 1933
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May, 1966
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writing of this dissertation has placed me under many happy obligations. To my mother, Eleanor A. Gleason, and my sister, Lilburne G. Hudgens, without whose steadfast trust and support this work would not have been completed, I gratefully dedicate this study. Of the members of the Louisiana State University faculty, I am especially indebted to Professor Esmond L. Marilla, scholar and gentleman, whose learned and patient counseling has guided me throughout this study, and whose broad understanding and unfailing kindness have been a source of encouragement and strength. I am sincerely indebted to Professors Lewis P. Simpson and Lawrence A. Sasek for the direction they have given me during the years they have served on my advisory committee, and for their knowledgeable suggestions for improvement of this work. Finally, I am obligated to all those faculty members, especially Professors Thomas A. Kirby and John H. Wildman, who either directly by their teaching or indirectly by friendly association, helped to make my years of study a time to enjoy as well as a time to learn. "If worthy and suitable friendships have befallen . . . what can be imagined more delightful, what more happy than those conferences of learned and most eminent men . . .?"
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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken for the purpose of effecting a synthesis of the heretofore widely scattered studies in seventeenth-century criticism of Milton. Underlying the work are two basic theses: the broad position that just as the growth of Milton's artistry unfolded consistently throughout his life, so did the development of his philosophy proceed without interruption, and thus the philosophic ideals basic in his prose writings are central in his long poems; secondly, the unstated but implied premise that a better understanding and appreciation of an author such as Milton results from a knowledge of the varying acceptance or rejection of his writings, during his lifetime, and from a recognition of his reaction to that reception. Certain questions naturally stem from these positions. Was Milton recognized in his own century as a great poet? Was his prose considered partisan pamphleteering exclusively, or was it ever acknowledged as statements concerning the essentials of an ideal society? Was there anyone in the seventeenth century who realized that a unity existed in Milton's entire life and writings, and that the philosophic ideals stated in the prose fore-shadowed those inherent in the long poems? Answers to these questions, sought in the seventeenth-century
commentary on Milton, define the early patterns in Milton criticism—some of which still exist.

Chief among the emerging patterns is that of subjectivity. From the very earliest assessment of Milton as a man, as a poet, and as a philosopher, to the present day, critics' views of Milton have been colored consciously or unconsciously by their own theological, political, and ethical beliefs. Milton early began to take a firm position on matters of dynamic importance to all inquiring minds—form of religion, freedom of conscience, marriage and divorce, the power of kings. For more than three hundred years commentators on Milton have been influenced by their own reactions to the ideas that Milton espoused. This subjective viewing of Milton has resulted in a wider variety of critical opinion perhaps than has been expressed about any other figure in English literature. It has resulted, too, in a dichotomy of feeling about Milton, as witnessed in the high estimates of him as a poetic artist, on the one hand, and the persistent harsh objections to the philosophic views projected in much of his prose, on the other.

The pattern formed by seventeenth-century reaction to Milton's prose is one of general disapproval. Far more deprecation was printed than approbation. Nowhere in the century, except in John Toland's Life of Milton (1698), is there any appreciation of his prose writings as repeated statements of his insights into man's conduct and into the
potentials of human society.

Contrary to the eighteenth-century belief, Milton's great poem did not lie in obscurity until rescued by Addison's Critique. Nor was Milton neglected and forgotten so that he died obscure and alone. Ample evidence of the almost immediate recognition of the greatness of *Paradise Lost* and of the early establishment of Milton's reputation as a poetic genius exists in the very nearly uninterrupted stream of seventeenth-century laudatory comments, beginning shortly after the publication of the long epic. Milton's artistry was praised, his likeness to the Ancients noted, the eloquence of *Paradise Lost* and the sublimity of its subject extolled. But there is no indication of any recognition of the unity of Milton the whole man, of the fact that in the three long poems Milton had again expressed his most profound philosophy of man's relation to man, and to his God.
"If I may assert what has been often told . . . ."

That great literary works stand on their own merit cannot be questioned. Without any necessity of supporting networks of biographical data and studies, of critical apparatus and supplementary appendices, literary masterpieces are upheld solely by their intrinsic worth. It is what a reader finds within the piece itself that not only pleases but amazes him, that not only informs him but exalts him.

A reader who never, previously, had known John Milton, a reader half a world away from Milton's England, and a world, or a universe away from Milton's learning and thought, can lose himself in mazes of wonder at the limitless spaces and unknown worlds and divine actors he finds in *Paradise Lost*. He can be excited by and be made envious of the exquisite love of the pre-lapsarian lovers. He can watch, as the evil purposes of Satan succeed, that very success sweeping him to the lowest reaches of degradation. He can suffer with Adam, or with Samson, his mental agony as he acknowledges his own guilt and responsibility for his irretrievable loss. A reader newly come to Milton can enjoy the music, the color and beauty of Milton's
poetic artistry. He can, to paraphrase MatthewArnold, feel the effect of Milton's mighty power of poetry without being able to give a clear account of its cause. A discerning reader may, indeed, even attempt, as does A. E. Housman, to set down some of the characteristics of Milton's poetry as he sees them: "The dignity, the sanity, the unaltering elevation of style, the just subordination of detail, the due adaptation of means to ends . . . are all to be found in Milton."¹

But to know Milton only from an enjoyment of his fables and characters, his "sentiments and language," even from an appreciation and understanding of the complexity of his highly sophisticated style is to lose the third dimension of Milton the whole poet. One cannot stop at the letter of Milton's writing, because behind the letter there is intensity of conviction and complicated depth of idea. To fail to have an understanding of Milton's philosophical ideas is to restrict the meaning of his words. To ignore, or to accept casually his opinions on society is to destroy one's perception of the poems' proportions.

As an artist, Milton was always developing. One needs only to read his poetry to see him move from the early Spenserian archaisms through genre after genre, recreating and ennobling each literary type that he touched,

progressing up to, and beyond, the fully orchestrated grand style of *Paradise Lost*.

Just as Milton's style developed consistently and harmoniously all his life, marking a steady growth, so did his thought develop slowly but uninterrupted from the earliest expression in the Cambridge Prolusions to the final pronouncements of *Samson Agonistes*. No part of Milton's writings can be set aside as being unrelated to this development of Milton the whole poet, of Milton the thinker.

Nor can any part of his life be excepted from a study of the growth of the entire man. More than in any other poet, in Milton there is complete unification of high intellect, of passionate sensibility, and of actual personal experience. His ideas are not the result solely of abstract speculation, but are, rather, "the result of the passing through life of a highly sensitive man--a man of high intelligence also--to whom life brought revelations about himself, his ambitions and his cause."\(^2\) What William Haller says of Puritan preachers in the England of the 1640's is equally true of John Milton throughout his entire life: "If men may be said to find meaning in experience by the help of ideas, they may also be said to discover meaning, often new and surprising meaning, in ideas by the

light of experience."

To consider Milton's life and works from a viewpoint such as that held by Mark Pattison must, it seems, inevitably result in a substantial lessening of the understanding and appreciation of the three great poems from Milton's later years. Pattison says:

Milton's life is a drama in three acts. The first discovers him in the calm and peaceful retirement of Horton, of which L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas are the expression. In the second act he is breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of party passion and religious hate, generating the lurid fires which glare in the battailous canticles of his prose pamphlets. The three great poems, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes, are the utterance of his final period of solitary and Promethean grandeur, when, blind, destitute, friendless, he testified to righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, alone before a fallen world.

Pattison later is more explicit concerning his view of the waste of those twenty years:

So far as Milton reckoned upon a gain in experience from his secretaryship in the Commonwealth, he doubtless reaped it... Yet it would be difficult to point in Milton's subsequent poetry to any element which the poet can be thought to have imbibed from the foreign secretary. Where, as in Milton's two epics and Samson Agonistes, the personages are all supernatural or heroic, there is no room for the employment of knowledge of the world.

A view contrary to Pattison's seems more nearly the one that must be subscribed to. Milton's prose does not

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serve "as a record of the prostitution of genius to political party." It cannot be treated as a static, alien and rocky mass obstructing the main stream of his literary development, and cutting it in two, a product of a sterile time. The years of Milton's rough and often painful contact with reality, the years that systematized and elaborated the ideas that developed from the deeper strata of his character, were the more than twenty years from 1640 into the 1660's--the years of the Long Parliament, the Commonwealth, and the restoration of the Monarchy. The chief fruit of Milton's experience in the arena for twenty years, of his opportunity of sitting at the council-board of the nation during one of the most exciting periods of her history, was the strengthening and enrichment of the major poems. The Secretary to the council was not useless to the historian of Pandemonium; the poet who described the infernal conclave in Book II of Paradise Lost was not likely to be insensible to the part played in politics by men of eminent and dominating personality. It was the insight gained by Milton that contributed to the human reality of the rebel angels. Hanford partially sums up the influence of the political scene upon Paradise Lost:

The first two books show concretely by what arts leadership is acquired and maintained in the state, how perplexing issues are threshed out in council, how great public enterprises are organized and executed. There is a certain analogy between Satan and Cromwell as military statesmen, though they are, in Milton's thought, exact opposites in their
ideals and purposes, the one aiming only at destruction, the other ultimately, at the nobler victories of peace.⁵

Here and there in *Paradise Lost* Milton's education in the handling of satire and invective (perfected in his prose) stood him in good stead. The high war of words between Satan and Abdiel in heaven (Book V), or between Satan and Gabriel on earth (Book IV), could not have been handled except by a master of all the weapons of verbal fence and all the devices of wounding invective. Of the Satan-Gabriel encounter Sir Walter Raleigh says:

In the great close of Book IV, especially where the arch-fiend and the archangel retaliate defiance and tower in swift alternate flights, to higher and higher pitches of exultant scorn, Milton puts forth all his strength, and brings into action a whole armory of sarcasm and insult whetted and polished from its earlier prosaic exercise.

And then, insisting that sunbeams cannot be extracted from cucumbers, Sir Walter wryly concludes:

The grandeur of *Paradise Lost* or *Samson Agonistes* could never, by any conceivable device of chemistry or magic, be compounded from delicate sensibilities and a superfine ear for music. For the material of those palaces whole provinces were pillaged, and the waste might furnish forth a city.⁶

So far as the world of letters is concerned, we are the gainers by the turmoil of the Revolution and the heart-break of the Restoration. Alden Sampson says:


That Milton should cease for the time to be a poet might at first seem only ill fortune, but it may have been a blessing in disguise, just as blindness itself would appear to have been calamity without compensation, yet the result even of that was to give great and vivid concentration of poetic vision when he afterwards came to write.7

Events between 1640 and 1660 forced Milton continually to reconsider, to readjust, to develop, to enlarge his opinions. These were the years that changed the reluctant, artistic man of letters, the author of *Comus*, into the far greater poet of the last poems, the blind man experienced in defeat, fallen on evil days, who could still undertake "to justify the ways of God to men."

Though Milton claims that his voice remains "unchang'd To hoarse or mute" it was changed in subtler ways. It was made richer, profounder, and maturer by what he had gone through. "To him, made fit by suffering, by unfailing courage, and by the grace of God, was granted to see the glories of Heaven, and to taste of its beautitudes."8 To him, also, was granted the power to illuminate some of the central paradoxes of the human situation and the tragic ambiguity of man as a moral being. And the prose that flowed from Milton's pen in those middle years of the 1600's forms a clear, personal record of the transformation that took place within him. It is true that almost

8Ibid., p. 163.
all of Milton's prose which he produced in the score of
turbulent years was written in the heat of the moment, for
some particular occasion, and was often intended for a
political purpose. But it all gives expression to large
and enduring principles, to intellectual positions that
directed his life-energies both as artist and thinker, and
the system of thought underlying those positions was not
the product of accident or occasion.

Now, when one subscribes to any given thesis he
seeks recognized authorities to confirm and substantiate
(or to refute) his view—even as Milton did. The critical
opinion of such twentieth century scholars as Douglas Bush,
James Holly Hanford and Frank Patterson adds much authority
to the thesis subscribed to in this study concerning the
unity that exists between Milton's prose and his later
poems. Bush says, "If Milton had not written a line of
verse his prose works would be important as the commentary
of a great and growing mind on momentous issues—and they
are still more important as a commentary on his major
poems."\(^9\) Hanford sees the necessity of a proper valuation
of Milton's philosophy by the exploring of his prose as
well as his poetry if one is to realize the significance
of Milton's poetry as "poetic criticism of life."\(^10\).

\(^9\)Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier

\(^10\)Hanford, "Milton and the Return to Humanism,"
SP, XVI (1919), 142.
Patterson expresses the conviction simply, but forcefully, "After all, the best commentary on Milton's poetry is his own prose." though this view is fairly general in our present century, it has not been unanimously held. One has to look no farther than T. S. Eliot and his famous dissent. Voicing his dislike for Milton, and thus furthering Matthew Arnold's nineteenth century "unamiable" theory about Milton and Puritans, Eliot thoroughly damns Milton from every side except that of an artist—a general condemnation which does not exclude Milton's philosophical prose:

As a man he is antipathetic. Either from the moralist's point of view, or from the theologian's point of view, or from the psychologist's point of view, or from that of the political philosopher, or judging by the ordinary standards of likeableness in human beings, Milton is unsatisfactory.

Sir Walter Raleigh says, late in the nineteenth century, that he sees Milton's prose works useful mainly for promoting appreciation of the "tribulations of the process whereby he became a classic poet." But as for any real unity between the prose and poetry he sees very little. Though the prose has been well searched for passages that can be used to illustrate Milton's poetry, it has been disappointing, he says, "although the search has

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been rewarded with many natural coincidences of expression, not a few passages of lofty self-confidence, and some raptures of poetic metaphor."

And then he pronounces his judgment on the "wild array of subjects and methods which he [Milton] commands for the purposes of his prose . . . this memorial heap of odd-shaped missiles hurled from his dire left hand for the confusion of his enemies."^13

Some fifty years earlier (1838), Ralph Waldo Emerson had voiced his feeling about the worth of Milton and his expressed ideals. It is very high praise, diametrically opposed to Raleigh's epithet that Paradise Lost is a monument to dead ideas:

The idea of a purer existence than any he saw around him, to be realized in the life and conversation of men, inspired every act and writing of John Milton. The lover of Milton reads one sense in his prose and in his metrical compositions. . . .

His own conviction it is which gives such authority to his strain. Its reality is its force. If out of the heart it came, to the heart it must go.^14

During the early decades in the nineteenth century, several new biographies appeared, dedicated to the propagation of Milton's political and religious views and activities, and of necessity, placing emphasis on the prose instead of the poetry.^15 These works might be considered

^13Raleigh, pp. 79, 72.

^14Ralph Waldo Emerson, Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with a biographical introduction and notes by Edward Waldo Emerson, Autograph Centenary Edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1904), XII, 256, 277.

to be a part of the last playing out of the dramatic controversy generated by Samuel Johnson's Tory-oriented *Life of Milton* (1779), a controversy that had now been waged for more than fifty years. Robert Fletcher, editor of a new edition of Milton's *Prose Works*, published in 1835, invites Milton's admirers to descend from the heights of Milton's poetry and survey the regions of the prose, a "less explored, but not less magnificent domain." Though he willingly admits that Milton the poet occupied "the summit of fame," he insists that "the base of the vast elevation may justly be said to rest on these Prose Works."

Coleridge, in his lecture X on Milton in 1818, dwells on the unity of Milton's entire life:

There are some persons of whom the grace of God takes early hold, and the good spirit inhabiting them, carries them on in an even constancy through innocence into virtue, their Christianity bearing equal date with their manhood, and reason and religion, like warp and woof, running together, make up one web of a wise and exemplary life. . . . These conditions I find in his own character. . .

Disharmonic voices in the eighteenth century chorus of praise of Milton are primarily Johnson, Bentley, and Lauder. But there are others less frequently remembered. David Hume, while recognizing Milton's greatness, was so opposed to the Puritan movement, and all related to it,

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16Ibid., p. 82.

that his estimation of Milton in his *History of England* (1756), is colored accordingly:

It is, however, remarkable that the greatest genius by far that shone out in England during this period [of the Revolution], was deeply engaged with those fanatics, and even prostituted his pen in theological controversy, in factious disputes, and in justifying the most violent measures of the party. This was John Milton, whose poems are admirable, though liable to some objections, his prose writings disagreeable, though not altogether defective in genius.18

While the *Critical Review* declared in December 1756 that it had "a better opinion of Milton" than that given by Hume, in its April 1758 issue can be found this abuse:

> Every body knows with what acrimony and rancour Milton wrote against the Character of Charles, and in defense of the most infamous of all mankind; and how industrious he was in picking up, and hardy in affirming for truth every low insinuation which malice could invent, or prejudice believe. Those are stains in the moral character of Milton, which all the splendour of his intellectual merit will never brighten.19

In Jonathan Richardson's 1734 *Life of Milton* he states that he desires to give a more Exact and a more Just Idea of Milton, and of *Paradise Lost* than the Publick has yet had of Either. This is All I Intend; not a Panegyrick, not to give my Own Sense of What a Man should be, but what This Man Really was.

As regards Milton's years of prose writing, Richardson

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steers the course of his comment in media via:

I know not if we are to Regret the Loss of So many years in which this Fine Genius would have Busied it Self on More Delightful Subjects, since what they Did produce, has a Kind of Excellence in Writing which is not Elsewhere to be Found. the Poet is Seen, however Disguis'd by Polemical Accoutrements.20

I have utilized the selective method in treating literary history (in reverse chronology) in the foregoing pages. I have touched very lightly the historical materials of three centuries to illustrate and enforce my own conviction concerning the unbroken continuity of development, and the unity of incidence in all his writings, of Milton's philosophical ideals. The difficulty inherent in a task of this nature stems not from the paucity of material from which to choose a few examples. Rather, it comes from the overwhelming plethora of opinions that have been voiced by highly respected scholars and men of letters through three centuries of Milton scholarship.

The necessity of judicious selection from such an extended accumulation of materials has fostered an awareness of two elements of Milton criticism that, in any effort of evaluation, assume increasingly important positions. These elements are the extremely wide range of

studies concerning Milton, and the subjective character of a large proportion of these critical works. Through the centuries since Milton lived and wrote there has been an outpouring of differing beliefs about him hardly duplicated about any other person within our knowledge. Indeed, one feels safe in saying that in the entire range of English life and art no figure has attracted a wider diversity of opinions than has John Milton. It seems possible, to this day, for men to disagree about Milton in a way in which they do not now, and never did disagree about Chaucer, or even Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{21} Every age, it seems, has its own Milton; indeed, every individual has his own Milton, his views of the poet being colored consciously or unconsciously not only by his literary taste and perception, but also by his own theological, political, and ethical beliefs.

Many explanations have been offered for the difficulty in being objective about John Milton. For one thing, we know him too well to be indifferent to him. In numerous autobiographical passages in his prose he has revealed himself to posterity—his inmost aspirations and purposes in life, as well as many actual physical characteristics and activities; his life was written by his contemporaries not once, but six times, adding countless details that make him as real a person as if he were alive

\textsuperscript{21}Hanford, \textit{A Milton Handbook}, p. viii.
today; and he was a public figure about whom there are official records and statements, all of which give authority to that side of his life. Added to this is the clear and unmistakable stand he took on issues explosive in his day, and still controversial. Of this T. S. Eliot says:

No other English poet . . . lived through or took sides in such momentous events as did Milton. Throughout that period of the Puritan Revolution English society was so convulsed and divided that the effects are still felt . . . The passions are still unquenched, and if we are not very wide awake their smoke will obscure the glass through which we examine Milton's poetry. 22

In the light of the atmosphere of Milton's own age, with the special bias of the time that is a recognized fact, one wonders if it has been possible to gain a clear picture of the real opinion of Milton held by his contemporaries. In his own day were there any whose outlook was akin to his? When the dust of controversy had subsided, were the discussions impartial and based on reason? Was there any who could recognize the unity, the harmony that existed in the entire life and writings of Milton? By tracing the shadowy outline of all phases of beginning criticism of Milton, by following it as the patterns begin to form, we may hope to achieve a more nearly entire view of the great man and his accomplishments in relation to his own time than can be afforded by study of only one aspect of contemporary appreciation.

In the introduction to his edition of Milton criticism, James Thorpe states:

A Miltonic tradition had been established by about 1730 that persisted in a general way throughout the remainder of the century. This consisted of a compound of three complex, interdependent and yet distinguishable conceptions: that of the man, that of the philosopher, and that of the artist. 23

Professor J. W. Good sees Milton's early biographers as accurate reflectors of the several attitudes generally assumed toward Milton during those beginning years of Milton scholarship:

The biographers of Milton tended at first to find the man in his prose writings, and Milton was therefore pre-eminently a politician and a controversialist. Later they found the man more especially in his verse. Then he was pre-eminently a poet—the pride of England, and the envy of other nations. Finally his biographers found the full man in his prose and his poetry, a man with one great message, the champion of what he thought sublimely good for all nations and for all times. Then Milton was the poet-politician [poet-philosopher], who walked on the earth, but breathed a celestial atmosphere, who saw things in their eternal relations, and spoke, with authority, to Man, of Man, and for Man. 24

A full history of Milton's reputation in the seventeenth century is not my intent. This study cannot be considered definitive, but it is an inquiry into the seventeenth century evaluation of Milton the whole man. A general harmony of treatment rather than rigid uniformity has seemed desirable, and there is some difference of emphasis in the different chapters. It is hoped that

23 Thorpe, pp. 4-5. 24 Good, p. 139.
the approach in each of these will seem to be that best suited to the material considered therein.
CHAPTER I

JOHN MILTON THE MAN

"So rarely endowed by nature that had he been but honestly principled . . . ." Anthony Wood

The John Milton of the 1630's was an urbane, gifted, diplomatic, amiable, handsome young poet-scholar. He composed an exquisitely beautiful masque for a Dowager countess; as a travelling Englishman, he had easy entree to his country's ambassadors in foreign lands. At Paris he was received by the "Renowned Doctor and Statesman" Hugo Grotius, who, as related by Edward Phillips, "took the Visit kindly, and gave him entertainment suitable to his Worth, and the high Commendation he had of him."¹ In Rome, he formed a lasting friendship with the Vatican librarian, and he was among the invited guests at a gala musical in the Roman palace of Cardinal Barberini, nephew of the Pope. A young English Protestant tourist, he enjoyed the hospitality of a proud Neapolitan nobleman. In his Second Defense of the English People (1654), Milton reports the civilities shown him by this aged Marquis of Villa, Giovanni Battista Manso, patron of Tasso: "He gave me

¹Darbishire, p. 56.
singular proofs of his regard. On my departure he gravely apologized for not having shown me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion." As testimony of his great, if qualified, esteem, Manso presented this distich to Milton before his departure:

Ut mens, forma, decor, facies, mos, in pietas sic
non Anglus, verum hercle Angelus ipse fores.

Though this is the earliest recorded expression of esteem for Milton hedged by a reservation, during four centuries since that instance, many men's statements of their great admiration for Milton and his writings have been tinged by personal feeling--by some firmly held political or religious conviction or literary theory that Milton had at some time run counter to. Milton was ever one to express his beliefs, as he said, "without fear or reserve." He continues in the Second Defense, "I . . . returned to Rome . . . and for about the space of two months I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery." Thus Manso's "... in pietas sic/ Non Anglus, verum Angelus" if extravagant, must have seemed to the old Roman Catholic not to be unfair. This dichotomy of feeling toward Milton has formed a pattern of criticism of him that has been evident from his pre-pamphleteering days to the present time.

In 1641, about two years after his return from his continental journey, Milton doffed his singing robes, stepped out of "the arms of studious retirement" into "a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes"—into public controversy, the fires of which were fanned by pamphlets, and he began the two decades in his life that have been called the long summer of prose, writing with a pen, he said, held in his left hand.

A product, at least in part, of the Renaissance, Milton as a humanist belongs to that tradition which stretches back through the Renaissance to antiquity; "the tradition," Bush says, "of a poet who not only writes what is doctrinal and exemplary to a nation, but takes his place as an active citizen and leader." Milton was an Englishman. He held that trust and privilege not lightly. To him, love of country came very close after love of God. Thus there was no hesitating when he thought the time had come to lay aside his life-long dedication to, and preparation for, a high and sacred calling—to be the author of "an elaborate song to generations," a poem "doctrinal to a nation," "something to after-times, as they should not willingly let it die."

In strife-torn England of the 1640's no intelligent Englishman could be merely an on-looker, and so Milton strode into what he believed was a struggle that would

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Bush, p. 389.
open the way for the establishment of real Christian liberty in England, and with England as the leader, ultimately in the entire world. When he entered public controversy, church government, Episcopacy versus Presbyterianism, was the burning question in the foreground of Parliamentary debate, and indeed in the attention of the entire English nation. Milton gives, in The Reason of Church Government (1642), what he considers to be his reasons for joining in the dispute:

Should the Church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have given me ability the while to reason against that man that should be the author of so foul a deed, or should she by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithful men change this her distracted estate into better daies without the lest furtherance or contribution of those few talents which God at that present had lent me, I foresee what stories I should heare within my selfe, all my life after, of discouragement and reproach.4

His first pamphlets, five anti-prelatical tracts, though carefully written and full of meaning, were all except one unsigned. The four contemporary printed allusions to the tracts were all disapproving, and they set the tone for the tradition that was about to be established and was to persist until Milton's death, or in some quarters, to the present time—Milton, the harsh controversialist, rebel against authority. William Riley Parker

has collected the contemporary allusions to Milton that scholars since Todd have been discovering. Of the 113 he lists that appeared between 1641 and 1674, nineteen are advertisements of Milton's works, and sixteen are classified as news items, impersonal statements of fact in the *Mercurius Politicus*, party news organ. Of the remaining seventy-eight, only about fourteen are favorable to Milton. This indicates, so Parker says, that "about eighty percent of the contemporary notices of Milton were printed out of indignation or disapproval."\(^5\)

The first of Milton's pamphlets to catch the attention of the public was his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643). During the whole of Milton's thirty-three years of public life, he wrote nothing else, except his *First Defense of the English People* (1651), which required so many editions and provoked so much comment as this,\(^6\) the tract which initiated his crusade against the English divorce laws. But this was notoriety distasteful to Milton. Most comment reviled and ridiculed him. The central thesis of his tract was often termed heretical, was often distorted: Milton was called a "libertine," was said to advocate "divorce at pleasure," and was accused of founding a sect of "Divorcers." For years, men who were

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\(^5\)William Riley Parker, *Milton's Contemporary Reputation* (Columbus, Ohio, 1940), p. 70.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 18.
quarrelling with Milton on quite different grounds con-
tinued to taunt him with his views on marriage. Bishop
Joseph Hall attacked those views at some length (an attack
published in 1649, though doubtless written some years
previously), but it is interesting to see that in the
course of his derogation, he took notice of the quality of
Milton's writing, and voiced his uneasiness about the
world-wide impression it would make. Concerning these
"heretical" theories of divorce he says:

I have heard too much of, & once saw, a licentious
pamphlet throwne abroad in these lawlesse times,
in the defence, and incouragement of Divorces ... to be arbitrarily given by the disliking husband,

7 Anthony Wood furnishes a sidelight on this subject
of Milton's views on marriage and divorce in his Athenae
Oxonienses et Fasti Oxonienses (London, 1828). The Fasti
was added to the Athenae Oxonienses in the 1721 edition.
Wood says:

After his Majesty's Restoratio[n when the subject of
Divorce was under consideration with the Lords, upon
the account of John Lord Ros his separation from his
wife ... he [Milton] was consulted by an eminent
member of that House, as he was about that time by a
chief officer of state, as being the prime person that
was knowing in that affair. (Fasti, I, 483).

David Masson adds an illuminating comment in his Life of
John Milton (London, 1880), VI, 639-640:

The Lord Roos [sic] Divorce Bill ... received the
royal assent ... after a hurried and stormy passage
through the two Houses. It was a bill of no less than
national significance, inasmuch as its real object was
to prepare the way for the King's divorce from his
barren Queen and his marriage with some one else. ... The affair, however, came to nothing, the project of a
Royal Divorce Bill having been abandoned by the King
himself on subsequent reflection.
to his displeasing and unquiet wife. . . . I must seriously professe when I first did cast my eye upon the front of the booke, I supposed some great wit meant to try his skill in the maintenance of this so wild, and improbable a paradoxe; but ere I could have run over some of those too-well-penned pages, I found the author was in earnest. . . . what will all the Christian Churches through the world, to whose notice those lines shall come, thinke of our wofull degeneration in these deplored times, that so uncouth a designe should be set on foot amongst us?

A commendatory notice that stands out among the many censorious ones of those days appeared in 1650. In the preface to his Introduction to the Teutonic Philosophie (Englished by D. F.), one Charles Hotham, Fellow of Peter House, has these kind words for Milton: "In truth, it is very hard to write good English: and few have attained its height, in this last frie of books but Mr. Milton." Taking Hotham's statement out of context makes it impossible to determine whether he has reference to Milton's Eikonoklastes, published in October 1649, or to The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, which appeared in February 1649, or to one of the earlier pamphlets, the Areopagitica, On Education, the Divorce tracts, or the anti-prelatical tracts.

Another adversary of Milton, like Bishop Hall, yielded grudging admiration to him when he admitted in his

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refutation of Milton's Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth that Milton was the "most able and acute scholar living."\(^{10}\)

In making a study such as this, one must steer an intricate course between two dangers. There is the Scylla of hero worship of Milton such as Professor William Haller sees Masson wrecked upon, evidenced, he believes, by Masson's interpretation of allusions to Milton in his monumental Life of Milton. Haller says that the facts concerning the number of allusions and the character of those few do not bear out the impression Masson conveys:

His interpretation of those references . . . suffers egregiously from the Carlylean attitude of mind by which he was obsessed, and from his failure to do justice to what he regarded as the lower and less pleasing aspects of Milton's contemporary background. . . . The truth seems to be that Milton was personally little known to the general public, and was not regarded as a person of importance until after he became identified with the revolutionary leaders in 1649.\(^{11}\)

On the other hand, there is the Charybdis of "the clipping bureau error" which Parker fears that Haller was drawn into.\(^{12}\) To judge Milton's reputation, as Haller seems to be doing, solely by the printed allusions to him

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\(^{11}\) William Haller, Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1647 (New York, 1934), I, 128-129.

\(^{12}\) Parker, p. 2.
is to have a strangely distorted picture of him, for it takes no account of any private expressions of approval by his friends, or any unspoken agreement of readers whose thoughts he may have expressed. Because we have no statements in print to which we can point as proof, are we to disbelieve Milton when he declares that "divers learned and judicious men testified their daily approval" of his Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce?

Some modern critics, in lieu of any other explanation for several interesting unsolved problems, believe that Milton had friends "high in authority" who held his interest at heart and who from time to time interceded for him. One unanswered question is, Why was Milton never prosecuted for the very same infraction—a repeated infraction on his part—of the licensing act, violation of which ordinance had resulted in punishment for other men such as John Goodwin, John Lilburne, Richard Overton and William Larner? As Haller ponders on this he remembers, "Milton was, to be sure, cited once in the Commons and once in the Lords, but nothing came of the matter in either case."13

Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson is one who holds the theory that powerful friends who had recognized Milton's abilities apparently had determined to make use of them

13Haller, Tracts on Liberty, I, 139.
That it was by request Milton wrote *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (Feb. 13, 1648-9, begun before but not printed till after the fatal day) is almost proved by its careful printing, with more than ordinary attention to Milton's peculiar spellings, by Matthew Symmons, the printer in chief, as he soon became, to the Common-wealth.\(^1\)

But Parker rejects this "official request" theory based on the quality of printing of the pamphlet, arguing that Milton had been training Simmons in his eccentricities of spelling for six years, and that he abandoned him in 1650 for another printer, "perhaps because of the carelessness in printing the *Eikonoklastes*."\(^2\)

There is the irrefutable fact that exactly one month after the publication of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* the newly chosen Council of State voted to offer the post of Secretary of Foreign Tongues to John Milton. Milton himself relates this in the Second Defense: ". . . after the subversion of the monarchy, and the establishment of a republic, I was surprised by an invitation from the Council of State who desired my services in the office for foreign affairs." The Anonymous Biographer relates much the same: "Upon the change of Government which succeeded the King's death hee was, without any seeking of his, by the means of a private Acquaintance, who was then


\(^2\)Parker, p. 28.
a member of the new Council of State, chosen Latin Secretary." Wood tells the same story. 16

As the years of Milton's secretaryship passed, they brought some real triumphs to him, some triumphs more apparent than real, and some real defeats. Since Milton was a member of the government, and his writings were official statements of government policy, they met with approval of those for whom he spoke. But not everybody to whom he spoke approved. And it is true that "then as now, consent usually gives silence, while disagreement is vocal." 17

Reaction by Royalists to The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, though fraught with danger for them, had been immediate. One denunciation, in Clement Walker's Anarchia Anglicana: or, The History of Independence, The Second Part, 1649 begins:

There is lately come forth a Booke of Iohn Meltons (a Libertine that thinketh his Wife a Manacle, and his very Garters to be Shackles and Fetters to him: . . . wherein [marginal note: "184. Meltons Booke, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, &"] he undertaketh to prove, That it is lawfull for any that have power to call to account, Depose, and put to Death wicked Kings and Tyrants . . . . The Persons Confederated being a complication of all Anti-monarchicall, Anarchicall heresies and schisms, Anabaptists, Brownists, Barrowists, Adamites, Familists, Libertines of all sorts . . . . 18

For his History of Independency, Walker was sent to the Tower. His books and papers were examined, and he was

18 Parker, pp. 82-83; Masson, IV, 156.
judged treasonable by the Council of State, trial by jury for political offenses having been categorically suspended. Dora Raymond gives the conclusion of this affair: "In two years, Walker's death freed the State from the cost of his further imprisonment." But Walker might be considered only one among many who had been sickened and appalled by the king's execution, and had been unconvinced by Milton's reasoned arguments in The Tenure that a monarch who had abrogated his solemn agreement with his subjects, and had violated the laws of the land that gave him power, ought to be called up to account.

On the day of the king's funeral, ten days after his execution, there appeared a secretly published small volume, the Eikon Basilike, that was destined to have the greatest sale recorded of any book in the seventeenth century. This volume, purporting to be a compendium of the prayers and meditations of the king that nobly supported him through the last years, almost the last hours of his life, unveiled an image of Charles as a model of conscientiousness and piety, loving and tender of his family, solicitous for the good of his subjects, a loyal Protestant, much given to earnest prayer. Though it was suspected by many to be a fraud, it so successfully accomplished its

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19 Dora Neill Raymond, Oliver's Secretary (New York, 1932), p. 123.
20 Ibid., p. 110.
purpose of winning public sympathy that the leaders of the Commonwealth recognized it as a great danger. To Milton was given the task of refuting the "King's Book." He makes it clear in the Preface of his *Eikonoklastes*, the "image breaker," that he disliked his subject: "a work assign'd rather, then by me chos'n or affected," and he foresaw the response to it: "... the envy and almost infinite prejudice likely to be stirr'd up among the Common sort, against what ever can be writ'tn or gainsaid to the king's book."

Milton's prediction was correct. He claimed reason and the "law of law" as his guide in the writing of *Eikonoklastes*. And though there was the interest deriving from the allegation of the plagiarized "Pamela prayer," there was no emotional appeal in the *Eikonoklastes* as there had been in the *Eikon Basilike*. If anyone doubts the power of appeal to the emotions, let him review the orgy of emotional sentimentality in which our own supposedly sophisticated country and century has engaged since the sudden and violent death of a recent chief magistrate.

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21 Walker had written in his *History of Independence*:

The very reading of it aggravateth our loss of so gracious and excellent Prince, that learnt the whole method of human perfection in the school of adversity. Herod and the Jews never persecuted Christ in his swaddling clothes with more industrious malice than the Anti-monarchical Independent Faction this Book in the presses and shops that should bring it forth into the world. (Masson, IV, 132)
Eikonoklastes was published officially and was distributed in part by the government, but three editions were all that were required in three years, as against forty-seven in one year of the *Eikon Basilike*.

The still unsuppressed Royalist *Mercurius Pragmaticus* (January 1650) tartly observes:

...it is the States policy to smother their sorrows by a busle and pretence of settling Lawes and Courts for administration of Justice, in divers Cases: as of Wills, Administrations, Legacies, Marriages and Divorces; sure when such a Court is erected these Regicides will choose Mr. Wylton (who houlds forth the Doctrine of Divorce, and, like a State Champion, sham'd himselfe with handling his penne to oppose those Divine Meditations of our late King of happy memory) to bee Judge, and then bee sure the Junctoes Wills must bee obeyed. 22

The young Republic had hardly settled the internal storm occasioned by the *Eikon Basilike* before trouble of a wider scope arose from outside England's borders. Charles II, in exile in France, had secured as the Continental champion of his cause the renowned Claude de Saumaise, great Latin scholar and redoubtable controverialist. His lengthy *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I contra Populum Anglicanum* was written to convince all of Europe that the leaders of the Commonwealth, those monsters "who use Kings' heads for balls, play with crowns as with spinning tops" should, for the safety of all, be pursued by fire and sword not only by kings who rule by royal right,

22Parker, p. 84.
but by the magistrates of all republics. In his tellingly smooth Latin, Salmasius builds his case against the men of the Commonwealth:

Surely the blood of the great King of Great Britain, shed by the huge wickedness of his enemies, calls to its revenge by all monarchs and princes of the Christian world. . . . The injustice, the impiety, the perfidy, the cruelty, of these men I will proclaim to Heaven and Earth, and will send on the culprits convicted to posterity, as men proved guilty of an action such that neither have past ages seen the like, nor perhaps shall coming ages see the like either.  

The fame of Salmasius, the shocked interest of the Continent in his subject, and the activities of the many Royalist refugees all combined to give the book wide circulation, with a resulting marked coldness, if not actual hostility manifest towards Commonwealth agents in the various European capitals.

This was a cold war that could rapidly lead to something more dangerous to the struggling Commonwealth. The effects of Salmasius's attack had to be neutralized. And so the task of answering Salmasius naturally fell to Milton, an assignment more to his liking. Here, at last, was a worthy opponent. The resulting First Defense of the English People was the high water mark for Milton as a controversialist—when he utterly routed Salmasius, first scholar of Europe, from the field, on his own ground. And all Europe talked of him from side to side—at least,

for a while.

In the **Second Defense** Milton explains the awful blinding price he had to pay for this triumph. This was a kind of war, and he was a soldier with a duty to be done—a mission which, if well done, could, in his opinion, accomplish the saving of his country. Whether that was actually the case is beside the point. Milton was convinced that he was the one person whose services his country needed to execute that mission, and so he did what plainly to him it was his duty to do. It was as simple as that.

It was after the Restoration of the Monarchy, when the mocking laughter for the blind Milton was rolling over him in waves that he had time and reason to estimate the high cost to him of *Joannis Miltoni, Angli, pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*.

In 1660, after twenty years of exhorting his countrymen to press forward toward their religious, political and civil freedom, and after seeing them fail repeatedly to do what he thought reason dictated they should do, Milton recognized that once again they would be unfaithful to their high destiny. Nonetheless, he made a last-ditch effort to stem, single-handed, the rising tide of royalist sympathy, and published his last, long, pre-Restoration political tract, *The Ready and Easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth, and the excellence thereof*
compared with the inconveniences and dangers of readmitting Kingship in this nation. He warned that England would "soon repent" the Stuarts when she saw "the old incroachments coming on by little and little upon our consciences," and would be "forced perhaps to fight over again all that we have fought."

On the eve of Charles II's return, Roger L'Estrange, royalist pamphleteer extraordinary, hurried into print his answer to Milton. In view of the scurrility, ridicule, and personal abuse which seventeenth century pamphleteers visited upon each other (from which charge Milton cannot be exempted), L'Estrange's No Blinde Guides is considered by some to be restrained and relatively impersonal. Most twentieth century readers, however, find the title cruel, and the title-page proverb more so: "If the Blinde lead the Blinde, Both shall fall into the Ditch." In the body of the pamphlet, L'Estrange applies the quotation "But none so Blind as they that will not see" to Milton, and he repeatedly taunts him with his blindness:

Under the Reign of God onely their King you say.  
. . . Doe you then, really expect to see Christ,  
Reigning upon Earth, even with those very eyes you  
Lost (as 'tis reported) with staring too long, and  
too sawcily upon the Portraiture of his Viceregent,  
to breake the Image, as your Impudence Phrases it?  
(It is generally indeed believed you never wept  
them out for this Losse.)

In these few lines L'Estrange reminds the readers that Milton was the author not only of Brief Notes, one of the targets of his abuse, along with The Ready and Easy Way,
but also of Eikonoklastes and the First Defense of the English People. Here he links Milton with the Devil, as indeed he had done more explicitly in the opening paragraph of the piece, which also harked back to Milton's Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce:

Mr. Milton, Although in your Life and Doctrine you have Resolved one Question; by evidencing that Devils may indue Humane shapes; and proving your self, even to your own Wife an Incubus; you have yet Started Another; and that is, whether you are not of That Regiment, which carried the Herd of Swine headlong into the Sea: and moved the People to beseech Jesus to depart out of their coasts.24

Here it should be noted, parenthetically; that it was a sign of the temper of the times that no objection was raised to L'Estrange's blasphemous equating of Christ and Charles II. Ardent monarchist L'Estrange, in his trying for royal favor by discrediting Milton's warning to the English people against the return (to their coast) of Charles II (in The Ready and Easy Way), over-reached himself in his comparison between the Milton-English people-Charles relation, and the demons-people of Gargesa-Christ situation as related in Matthew 8.34.

This is the Roger L'Estrange whose name, then Sir Roger L'Estrange, is listed among the more than five hundred names of the "Nobility and Gentry that Encourag'd by Subscription" the elaborate 1688 folio edition of Paradise

It is still an open question whether Sir Roger had contributed to the subscription edition because of the distinguished company he would join in that enterprise, or because his long held respect for Milton's ability as a writer had ripened into admiration for Milton's great work of poetry. In view of L'Estrange's polemics against Milton, which he continued up to the "Glorious Revolution," one cannot assume that recollection of Milton's political offenses had become weaker in his memory, as it is said to have become in the memory of some others.

Masson, however, sees little lessening of the animosity to Milton between the time of the Restoration and the publication of *Paradise Lost*. He says, "Such public references as there had been to Milton in his retirement . . . had all been in the vein of continued execration and regret that he had not been hanged." Some of the more extreme pronouncements could stem only from a gnawing hatred that fed on itself in order to grow and reproduce more of its kind. Robert South, chaplain in ordinary to Charles II, referred to Milton in one of his sermons as "The Latin advocate, Mr. Milton, who, like a blind adder, has spit so much poison upon the King's person and cause. . . ." Masson notes that in Bishop Hacket's *Life of bishop Williams*, written in the years 1661-1670, Milton is:

that serpent Milton . . . that black mouthed Zoilus . . . a Shimei . . . a dead dog . . . a
canker-worm . . . the same, O horrid! that defended the lawfulness of the greatest crime that ever was committed, to put our thrice-excellent King to death: a petty school-boy scribbler that durst grapple in such a cause with the prince of the learned men of his age, Salmiasi.\textsuperscript{25}

Even allowing for seventeenth century methods of controversy, and for self-serving statements, such virulent abuse from clergymen, and such lack of Christian charity is shocking to modern readers. To these men can be applied Emerson's dictum that "[Fame] characterizes those who give it as much as him who receives it." In his 1738 Life of Mr. John Milton, Thomas Birch shrugs off such execration: "But such a Judgment is a Reproach only to the Person who is rash enough to pass it."\textsuperscript{26}

There is no question about the operation of strong prejudice in another figure of the late seventeenth century who still recognized that Milton had a place in any listing of great English poets. Masson, again, is the source for this account:

It [prejudice] is still rank indeed in the article on him [Milton] in the Lives of the most famous English Poets published in 1667 by a William Winstanley. He had been a barber, had pillaged Edward Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum for the purposes of his book, and dismissed Milton thus, in words stolen from Phillips, with an addition of his own: "John Milton was one whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English poets, having written two heroic poems and a tragedy, namely Paradice Lost, Paradice

\textsuperscript{25} Masson, VI, 636.

\textsuperscript{26} Thomas Birch, Life of Milton, p. lxiii. Quoted by Good, p. 125.
Regain'd and Sampson Agonista; but his fame is gone out like a candle in a snuff, and his memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honourable repute, had he not been a notorious traitor and most impiously and villanously bely'd that blessed martyr King Charles the First."

Masson pithily concludes, "Winstanley was but a straw against the stream."²⁷

Except for Samuel Johnson, Anthony Wood is perhaps the outstanding example of the clash within one person of antipathy and sympathy for Milton. Though he hated Milton's politics and frequently gave expression to his hostility, he was a grudging admirer of Milton and respected his reputation as a writer. In his 1691 life of Milton, included in the Fasti Oxonienses, he denounces Milton's political beliefs and indicts his political activities at the same time he admires Milton's "wonderful parts" and notes his excellence of performance in those very activities. Wood hits out as a party man against a man of the opposite party:

Milton sided with the rebellious faction, and being a man of parts, was therefore more capable than another of doing mischief, especially by his pen . . . and then he became a great antimonarchist, a bitter enemy to K. Ch. I. and at length arrived to that monstrous and unparallel'd height of profligate impudence, as in point to justify the most execrable murder of him the best of kings . . . . He was a person of wonderful parts, of a very sharp, biting, and satyrical wit. He was a good philosopher and historian, an excellent poet, Latinist, Grecian and Hebritant, a good mathematician and musician, and so rarely endowed by nature, that had

²⁷Masson, VI, 783.
he been but honestly principled, he might have been
doubly useful to that party against which he all
along appeared with such malice and bitterness.28

That Wood's animosity towards Milton extended to Milton's
nephews can be seen in the biography of Edward Phillips:

He was son of a father of both his names by Anne
his wife, daughter of John Milton and sister to
Joh. Milton the defender of the murder of King
Charles I. ... This Edw. Phillips hath a brother
called Joh. Phillips, who ... early imbib'd in a
most plentiful manner the rankest anti-monarchical
principles, from that villainous leading incendiary,
Joh. Milton his uncle.29

Mixing praise and censure as he thought of Milton
first as a poet he venerated then as a politician he de­
spised, Dr. Thomas Yalden, in about 1690, drew in his own

And praise the flights of a seraphic Muse,
Till thy seditious prose provokes our rage,
And soils the beauties of thy brightest page.

Whilst here thy bold majestic numbers rise,
And range th' embattled legions of the skies,

We owe the poet worthy to rehearse
Heaven's lasting triumphs in immortal verse.
But when thy impious mercenary pen
Insults the best of princes, best of men,
Our admiration turns to just disdain,
and we revoke the fond applause again.

Yalden even compares Milton to the fallen angels:

28 Wood, Fasti Oxonienses, I, 482.
29 Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, IV, 760.
As they did rebels to the Almighty grow,
So thou profan'est His image here below.

And then Yalden blurs the distinct outline he has drawn, and the poet and politician become one—"Apostate Bard!"\(^{30}\)

When Winstanley represents the fame of Milton as having gone out like a candle in a snuff, or when Langbaine reluctantly admits, "Had his principles been as good as his parts, he had been an excellent person,"\(^{31}\) or when Wood terms Milton a villainous incendiary, the defender of the king's murder, and Yalden hisses "Apostate Bard," these are dyed-in-the-wool Royalists-Tories who cannot forgive or forget the part that Milton the advocate, not Milton the poet, played in the rebellion.

It comes as a surprise to see that Joseph Addison, staunch Whig-to-be, attacks Milton for the same old cause that had made Milton's name anathema to Royalists for a quarter of a century. In 1694 the youthful Addison's rhymed \textit{Account of the Greatest English Poets}, eulogizing eleven poets, devotes thirty of its one hundred and fifty-five lines to Milton—twice as many as given to Dryden.


Acknowledging the majesty of Milton's blank verse, "Milton Unfettered in majestic numbers walks," Addison praises the sublimity of his subject matter in *Paradise Lost*, and the absolute lucidity of his diction:

Whate'er his pen describes I more than see,
Whilst every verse, arrayed in majesty,
Bold and sublime, my whole attention draws. . . .

And then Addison sharply draws the distinction between Milton the poet and Milton the controversialist:

Oh had the poet ne'er profan'd his pen,
To varnish o'er the guilt of faithless men;
His other works might have deserv'd applause!
But now the language can't support the cause;
While the clean current, tho' serene and bright,
Betrays a bottom odious to the sight.32

At the turn of the century the austere and unbending political fighter may have been the center of the tradition of Milton the man. It is to be regretted if the harsh, and sometimes coarse and brutal controversialist had in truth very nearly obscured the image of Milton whom the early biographers saw at close range, the man whom Milton's friends and relatives knew, "a man of culture and breeding, generous, companionable, witty, peaceable, loving music and good talk, loving quiet and all the delights of intercourse with affectionate, intelligent companions."33

From the early biographers come the details of Milton's last days, the days of a man of considerable fame:

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33 Darbishire, p. 1xI.
from Aubrey, that he was visited much by the learned--more than he desired—that he received enticing offers to live abroad, in France and Italy, that foreigners visited England chiefly to see "O. Protector and Mr. J. Milton," and his birthplace, "house and chamber," and that he was admired more abroad than he was at home. Wood, of course, gives much the same information. From John Toland we learn, additionally, that "All his learned and great Friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the Vulgar" attended his funeral.34

In a letter written to Milton in 1666, Milton's young German friend Peter Heimbach sums up the virtues that Milton lovers do indeed believe that Milton possessed:

I, who admired in you not so much your individual virtues as the marriage-union of diverse virtues, do now, while I discern many things besides in you, admire especially how it has happened that, by the union of a grave dignity (exhibited in a face worthy of the wearer) with the calmest politeness, of kindness with prudence, of piety with policy, of policy with immense erudition, and, I will add, of a generous and far from timid spirit (even when younger minds were slipping) with a genuine love of peace, you have been an example of a mixture of qualities altogether rare and beyond the allowance of the age.35

34 Darbishire, pp. 6-7, 48, 193.
35 Masson, VI, 501.
CHAPTER II

JOHN MILTON THE POET

"The fame of a great man is not rigid and stony like his bust. . . ." Emerson

During the first half of the eighteenth century, a habit of thinking developed and took hold among many Milton admirers—that of blaming the generation before them for alleged neglect of Milton and for allowing his "great poem to lie in obscurity." To most of these lovers of Milton, his fame rested primarily, if not wholly, on Paradise Lost. Jonathan Richardson succinctly put forth this attitude in his Life of Milton, published in his Explanatory Notes on Milton's Paradise Lost (1734). "The Print Prefix'd," he said of the full page frontispiece portrait of Milton, "shows the Face of him who Wrote Paradise Lost, the Face we chiefly desire to be Acquainted with."¹ Although Addison assumed a general popularity of Milton in his Spectator Papers on Paradise Lost in 1712, that very Critique was soon credited with having introduced Milton to the English reading public. The nation fixed upon the Critique "as the turning point of Milton's fame from evil

days and evil tongues to national honor and immeasurable glory."² That view prevailed throughout the century and, to some extent, still persists.

There is little doubt that as early as 1716 Sir Richard Blackmore was thus referring to Addison:

It must be acknowledged that till about forty years ago, Great Britain was barren of critical learning, tho' fertile in excellent writers; and in particular had so little taste for epic poetry and was so unacquainted with the essential properties and true beauties of it that 'Paradise Lost', an admirable work of that kind, published by John Milton, the great ornament of his age and country, lay many years unspoken of and entirely disregarded till at length it happened that some persons of great delicacy and judgment found out the merit of that excellent poem and by communicating it to their friends propagated the esteem of the author who soon acquired universal applause.³

John Dennis declared 1712, "Paradise Lost had been printed forty years before it was known to the greatest part of England that there barely was such a book."⁴ Aaron Hill is said to have complained, ten years later, about the English nation's "stupid insensibility to such a prodigious Genius as Milton's who had been thirty years dead before the force of his Poetry began to take Life among us."⁵

²Good, p. 13.


⁴The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. E. N. Hooker (Baltimore, Md., 1943), II, 32.

⁵Good, p. 12.
The chorus went on in much the same strain throughout that century and through the next. In making a study of the plight of writers in Restoration England, Alexandre Beljame, in 1881, wrote of Milton:

Great Milton, 'on evil days though fall'n and evil tongues; in darkness, and with dangers compast round, and solitude,' wrote his masterpiece, for a scanty audience.

Scant the audience, indeed, and scant their sympathy. . . . Neither the author nor his subject was of a type to win popular favour, nor his style either; the court compared his verse to the clatter of a wheelbarrow.6 His brother poets themselves treated his biblical epic no better; Dryden turned it into an opera. . . . This Restoration period proved one of the least favourable to literature.

. . . . Apart from Tonson's edition of Paradise Lost (the first worthy recognition of the great, under-appreciated poet), Addison's articles on Milton was the first reparation England made to the great poet who had died forgotten.7

In 1884 W. J. Courthope said very nearly the same thing that Blackmore had said: "His [Addison's] papers on Milton achieved the triumph of making a practically unknown poem one of the most popular classics in the language."8

6 Beljame quotes this from Johnson's Life of John Philips. Johnson, in turn, quotes it from a Bodleian manuscript "fragment" written by Edmund Smith. The complete quotation is: "False criticks have been the plague of all ages; Milton himself, in a very polite court, has been compared to the rumbling of a wheel-barrow; he had been on the wrong side, and therefore could not be a good poet."


With a love for Milton that was, admittedly, little short of idolatry, commentators of the eighteenth century felt that there was some special degeneracy in an age that failed to recognize the merits of a Milton. Granted the sincerest and the strength of their belief in Milton's neglect by Restoration England, poets of the Age of Reason, scholars and other lovers of poetry felt impelled to seek out the explanation for this alleged neglect. This was the motivation for the real research into the problem of Milton's early popularity that was undertaken and pursued with great industry throughout the century.

Even admitting the moral austerity of their idol, the Miltonists of the seventeen-hundreds pronounced that the Restoration period, in so far as court influence was dominant, presented a solid immoral front to all that Milton held dear. The king was debauched, was double-faced, they believed; the court was notoriously corrupt, and the people, rejoicing to be free from Puritanism, were glad to follow the court's example. The Reverend Thomas Munro could see a debased consistency that ran through all the wits of this period, whose loves and writings alike, he felt, were characterized by an immorality. "They seem to have agreed," he said, "... that a tale of humor was sufficient knowledge, good-fellowship sufficient honesty, and a restraint from the extremes of vice sufficient
virtue." It was not surprising, then, that *Paradise Lost*, the embodiment of Milton's most sublime ideals of morality, should have little attraction for Restoration wits. The general lack of earnestness, and the over-emphasis on what is merely exterior made the time ripe for *Hudibras*, not for *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, it would be hard to find a period of English history in which the current of life was so hostile to the ideas, and the current of literature so hostile to the form of Milton's epic as it was when *Paradise Lost* appeared. Some sixty-five years later, in 1732, Jonathan Swift soberly wrote of the great poem: "Few either read, liked, or understood it; and it gained ground merely by its merit." Almost one hundred years later still Thomas Campbell, while admitting that *Paradise Lost* was not neglected, repeated the charge that it was beyond the general understanding of Restoration England:

But of Milton's poetry being above the comprehension of his age, we should have a sufficient proof, if we had no other, in the grave remark of Lord Clarendon, that Cowley had, in his time, 'taken flight above all men in poetry'. . . . He [Milton]

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stood alone, and aloof above his times, the bard of immortal subjects.\textsuperscript{11}

As Joseph Warton saw it, Restoration literary taste fully deserved the censure that was heaped onto it:

It was too great attention to French criticism that hindered our poets, in Charles II's time, from comprehending the genius, and acknowledging the authority of Milton; else, without looking abroad, they might have acquired a manner more correct and perfect than the French authors could or can teach them.\textsuperscript{12}

The unrimed lines of Milton's blank verse, his sustained verse paragraphs, and his use of antiquated words offered obvious difficulties to persons who had come to prefer the polished, smooth, rimed couplet. Milton was censured for the irregularity of his blank verse—for his "wildness". Dryden would not "justify Milton for his blank verse," saying that "rhyme was not his talent; he had neither the ease of doing it nor the graces of it."\textsuperscript{13} Few persons any earlier than 1699 would have admitted being in error in wishing to convert Milton's blank verse to rhyme, as did John Hopkins when he repented publicly for having attempted to rhyme the great epic. In an apologetic preface


\textsuperscript{13}John Dryden, Original and Progress of Satire (1693), Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford, 1900), II, 29-30. Subsequent quotations from Dryden's essays are from the Ker edition.
to his slender volume, he said:

I did not at first so well perceive the Majesty and Noble Air of Mr. Milton's style as I do now. . . . It has been the Misfortune of one of my Name to affront the Sacred Prose of David, with Intolerable Rhyme, and 'Tis mine, I fear, to have abused almost as Sacred Verse.14

There were still other considerations that influenced the epic's early popularity. To England of the late 1660's John Milton was famous, or more correctly, infamous, as a controversialist, a pamphleteer who had supported the acts of the hated Puritan Commonwealth. There were many who, on seeing his name on a title page, would recall the despised tractarian and would pass the poem by, unread. Samuel Johnson added the element of necessity when he said of Restoration Englishmen: "Wit and literature were on the side of the Court; and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides?"15 In view of these unfavorable circumstances, it seems foolish to expect *Paradise Lost* to have been a "popular" poem prior to 1700 in the sense that it was popular in the eighteenth century. The only question which can reasonably arise is, "Was *Paradise Lost* known, read, and admired by the class for whom it was written—the learned, the cultured, the literary, and such


as would be attracted by the theme?"\textsuperscript{16} In short, did \textit{Paradise Lost}, in the seventeenth century, reach Milton's "fit audience, though few"?

Among those answering this question in a strong affirmative was Jonathan Richardson. Declaring that \textit{Paradise Lost} had been unread and unappreciated for not more than two or three years, Richardson flatly refuted a claim that had been made that Lord Sommers, through his support of the 1688 subscription folio edition of \textit{Paradise Lost}, had caused Milton's great epic to become known and esteemed. Richardson said:

\begin{quote}
It has been a Current Opinion that the late Lord Sommers first gave this Poem a Reputation. is it not a sufficient Reproach to our Country that \textit{Paradise Lost} lay neglected for Two or Three Years? though even for Those it may be Pledged that Party-Partiality, and the Then Gay Taste of wit are answerable for a great Share of the Guilt; 'Twas not Altogether Stupidity . . . \textit{Paradise Lost} was known and Esteem'd Long before there was Such a Man as Lord Sommers. the Pompous Folio Edition . . . is a Proof of what I Assert . . . Lord Sommers was a subscriber; but He was Then John Sommers Esq; No doubt, when he was So conspicuous Himself as He Afterwards was, His Applause and Encouragement Spread and Brightened its Lustre, but it had Beam'd Out Long before.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Like Richardson, Thomas Birch argued that the magnificent folio edition of \textit{Paradise Lost} was not a cause, but a proof of popularity. In his \textit{Life of Milton} (1738), Birch made a strong case for his contention. As part of his

\textsuperscript{16} Havens, "Early Reputation," p. 189.

\textsuperscript{17} Jonathan Richardson, \textit{Life of Milton} (London, 1734), Darbishire, pp. 294-295.
evidence he cited the famous subscription list of the five hundred "best names" in England at that time. It seems reasonable to assume that many of these noblemen and gentleman must already have known the poem, or that they must have been sufficiently impressed by its appearance to have subscribed to the edition. Doubtless a considerable number of the subscribers previously admired it and wished to have it in what they considered a suitable form. It is possible that already, by 1688, persons of taste, or of fashion and distinction were expected to know *Paradise Lost*, or to have it in their libraries. If this was true, it foreshadowed the attitude that became a fashion in the next century.

In his *Life of Milton* (1779), Dr. Johnson undertook to correct what he considered an erroneous belief concerning the "neglected merit," the "long obscurity and late reception" of *Paradise Lost*. "Has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?" he asked. Glancing at the unfavorable attendant circumstances of the early years of *Paradise Lost*, Johnson reminded his readers that it is a mistake to judge past times by their own. He observed that reading in Milton's age was not the general amusement that it had become in their own century; not that there

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had been any paucity of learned men in Milton's time, but that there had been a comparatively small "number of the middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment and who buy the numerous products of typography."¹⁹ In other words, the call for books in the last half of the seventeenth century had not been the same that it was in the last half of the eighteenth century. And then as proof of his assertion that "it cannot be inferred that Milton's poem was not read or not, however unwillingly, admired" during the time in question, Johnson supplied some comparative statistics from the market place. England had been satisfied in the forty-one years from 1623 to 1664 with only two editions of Shakespeare's works, comprising probably fewer than one thousand copies. Thirteen hundred copies of Paradise Lost had been sold in the eighteen months from its September 1667 publication to April 1669. The sale of this number Johnson believed, "in opposition to so much recent enmity and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius." ("This remark will always be read with peculiar gratification," Todd comments, "as it exonerates our forefathers from the charge of being inattentive to the glorious blaze of a luminary, before which so many stars 'dim their ineffec­tual light.'"²⁰) Johnson's editor, G. B. Hill, adds an

¹⁹Johnson, Lives, I, 143. ²⁰Todd, I, 122-123.
item to the statistics: the first edition of Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), probably consisting of one thousand copies, was fourteen years in being exhausted. The ratio of the three would seem in this instance, to be, 

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\text{(S) } 41 : 1000 = \text{(M) } 1\frac{3}{5} : 1300 = \text{(D) } 14 : 1000. 
\]

Johnson was convinced that Milton's merit had not gone unrecognized, that he had not been neglected. He even felt that he knew "with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence during the reigns of Charles II and James II." He felt that the poet must have been "calm and confident," a "little disappointed" perhaps, but "not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting without impatience the vicissitudes of opinion and the impartiality of a future generation."23

Though Milton may have been an illustrious example of patient merit, Todd believes that that patience was not tried very long. "His admirers were not long silent,"24


22Pattison warns against taking market sales as an absolute gauge for standing and success. As illustration, he offers the comparison: *Paradise Lost* in the twenty years between 1667 and 1688 required three editions, about 4500 copies; Shakespeare's plays in the sixty years between 1624 and 1684 were published in three editions, totalling about 3000 copies; but Cleveland's poems ran through sixteen or seventeen editions in about thirty years. Pattison, pp. 214-215.

he says, tacitly refuting Johnson's flat avowal "that in
the reigns of Charles and James, the Paradise Lost re-
ceived no public acclamations." To build his case
against the view of Milton as a neglected, forgotten ge-
nius, Todd cites many tributes that soon began to be ac-
corded him. Todd in 1801, Masson in 1880, R. D. Havens in
1909, and J. W. Good in 1915 have all made studies of
the early reputation of Milton the poet. After Todd, each
has been able to add tributes of his own discovery to
those listed by his predecessors. Altogether, their find-
ings make an astonishing list.

Masson is of the opinion that about the beginning
of 1669 the merits of Paradise Lost began to be a matter
of talk among the critics and court-wits, "chiefly because
of the boundless praise of it by Dryden and Lord Buck-
hurst ... Buckhurst, Roscommon, and others of the Res-
toration wits and critics may have helped in the first ap-
preciation of Paradise Lost," he says, "but Dryden was
their first leader." 27

25Johnson, I, 142.

26R. J. Todd, Life of Milton in The Poetical Works
of John Milton, I; David Masson, The Life of John Milton,
VI; R. D. Havens, "Seventeenth Century Notices of Milton,"
Englische Studien, XL (1909), 175-186, and "The Early
Reputation of Paradise Lost," ibid., pp. 187-199; John
Walter Good, Studies in the Milton Tradition. This does
not purport to be a definitive list of such studies.

27Masson, VI, 631, 635.
John Dryden is said to have declared when *Paradise Lost* was published, "This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too," but this is only a sentiment that is not perfectly well vouched. Beginning with the first printed praise of Milton the poet, in 1669 (this excepts the printer's commendatory Preface to the 1645 edition of Milton's *Poems on Several Occasions*, together with the tributes of Milton's Italian friends—published by Milton in the *Poems*—tributes that for the present purpose will not be considered), there are very few years from that date to the 1712 Critique of Addison that are not marked by one or more printed commendations of Milton.

The first person who expressed openly in print the opinion about Milton the poet that, from all evidence, was steadily forming in private among critics and poets, was his nephew Edward Phillips. This first tribute is sometimes passed by as being prejudiced, but this view seems a little overnice, for every printed reference to Milton the poet must surely have caused some reader to become interested in the poetry of this erstwhile pamphleteer—and breadth of readership is part of the matter under study. Masson reports that Edward Phillips had been requested "to superintend a new edition, in 1669, of the once popular book of Joannes Buchlerus entitled *Saccarum Profanarumque*

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28 Richardson relates this in his 1734 *Life of Milton*. Darbishire, p. 296.
Phrasium Poeticarum Thesaurus." If this edition was, indeed, an answer to an expressed need, then one might reasonably expect that more than a few would read it, and would also read Phillips's own appended Latin essay listing outstanding Italian, German and English poets since the time of Dante, in which he says of Milton:

John Milton, in addition to other most elegant writings of his, both in English and Latin, has lately published Paradise Lost, a poem which, whether we regard the sublimity of the subject, or the combined pleasantness and majesty of the style, or the sublimity of the invention or the beauty of its images and descriptions of nature, will, if I mistake not, receive the name of truly Heroic inasmuch as by the suffrages of many not unqualified to judge, it is reputed to have reached the perfection of this kind of poetry.29

Representing himself as speaking for others quite capable of critical judgment, Edward Phillips named Paradise Lost a "truly Heroic" poem, and thereby raised the question of its classification—a matter that was argued for more than a hundred years.

Dryden seems never to have been able to define critically the position Paradise Lost should occupy in the ranks of literature, returning repeatedly to the problem over a period of twenty-five years in his critical essays. Now, Dryden adhered firmly to the critical rules of his day and endeavored to judge all literature by those rules which had been deduced largely by Horace from the standard writings of the Ancients, but had been imported to England

29Masson, VI, 636-637.
from the Neo-Classicism of the French court. When he attempted to measure *Paradise Lost* by these rules requiring formality, regularity and rationalism, it was patently clear to him that the great poem had not been created according to the rules. Therein lay Dryden's dilemma, for he recognized at once in *Paradise Lost* the unmistakable evidence of great poetic genius. Indicative of his high regard for Milton's genius is the liberal acknowledgment of his obligation to *Paradise Lost* in the preface to his rhymed version of the poem—*The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*—acknowledgment made almost immediately after Milton's death in 1674, but published in 1677:

I cannot, without injury to the deceased author of *Paradise Lost*, but acknowledge, that this poem has received its entire foundation, part of the design, and many of the ornaments from him. What I have borrowed will be so easily discerned from my mean productions, that I shall not need to point the reader to the places: and truly I should be sorry for my sake, that any one should take the pains to compare them together; the original being undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced.30

Dryden once said that though Milton lacked neither genius nor learning to have been a perfect poet, yet he was liable to many censures. But each time that Dryden criticized Milton for one of his faults, he seems to have followed it by an explanatory statement or by a

30Dryden, *The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic License*, Preface to the *State of Innocence and Fall of Man*, an Opera (1677), Ker, I, 178-179.
complimentary one that minimized his stricture. Dryden felt constrained to disallow a heroic character of Milton's subject in *Paradise Lost*. "His design is the losing of our happiness; his event is not prosperous like that of all other epic works; his heavenly machines are many, and his human persons are but two," was his criticism. But he continued, "His thoughts are elevated, his words sounding, and . . . no man has so happily copied the manner of Homer, or so copiously translated his Grecisms and the Latin elegancies of Virgil." 31

He found "flats" in Milton's thought "sometimes for a hundred lines together." 32 "But," he said, "it is when he gets into a track of Scripture." He disapproved of Milton's use of antiquated words both because of the "perpetual harshness of their sound," and because Milton did not observe moderation in their use. On this point he said that Milton used antiquated words from choice, not necessity, and that there was something venerable in them; furthermore, Milton was imitating Spenser just as Spenser imitated Chaucer, and they both probably were carried away by love for their masters.

Advocate of the doctrine that blank verse was unsuitable for all high or serious poetry, Dryden would not

31 A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (1693), Ker, II, 29.
32 Preface to *Sylva* (1685), Ker, I, 268.
"justify Milton for his blank verse," but he offered to excuse him on the ground that "rhyme was not his talent . . . which is manifest in the verses written in his youth . . . at an age when . . . love makes almost every man a rhymer, if not a poet."33

Two dominant themes in Dryden's thinking about Milton seemed to repeat themselves: Milton's closeness to the ancients, and his supreme genius. Dryden cited "Homer, Virgil, Tasso, or Milton's Paradise" as examples of good epic usage and declared that Horace, "had he now lived," would not have taxed Milton, "as our false critics have presumed to do, for his choice of a supernatural argument."34 Later he stated, "Spenser and Milton are the nearest, in English, to Virgil and Horace in the Latin."35 Referring to his search for perfect use of satire, he said, "Then I consulted a greater genius [than Cowley], I mean Milton. . . . I found in him a true sublimity, lofty thoughts which were clothed with admirable Grecisms."36 He admitted he dared "not condemn so great genius as Milton."37 Almost a summary of his great admiration for Milton is the encomium: "It is as much commendation as a

34 Preface to the State of Innocence, Ker, I, 189-190.
35 Dedication of Aeneis (1697), Ker, II, 223.
37 Dedication of Aeneis, ibid., p. 212.
man can bear to own him excellent; all beyond is idola-

try."\(^{38}\)

It is not clear what the nature of the "publick ac-
clamations" was meant to be in Johnson's statement that
"In the reigns of Charles and James the Paradise Lost re-
ceived no publick acclamations." No less a person than
the poet laureate himself had expressed in print his
boundless admiration for Milton, both in the reign of
Charles (Preface to the State of Innocence), and of James
(Preface to Sylvae). Even supposing that Johnson had not
seen the various pieces of rhymed praise of Milton that
came out of this period, it seems unlikely that he had not
read the two prefaces—he discusses the first in his Life
of Dryden. One can only surmise that in the interest of
the stand he was taking, he simply chose to overlook them.

Two, or perhaps three, poetical tributes were writ-
ten before Milton's death. Professor Good believes that
the twelve-line verse signed with initials "F.C." was
written before 1674,\(^{39}\) though it was published in 1680.\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\)Preface to Sylvae, Ker, I, 268.

\(^{39}\)The well-established custom of handing around
within a circle of friends one's writing, in manuscript,
must have been followed by many who made comments on Mil-
ton. "Timely" writing such as verses written on the death
of a well known person, but not immediately published,
must certainly have received this attention. Though this
practice cannot be measured, it must have had some bearing
on Milton's early popularity, and should not be overlooked
in a study such as the present one.

\(^{40}\)Good, p. 53.
(Todd thinks that this F.C. is Francis Craddock, a fellow member with Milton of the Rota-Club.)

The lines give the feeling of being addressed to a living person, not apostrophizing his memory:

0 Thou, the wonder of the present age,  
An age immers'd in luxury and vice;  
A race of triflers; who can relish naught,  
But the gay issue of an idle brain;  
How could'st thou hope to please this tinsel race!  
Though blind, yet, with the penetrating eye  
Of intellectual light, thou dost survey  
The labyrinth perplex'd of Heaven's decrees;  
And with a quill pluck'd from an Angel's wing,  
Dipt in the fount that laves the eternal throne,  
Trace the dark paths of Providence Divine,  
And justify the ways of God to man.

Next to the Dryden hexastich, probably the poetical tributes most frequently quoted are those of Dr. Samuel Barrow and Andrew Marvell, prefixed to the 1674 edition of Paradise Lost and thereafter printed many times with it.

Dr. Barrow's Latin In Paradisum Ammisam Summi Poetae

Johannis Miltoni begins:

Qui legis Amissam Paradisum, grandia magni  
Carmina Miltoni, quid nisi cuncta legis?

41Todd, I, 125.

42Francis Craddock, To Mr. John Milton, On. . . . Par. Lost. Fawkes & Woty, The Ptl Calendar, 8:69. Good, p. 53; Todd, I, 125. Some of the Milton tributes given on pp. 61-75 are documented by collating citations in some, or in all of the studies by Todd, Masson, Havens and Good, mentioned on p. 54. For using this method of documentation, I claim Doctor Johnson as advocate. He once said, "To adjust the minute events of literary history . . . often depends upon enquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand"—Johnson's Life of Dryden, Lives, I, 368.
Who reads Paradise Lost, magnificent song of the great Milton, without reading everything?

Marvell's *On Paradise Lost* opens on a doubtful note:

When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold,
In slender Book his vast Design unfold
Messiah Crown'd, God's Reconcil'd Decree,
Rebelling Angels, the Forbidden Tree,
Heav'n, Hell, Earth, Chaos, All; the Argument
Held me a while misdoubting his Intent,
That he would ruin (for I saw him strong)
The sacred Truths to Fable and old Song. . . .

But it rises to the triumphant praise:

That Majesty which through thy work doth Reign
Draws the Devout, deterring the Profane.
And things divine thou treat' st of in such state
As them preserves, and thee, inviolate.

Where couldst thou words of such a compass find?
Whence furnish such a vast expense of Mind?
Just Heav'n thee like Tiresias to requite
Rewards with Prophecy thy loss of sight.

Though writing in rhyme himself, Marvell praises Milton's use of blank verse:

Well mightst thou scorn thy Readers to allure
With tinkling Rime, of thy own sense secure;

Thy Verse created like thy Theme sublime,
In Number, Weight, and Measure, needs not Rime.

It was probably soon after Milton's death that

Charles Goodall wrote *A Propitiary Sacrifice, To the Ghost of J.M. by way of Pastoral in a Dialogue between Thyrsis and Corydon*. . . which was not published until 1689. The poet makes it clear that the "J.M." is Milton, and he ably notices Milton's rejection of rhyme:

Daphnis! the great Reformer of our Isle!
Daphnis! the Patron of the Roman Stile!
Who first to sense converted Doggerel Rhimes
The Muses Bells took off, and stopt their/
Chimes. . . . 43

Edward Phillips very early took his stand on the question concerning the use of blank verse instead of rhymed verse. On this head, poets, critics, and men of letters drew up in well defined opposing ranks. The pseudo-classical school emphasized refinement of poetic form, maintaining that restraint (embodied in rhyme), was essential to excellence. The adherents to blank verse, using Milton as example par excellence, emphasized magnitude of thought and grandeur of expression. To them all real excellence depended upon liberty of thought and expression, such as was afforded solely by blank verse, and was exemplified in Paradise Lost. They held that upon this liberty, only, depended the possibility of attaining the excellence of the Ancients. In his advocacy of this necessary condition for poetic greatness, Edward Phillips in 1675 argues that

the use of Measure alone without any Rime at all would give far more ample Scope and Liberty both to style and Fancy than can possibly be obtained in Rime, as evidently appears from an English Heroic poem which came forth not many years ago, and from the Style of Virgil, Horace, Ovid. . . . 44

R. W. Good believes that Nathaniel Lee wrote in

43Good, p. 55.
1677 his lines on Dryden's State of Innocence, addressed to Dryden:

Milton did the wealthy mind disclose,
And rudely cast what you could well dispose;
He roughly drew, on an old-fashioned ground,
A chaos; for no perfect world was found,
Till through the heap your mighty genius shined;
He was the golden ore which you refined.45

It is easy to see Lee's poor opinion of blank verse, which he characterizes by his epithets, "rudely cast," "roughly drawn," "old-fashioned ground," "the heap," "ore which you refined" into rhyme.

In 1678 a third edition of Paradise Lost was published. In 1678, also, Thomas Rhymer, apparently feeling that too much high esteem of Paradise Lost had been voiced, attempted to disparage it in his critical Tragedies of the Last Age Considered, and made a promise which he never fulfilled: "With the remaining Tragedies I shall also send you some reflections on that Paradise Lost of Milton's which some are pleased to call a poem, and assert Rime against the slender Sophistry wherewith he attacks it."46

Samuel Woodford's examination of blank verse the following year inevitably contained reference to Milton. He writes in the preface to his poetical Paraphrase Upon the Canticles:

45 Good, p. 56.

In the next age, even our now cry'd up Blank Verse will look as unfashionable, how well so ever as a Novelty and upon his Credit who was the Inventor of it here it may speed in this. Not but I have and always had, as great an honour for Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost as those who admire him most, and look upon it as Mr. Dryden has very well observed 'To be one of the greatest . . . poems any . . . has produced.' Nay that it shall live as long as there are men left in our English World to read it.

In this same year (1679), Samuel Slater's Poems in Two Parts was published. Part I is entitled An Interlocutory Discourse concerning the Creation, Fall and Recovery of Man, in the preface to which the author declares ("a rather curious commendation," Todd says): "I was much taken with the Learned Mr. Milton's Cast and Fancy in his Book viz. Paradise Lost." And then he admits, "Him I have followed much in his method and have been otherwise beholding to, how much I leave thee, gentle reader, to judge: but," he says, "I have used a more plain and familiar style because I conceived it most proper." (Havens says dryly that most readers familiar with the Puritan epic would judge Slater's Discourse to be merely a condensed paraphrase of parts of that work, but Todd was incensed by Slater's temerity: "The compositions of this self-complacent writer, the children of preposterous conceit, would have been a valuable addition to the common-place book of Bayes, who also 'loved to write familiarly.'")

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48 Todd, I, 124.
Milton's name did not fail to appear before the reading public in 1680. There was P.C.'s "O Thou! the wonder of his present age!" mentioned above. John Oldham's Bion. A Pastoral written on the Death of the Earl of Rochester (1680), has the lines:

Milton, whose muse with such daring Flight,
Lead out the warring Seraphim to flight. . . . 49

And an anonymous translator of Jacob Catsius's Self-Conflict pleads for his poetical translation (1680), in its preface: "It were a pity gold should be rejected . . . because not sung to thee by a Cowley or a Milton. . . ." Todd adds, "Yet, notwithstanding this modest depreciation of his labour, the translator has employed with good effect many Miltonick expressions."50

Beginning with Dr. Johnson,51 those interested in the question of Milton's early popularity see the Duke of Buckingham's An Essay Upon Poetry, first published in 1682, as a means of tracing the growing admiration for Milton. The poem closes with a description of an ideal poet who,

Must above Cowley, nay, and Milton too prevail,
Succeed where great Torquato, and our greater/
Spenser fail.

49Poems and Translations (London, 1684), p. 82.
Good, p. 55.

50Todd, I, 125.

In the 1713 edition the lines read,

Must above Milton's lofty flights prevail,
Succeed where Spenser, and even Torquato fail.

But by the 1723 revision Milton has advanced to the highest place:

Must above Tasso's lofty flights prevail,
Succeed where Spenser, and even Milton fail.

In a 1682 publication, dichotomy of feeling for Milton once again is seen. Nathaniel Lee's lines to Dryden on *Absalom and Achitophel* indirectly acknowledge Milton's high place in literature, while they also reveal Lee's political inclination as contrary to Milton's:

To whom ev'n the fanatics' altars raise,
Bow in their own despite, and grin your praise;
As if a Milton from the dead arose,
Fil'd off the rust, and the right party chose.\(^{52}\)

One type of praise for Milton is the assured, almost casual use of references to him for elucidating an idea or a premise with which the writer is concerned. Such usage presupposes a general familiarity with Milton. In 1683 Henry Hare's *The Situation of Paradise Found Out* "cites with taste and judgment," Todd says, several passages from *Paradise Lost* (Bk IV), referring to it as if it were perfectly well known: "The author of *Paradise Lost* handsomely describes it . . . and Milton has it thus. . . ."\(^{53}\) This


\(^{53}\)Todd, I, 125.
referring to Milton familiarly became fairly common in the late seventeenth century, and developed into an almost universal habit in the eighteenth. Writers such as John Dennis, Addison, and Thomas Warton the younger became so addicted to the practice that to note Milton references in their writing requires such citation as, "See Works, passim."

Of literary influence in the late seventeenth century second perhaps only to Dryden, and much like Dryden in his taste, was Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon. His rhymed Essay on Translated Verse, first published in 1684, became very well known, much referred to and quoted in the period which followed. Though he was a poet highly esteemed in Augustan circles ("No man ever rhymed truer and evener than he," Atterbury once said of him), Lord Roscommon took his stand along with Milton on the matter of versification. He declared that rhyme is not only unnecessary, but is even a barbarous yoke imposed upon the free range and liberty of thought:

Of many faults rhyme is perhaps the cause;
Too strict to rhyme, we slight more useful laws;
For that in Greece or Rome was never known
Till, by Barbarian deluges o'erflown,
Subdued, undone, they did at last obey,
And change their own for their invaders way.

Strongly expressing his faith in the larger possibilities of blank verse, Lord Roscommon wished to see rhyme de-throned and blank verse set up in its room:

Oh may I live to hail the glorious day,
And sing loud paeans through the crowded way,
When in triumphant state the British Muse,
True to herself, shall barbarous aid refuse,
And in the Roman majesty appear,
Which none know better, and none come so near.

In the second edition of the essay (1685), Roscommon illustrated the superiority of blank verse by dropping the couplet and concluding the essay, as he pointed out in a footnote,\(^54\) with a twenty-seven line imitation of Paradise Lost:

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Have you forgot how Raphael's numerous prose
Led our exalted souls thro' heavenly camps,
And mark'd the grounds where proud apostate thrones
Defied Jehovah!
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This famous poem, the standard work on its subject, containing as it did a plea for Miltonic verse and an example of it, must have performed a double service for Milton: not only did it give an indication of what men were thinking about the versification "new to all and disgusting to many," but it also acted as an important influence at work to make Paradise Lost, and Milton, better known.

Purposefully, with full intent, John Milton, Englishman, had written his great poems in the language of his own countrymen. As early as 1628 in his Vacation Exercise Milton had declared his intention of writing worthily in the English tongue on some lofty theme. He frequently repeated this intention, but the finest expression of it is in the scholarly and stately Reason of

\(^54\)Essay on Translated Verse, in Works of the English Poets, VIII, 264.
Church Government (1642), where he reveals that his inmost ambitions as a poet were even more bound up with his ardent patriotism than they had been when he first touched on the subject years before:

I applied myself to that resolution . . . to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue . . . to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above, of being a Christian, might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British islands as my world (II, 478).

In short, as Jonathan Richardson says, "Himself Intended it for his Native Country, Other Nations were to Enjoy it as much as Translations could Bestow it on them." 55

Another instance of the increasing regard in which Milton was held in the last quarter of the seventeenth century is the translations of his works 56 both into modern and classical languages. A German version of Paradise Lost had appeared in 1682. Masson says that even before that year, Milton's old friend Theodore Haak, the original founder of the London club of which the Royal Society was a development "had translated half of the poem into German blank verse, with much approbation from the continental

55 Darbishire, p. 296.

56 R. W. Good (p. 43), says that Lycidas "seems to have been translated into Latin in 1638," but he gives no explanation for his thinking so.
friends to whom he sent specimens of it in manuscript. 57

In 1734 Richardson gave his summary of the modern language treatments of Paradise Lost:

It has had several French, High and Low Dutch translations. Half of it has been done in Italian, by Rolli, and we hope for the other six books, the famous, learned Abbe Salvini, the same who translated Addison's Cato into Italian, shew'd my Son at Florence an Intire Translation of it, and said he intended to print it. 58

In 1686 the first of many Latin translations was published; this was of Paradise Lost, Book I. The whole of Paradise Lost, together with Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes, was translated into Latin by W. Hog in 1690, Lycidas in 1694, and Comus in 1698. Translations into Latin and Greek, primarily of Paradise Lost, continued to be published with some frequency until the middle of the eighteenth century, after which time few translations seem to have appeared.

Poems to the Memory of Edmond Waller, Esq. appeared in 1688. Among these poems Milton receives commendation from an anonymous writer by a comparison:

Now, in soft notes, like dying swans, ye'd sing,
Now tower aloft, like eagles on the wing;
Speak of adventurous deeds in such strain,
As all but Milton would attempt in vain. 59

For almost twenty years, almost from the day that Paradise Lost was published, men had bought copies of it;

57 Masson, VI, 783-784. 58 Darbishire, p. 296.
59 Todd, I, 126.
men had read it, had formed opinions of it, had described other poets by comparing them to its author; some had praised it and had put this praise into written words, some into printed words. Though commendations of Milton were certainly offered without the blessings of the Stuart court in these years between 1667 and 1688, there is no indication that there was any attempt to conceal the tributes from the eyes of the court at a time when court approval or disapproval still exerted a great influence on a person's welfare. One cannot agree with Dr. Johnson, therefore, when he speaks of "the silent progress of his work," and of Milton's "reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterranean current through fear and silence." Fear, perhaps, but not silence.

On the other hand, Masson is convinced that as England neared the Revolution of 1688, the supremacy of Milton seemed "an article of universal belief," and that it was this state of sentiment about Milton, fully formed only fourteen years after his death, that produced the "sumptuous folio volume entitled Paradise Lost, A Poem in Twelve Books, The Author John Milton. The Fourth Edition, Adorn'd with sculptures. London, Printed by Miles Flesher, for Jacob Tonson at the Judge's Head in Chancery Lane near Fleet-Street, MDCLXXXVIII." Whether this was primarily a concerted public recognition of the nation's

60 Masson, VI, 784.
great poet, or whether it was a result of power politics—a victorious Whig Party's exaction of tribute to a reputation the party had espoused, tribute to that "Grand Whig, Milton," whose philosophy of society the Whig party finally admitted having also espoused—the massive folio edition with its five hundred honorable names of subscribers appended, among whom are the most distinguished characters of the time, did amount to a national recognition of Milton the poet. It was the first poem ever to be published by subscription in England, and was an effort furthered by many. The Whig lawyer and statesman, John Sommers, afterwards Lord Sommers, young Francis Atterbury, later Bishop Atterbury, and John Dryden are credited with leadership in the endeavor. Dryden, besides subscribing and encouraging subscription to the edition, furnished his famous six-line epigram which was engraved under the Faithorne portrait:

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next in majesty; in both the last.
The force of Nature could no farther go;
To make a third, she joined the other two.

Copies of this ornamental edition of Paradise Lost are said to have become household treasures. The edition itself speaks convincingly of the early recognition of the poem and its author. Tonson, in the duodecimo edition of 1711 makes a practical observation about this "elegant edition": "Notwithstanding the price of it was four times
greater than before, the sale increased double the number every year. The work is now generally known and es-
teemed."\(^6\)

A companion volume containing *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* was issued the same year by another pub-
lisher. This, the third edition of Milton's last two
poems, was made up in the same folio size, of the same
style of type as the folio *Paradise Lost*, but without the
sculptures."

With the abdication, by default, of James II in
1688, the absolute monarchy, the ruling under the doctrine
of the divine right of kings, was officially ended in Eng-
land. William of Orange, invited to the throne, became a
constitutional monarch by contract—the theory of monarchy
advocated many times by Milton. Among the many other
changes resulting from this Revolution was that change
concerning the attitude towards Milton. King William was
not interested in persecuting Puritans; not only was it no
longer possible to curry royal favor by abusing the party
opposed to the king, but it was no longer profitable to
abuse Milton for the amusement of king and court. Rather,
all men were privileged to speak freely what many had felt,
and what many had already asserted, concerning the great-
ness, as a poet, of this Englishman, John Milton. Tributes

\(^6\)Quoted by G. B. Hill, ed., Johnson's *Lives*, I, 198, Appendix N.
continued to express the regard with which other Englishmen held him. Nahum Tate wrote:

The Daring Muse unbeaten paths shall tread,
In Visionary Dreams of Rapture led,
Descend into the Region of the Dead,
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Where Milton on Eternal Roses lies,
Deep Wrapt in Dreams of his own Paradise. 62

Addison's lines on Milton in his Account of the Greatest English Poets began:

But Milton next, with high and haughty stalk,
Unfettered in majestic numbers walks. 63

Isaac Watts implored in verse:

Give me the Muse whose generous force,
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . bears to Paradise the raptur'd mind.
There Milton dwells. 64

The anonymous couplet

Or mighty Milton walks thro' paths untrod,
And sings the ancient Wars of God 65

may be considered typical of the expressions of praise for the poet Milton that continued to be written throughout the seventeenth century until they were replaced by the more extravagant ones of the eighteenth century. "Quotations are superfluous in an established truth," Dryden

62Nahum Tate, A Poem occasioned by the late Discontent and Disturbances in the State (1691), in Poems on Affairs of State, IV, 309. Good, p. 57.

63Addison, Works, I, 144:


once said. Further quotations, in this present instance, would seem, in fact, to be superfluous.

It is true that some among these "dispensers of honest praise" were obscure persons. But there is virtue in that fact. It indicates that Milton's *Paradise Lost* was generally read, and that readers in many ranks and walks of life were deeply sensible to its excellence. It indicates, also, that Milton's rank at the top was very early an accomplished thing.

A partial summary of the Miltoniana published in the forty-five years between the publication of *Paradise Lost* and that of Addison's critique on the poem attests to Milton's early fame as a poet. In these years from 1667 to 1712 there had appeared six editions of *Paradise Lost*, four of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, one of the minor poems, besides three editions of the complete poetical works. The first complete edition of the poems (1695) was accompanied by Patrick Hume's voluminous notes on *Paradise Lost* and constituted the first annotated edition of any English poem. This work preceded the first critical edition of Shakespeare, even, by fourteen years, which is, Havens says, "a very simple matter as compared with that of Hume."^66 By 1712 Hog had translated into Latin the five longest poems, as previously mentioned; another complete, and four partial Latin versions of *Paradise Lost*

had been made; Vom Berge had published his German transla-
tion of Paradise Lost. Two adaptations of Paradise Lost
into rime had been done, one by Dryden. Twenty-two unmis-
takable imitations of Paradise Lost had been published,
some of which were very popular. Among these John Philips's
parody The Splendid Shilling stands out preeminently, and
its very preeminence attests to a broad familiarity with
Paradise Lost. The humor in this piece was not intended
as a derogation of Milton's great epic; the young Milton
enthusiast was too utterly devoted to Milton for anything
of that nature. But John Philips had so steeped himself
in Milton's great poem and had so written his imitation of
it that the better one knew the original poem, the more he
could enjoy the imitation. Paradise Lost had been praised
highly by the chief critics of the time—Dryden, Roscommon,
and later, Dennis. And, finally, it had been praised and
imitated by the leading poets, Dryden and Pope.

Without benefit of great libraries or modern methods
and tools of research, the eighteenth century cannot be
expected to have had available compilations of information
about Milton. On the contrary, it was eighteenth century
Milton scholarship that began to reveal the facts that we
make use of today as we form our judgments of earlier
times and events. Truths about Milton have come to light
slowly, and usually without fanfare, but during much of
the eighteenth century, quiet facts had to contend for at-
tention with a vitality of enthusiasm for Milton unknown
in our time. A glance or two through the door into the eighteenth century gives ample evidence of this enthusiasm.

As early as 1704 John Dennis characterized *Paradise Lost* "the most lofty Poem that has been produced by the Mind of Man," and as late as 1796 it was described as "the noblest poem, perhaps that ever wit of man produced." Critical writings all through the century were strewn with such terms as "the divine Milton," "the supreme of Verse," "the greatest genius that ever appeared among man," "perfect poems," "exalted to a supreme rank."

Milton, by virtue of the sublimity of *Paradise Lost*, was considered to rank with, if not above, Homer and Virgil. Dryden had been the first to rank him above the other two, and those who followed Dryden repeated the theme of his hexastich. Addison declared: "Homer strikes the imagination wonderfully with what is great; Virgil with what is beautiful, and Ovid with what is strange... If I were to name a poet that is a perfect master in all these arts of working in the imagination, I think Milton may pass for one." William Warburton wrote:


Milton . . . found Homer possessed of the province of MORALITY; Virgil of POLITICS; and nothing left for him, but that of RELIGION. This he seized . . . and by means of the superior dignity of his subject, hath gotten to the head of that Triumvirate, which took so many ages in forming.70

Another writer declared:

It is no Compliment, but a bare Piece of Justice done to Milton, when we not only compare him to Homer and Virgil, but even prefer him to both those great Poets; because his genius evidently appears to have been superior to theirs, by the frequent Proofs he gives us of what Power which constitutes a sublime Genius, and . . . is more conspicuous in him than in any other poet.71

Johnson's protest that Addison had "made Milton an universal favourite, with whom readers of every class think it necessary to be pleased" was more than half true. Milton had, in fact, become so popular in the eighteenth century that he was the fashion, and in the words of John Marchant, "He who professes he has no Taste for Milton is justly deemed to have no Taste for Polite Literature."72

The result of this flood of adulation was that whoever might not have shared in this regard for "the finest poem in the world" did not dare avow publicly his indifference. Lord Chesterfield, after admitting to his son, "I cannot possibly read . . . Milton through," added, "Keep this


secret for me; for if it should be known, I should be abused by every tasteless pedant, and every solid divine in England."73

With so many falsetto words of praise being uttered in the eighteenth century, there is little wonder that few could hear the praise coming from the seventeenth century, some of which had, admittedly, been sotto voce. But whether or not the Age of Enlightenment could ever be convinced that Milton had not been neglected and forgotten by his contemporaries, that his great poem had not lain in obscurity, evidence all shows that Milton had, indeed, found his "fit audience," and that that audience in his own century had ranked him, if not on the throne itself, certainly in the place nearest to the throne.

Richardson spoke very truly when he said of Paradise Lost, and by synecdoche, of Milton:

Thus, what by One means, what by Another, and Those Complicated, and Manag'd as Providence well Can, This Poem [and one might add, this poet] (like an Acorn Hid and Lost) has, by its Inherent Life, and a Little Cultivation, Sprung Out of the Earth, Lifted up its Head and Spread its Branches, a Noble Oak; has become a Richer Treasure to the World than it has receiv'd from Most of Those Names which Glitter in the Records of Time.74


74Darbishire, p. 297.
CHAPTER III

JOHN MILTON THE PHILOSOPHER

"That lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose publisht labours advance the good of mankind..."

Just as Anthony Wood is the example of a biographer who can see Milton only as a political controversialist, "that libellous incendiary Milton," so John Toland, whose Life of John Milton prefaced the first complete edition of Milton's prose works in 1698, is chief among the early biographers who see Milton as a scholar-poet-philosopher. Toland begins his Life:

John Milton, a Man eminent at home and famous abroad for his universal Learning, Sagacity and solid Judgment: but particularly noted as well for those excellent Volumes he wrote on the behalf of Civil, Religious, and Domestic Liberty; as for his divine and incomparable Poems, which, equaling the most beautiful Order and Expression of any antient or modern Compositions, are infinitely above them all for Sublimity and Invention.¹

Whereas Jonathan Richardson loves the Milton who is primarily the author of Paradise Lost, John Toland loves the Milton of the Areopagitica. To the Whig Toland, Milton is most eminently a champion of freedom, and of

¹Darbishire, p. 83.
freedom of thought. Toland sees the chief design of *Paradise Lost* as being "to display the different Effects of Liberty and Tyranny," and believes that Milton stated that as his intention in the exalted conclusion of his tract *Of Reformation in England* (1641):

> Then, amidst the Hymns, and Halleluias of Saints some one may perhaps bee heard offering at high strains in new and lofty Measures, to sing and celebrate thy divine Mercies . . . When thou . . . shalt put an end to Earthly Tyrannies . . . (III, Pt. I, 78).

Toland declares, "Milton look'd upon true and absolute Freedom to be the greatest Happiness of this Life, whether to Societies or single Persons. . . ."\(^2\) Milton himself says in his *Second Defense of the English People* that he had, by philosophic design, addressed himself in his prose writings to religious, domestic, and civil liberty. Whether or not the outline of this inner unity can readily be traced, it is not difficult to see that in his prose Milton is setting forth the philosophical standards of human society in its very highest and most sublime condition—that of a state of perfect Christian liberty. Milton's prose records the evolution of his idea of liberty. It was a liberty always to be sought from within rather than from without, "and its first essential was self-discipline in accordance with the highest dictates of

\(^2\)Darbishire, p. 194.
Emerson speaks of Milton as an apostle of freedom:

An apostle of freedom in the house, in the state, in the church; freedom of speech, freedom of the press, yet in his own mind discriminated from savage license, because that which he desired was the liberty of the wise man, containing itself in the limits of virtue.4

From his earliest entrance into public controversy, Milton had recognized and had willingly, even eagerly, met the twin issues that were central to the seventeenth-century political conflict. These were the differences that first came to a head during the Puritan Rebellion, and that continued to be a source of bitter controversy, of bloodshed, and of much agony of spirit until the ascent to the throne of Queen Anne, early in the next century. On the one side stood those who believed in church conformity and the divine right of kings; on the other, those who contended for freedom of worship and for the theory of a compact made between the king and his people—a contract with reciprocal duties and rights. As Milton gradually developed his program for man and society, he returned repeatedly to the two great issues of the day, writing eloquently in his efforts to persuade his countrymen to listen to the voice of reason and to follow the course that he offered toward resolution of the problems.


4 Thorpe, p. 366.
In his first tract, *Of Reformation*, Milton castigates English prelates and the Stuart rulers for their relentless religious persecution and denial of liberty of conscience to so many "freeborn Englishmen and good Christians," who had been forced "to forsake their dearest home" and seek freedom on the "wide Ocean" and in "the savage deserts of America." (King James had called the Puritans "very pests," and had said of them "I'll harry them out of the land.") He pictures mother England in mourning weeds with ashes on her head, grieving for her children lost to her and exposed to so many dangers because "their conscience could not assent to things which the bishops thought indifferent." "What more binding than conscience?" he asks. And then he warns, "... there cannot be a more ill-boding sign to a Nation ... than when the Inhabitants, to avoid insufferable grievances at home are inforc'd by heaps to forsake their native Country" (III, Pt. I, 50).

In the fourth of the prelatical tracts, *The Reason of Church-government urg'd against Prelaty* (1642), Milton continues his vigorous opposition to enforced uniformity of belief. Rather than hating and fearing sects and schisms as did the prelates, he maintains that such divisions are salutary, are in fact absolutely necessary to a healthy, reformed church. Sects are not a hindrance to reformation, he declares. On the contrary, they require Christians to examine their principles and thus lead them
to a deeper faith. "It may suffice us to be taught by St. Paul," he says, "that there must be sects for the manifest-
ing of those that are sound-hearted." One has only to
look "on the nature of elemental and mixed things" to know
that they can suffer no change from "one kind or quality
into another, without the struggle of contrarieties."
Only through diversity of doctrine can truth be arrived at
and be tested: "If there were no opposition, where were
the trial of an unfeigned goodness and magnanimity?" he
asks. This point of view, vastly broadened, he develops
in detail in the Areopagitica, which he composed some year
and a half later.

It is also in The Reason of Church-government,
longest and in some ways most philosophical of the prelati-
cal tracts, that Milton first advances his theory of the
separation of Church and State, and that he makes his
first important reference to Christian liberty—the doc-
trine that had come into prominence with the Reformation
revival of Pauline theology. Between the time of this
first notable reference to Christian liberty, and his com-
plete exposition of it in De Doctrina Christiana, Milton
repeatedly invokes the doctrine in his campaign for lib-
erty, religious, civil, and domestic (or individual).
Here he says:

But in the Gospel, which is the straitest and dear-
est cov'nant can be made between God and man, wee
being now his adopted sons, and nothing fitter for
us to think on then to be like him, united to him
. . . God being now no more a judge after the
sentence of the Law, nor as it were a schoolmaister of perishable rites, but a most indulgent father governing his church as a family of sons in their discreet age (III, Pt. I, 256).

Arguing cogently that we now live under New Testament grace and Christian liberty, that men have been freed from Mosaical ceremonial and canon law, he declares that so long as prelacy relies on temporal authority in matters that should be purely moral and spiritual, men will be denied that freedom of conscience which had been so dearly purchased by the very life blood of Christ himself. Furthermore, it is a crass transgression of the true nature of things to force matters superior, that is spiritual, to be subordinated to lesser, temporal matters:

For the imperfect and obscure institution of the Law, which the Apostles themselves doubt not oft-times to vilify, cannot give rules to the compleat and glorious ministration of the Gospell, which lookes on the Law, as on a childe, not as on a tutor... In state many things at first are crude and hard to digest, which only time and deliberation can supple, and concoct. But in religion wherein is no immaturity, nothing out of season, it goes farre otherwise. The doore of grace turns upon smooth hinges wide opening to send out... the precious offers of mercy to a nation (III, Pt. I, 195, 225).

Milton returns briefly to his argument for separation of the church and the state in The Second Defense of the English People (1654). Near the conclusion of his panegyric of Cromwell he pleads with him to "leave the church to itself," to relieve himself and other government officials from a charge so incompatible with their functions; no longer to "suffer two powers" so indifferent as
the civil and ecclesiastical, "to commit whoredom together, and ... to undermine and at last to subvert one another" (VIII, 235). Though Cromwell did make definite steps toward broad toleration, Milton never became reconciled to Cromwell's policy of maintaining a tithe-supported state church that practiced considerably less than the complete religious freedom for which Milton so ardently hoped.

His next argument for separation of Church and State was almost five years in coming, but it was his most decisive: _A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes; Shewing that it is not lawfull for any power on Earth to compel in matters of Religion_ (1659). Taking as his thesis the cornerstone of Protestantism, that the Scripture is the foundation of the Protestant religion, interpretation of which is ultimately the affair for each individual conscience exclusively, he argues that inasmuch as "no man or body of men in these times can be the in-fallible judges or determiners in matters of religion to any other mens consciences but thir own," it certainly follows that "for beleef or practise in religion, according to this conscientious perswasion, no man ought be punished or molested by any outward force [certainly not a civil magistrate] on earth whatsoever ... (VI, 6, 5). Papists are excluded on the grounds that they represent a foreign political power, potentially dangerous to the state. Thus he amends the argument to:

No protestant therfore of what sect soever follow ing scripture only, which is the common sect
wherin they all agree, and the granted rule of everie mans conscience to himselfe, ought, by the common doctrine of protestants, to be forc'd or molested for religion (VI, 19).

Religion is a spiritual, an internal matter of the conscience and the will. But force is an external, a material thing. Conscience, being of a higher order, should regulate force. Any reversal of this superiority is a violation of the natural order of things. Furthermore, religion that is forced is not religion, which must be voluntary, but it is, rather, servitude, and is "no service to Christ or his kingdom, but rather a disparagement, and degrades it from a divine and spiritual kingdom to a kingdom of this world: which he denies it to be" (VI, 22). But Christ had expressly denied that His kingdom was of this world: John:18:36: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

"What I argue shall be drawn from the scripture only," Milton says at the beginning of his treatise Of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes. And he uses his scripture citations tellingly as he progresses systematically from one argument to another. But there is no more evidence that this tract exerted any influence on the Parliament to which it was addressed than that his next pamphlet exerted influence on the body to which he directed it—to the considerably enlarged Rump Parliament.
which had once more been restored to power.

In the turbulent days of 1659 after Richard Cromwell's forced abdication, Parliament, in casting around for ways of enlisting popular support, was even considering the questions of disestablishment and the abolition of the tithe system. This seemed to Milton a propitious time to state his position concerning the problem of tithes, and so he launched his pamphlet, Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church. Wherein is also discourec'd of Tithes, Church-fees, Church-revenues; And whether any maintenance of ministers can be settl'd by law.

As early as in Of Reformation, Milton had asked:

Were it such a desperate hazard to put to the venture the universall Votes of Christs Congregation, the fellowly and friendly yoke of a teaching and laborious Ministry, the Pastorlike and Apostolick imitation of meeke and unlordly Discipline, the gentle and benevolent mediocritie of Church-maintenance, without the ignoble Hucsterage of pidling Tithes? (III, Pt. I, 75).

Traditional tithing, like many other established practices, had, in the years from 1640 to 1660, undergone searching scrutiny, with the idea of its being abandoned. But the Presbyterian clergymen who took the places formerly held by the Anglican bishops, and even many Independent clergy along with the Presbyterians, found the guaranteed income which tithes furnished very comfortable. And the Parliaments during those years, responsive to economic pressure and also anxious to retain as many traditional
practices as possible amid all the revolutionary changes taking place, continued to uphold tithe-gathering rights of both the churches and the laymen and these latter, at that time, received over one-third of the tithes.\(^5\)

Milton believed that the forcible exacting of tithes from the people, with which magistrates hired ministers, was more dangerous to the church and to the advancement of truth than was the forcible restraining of truth through a uniform established church. Truth often thrives and flourishes under persecution, he says many times, but when the teachers of truth—the ministers—are corrupted by the mercenary spirit, as is fostered by a system of enforced contributions, then the corruption is the very bane of truth. Ministers become pensioners of the state. When the state becomes master of salaries, it also becomes molder of opinions, for where there is state money, there is state control.

Tithes were an Old Testament requirement, but the Grace dispensed by the New Testament has vitiated these Old Testament practices, he declares. Nowhere does Christ require a tithe, nor does He give pay to His ministers. Indeed, He asks for Himself and His Apostles only enough income for subsistence, and that is to be in the form of free will offering by those receiving His teaching. If

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tithes were abolished, then, with the source of funds dried up, hirelings who had been attracted to the Church by the gleam of gold rather than by the gleam of Eternal Truth, would no longer flock to the ministry, and the Church would then be purged of those unworthy hirelings. Thus they would have been removed out of the Church "by the likeliest means."

Any resulting shortage of ministers might easily be solved, Milton suggests. Poor village congregations might be served by missionaries sent by more affluent parishes. And since knowledge of Christian religion is not difficult to obtain, ministers could soon be trained from among the congregations. Years of study at universities are unnecessary, he avers. (Milton's advocacy of using public funds to build schools and libraries for use of ministerial students is discussed in the section, below, concerning Milton's philosophy of education.)

In this tract Milton dispenses with the use of learned references and historical matter. He prefers, rather, to argue from first principles: the psychology and ease of corruption; the effect of men's salaries on their opinions; the nature and methods of persuasion; the contrast between the poverty of Jesus and His disciples, and the opulence of England's teachers of Christ's doctrine. Reasonable and convincing as his arguments were, they went unheeded, and England kept her tithes for almost three centuries longer. Milton's conclusion of this tract
seems to indicate that he recognizes the futility of his efforts: "If I be not heard nor believed, the event will bear me witness to have spoken truth; and I in the mean while have borne my witness, not out of season to the church and to my country" (VI, 100).

Over and over Milton states his conviction: "Individual conscience, ruled by reason, is the ultimate authority for religious belief." From this he derives the oft-stated principle that any form of coercion exerted by external power on such a rationally guided conscience is a violation of the natural order of things. This philosophy of duality—of the superiority of the spiritual and intellectual to the material and physical—Milton projects as the very foundation of his four tracts on divorce that he published during the years 1643 to 1645.

Milton believes that marriage was intended to be a spiritual rather than a merely physical union, that God had so ordained the institution of marriage that "the solace and satisfaction of the mind is regarded and provided for before the sensitive pleasing of the body," and is thereby a greater blessing from God. He cites as his authority for this belief the passage from Genesis 2:18: "It is not good, saith he, that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." And then he declares:

From which words, so plain, lease cannot be concluded then that in Gods intention a meet and happy conversation is the chieuest and noblest end of the mariage: for we find here no expression so necessarily implying carnall knowledge, as this
prevention of lonelines to the mind and spirit of man (III, Pt. II, 391).

If compatibility of mind and disposition provide the empathy of intellect and spirit that result in a true marriage, then conversely, incompatibility results in failure to achieve that closest relationship for which the marriage bond was instituted, and there is then, in fact, no marriage. "A marriage in which the mind is denied contentment is not of God's institution," he says, "and therefore no marriage . . . for surely what God intended and promised, that only can be thought to bee his joyning, and not the contrary." And again he calls on the Scripture for authority:

So likewise the Apostle witnesseth, I Cor. 7.15, that in marriage God hath call'd us to peace. And doubtlesse in what respect hee hath call'd us to mariage, in that also hee hath joyn'd us. The rest whom either disproportion or deadnesse of spirit, or some-thing distastfull and averse in the immutable bent of nature renders unconjugall, error may have joyn'd, but God never joyn'd against the meaning of his own ordinance. And if he joynd them not, then is there no power above their own consent to hinder them from unjoyning, when they cannot reap the sobrest ends of being together in any tolerable sort (III, Pt. II, 479-480).

But the Canon laws still in force in England recognized no such intellectual grounds for divorce. Only physical transgressions were grounds for dissolution of the marriage vows, and remarriage was not legally permitted even to the innocent party after divorce for adultery. In the reign of Edward VI, as Milton reports near the conclusion of his third divorce tract, *Tetrachordon* (1645), a royally
appointed commission had actually drafted a set of ecclesiastical laws to replace the old Canon laws. This draft included a law of Divorce substantially such as Bucer (Martin Bucer, the great German reformer, brought to England by Edward VI) had then recommended to the English, and such as Milton now recommends. But the untimely death of the young king prevented this law from being put into effect.\(^6\) Elizabeth and the Stuarts who followed her preferred to continue giving lip service to the sacramental conception of marriage while permitting abuses in the administration of the laws governing marriage—abuses which for years had been the object of frequent attacks by Protestants.\(^7\)

Milton states his position early in Book I of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*:


The Proposals of the commission appointed by Edward VI to reform ecclesiastical law were printed during the reign of Elizabeth: *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, ed. John Foxe (1571). . . . The preface names Cranmer, Walter Haddon and Sir John Cheke [and Peter Martyr] among the members of the commission [as Milton had done]. The preface also contains the information that the work was pushed forward with great diligence and received greatest applause and approbation and that the law would doubtless have been established by Act of Parliament, but for the untimely death of Edward VI.

\(^7\)Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*, p. 89.
That indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangeable, hindring and ever likely to hinder the main benefits of conjugall society, which are solace and peace, is a greater reason of divorce then naturall frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutuall consent (III, Pt. II, 388).

His demands are these: the recognition of divorce a vinculo with the right of remarriage for both parties; the liberalization of grounds for divorce, particularly to include incompatibility; and the removal of divorce from public jurisdiction, whether ecclesiastical or civil, to private.

"Divorce is not a matter of Law," he argues, "but of Charity." And then he explains why this must be true:

Ofttimes the causes of seeking divorce reside so deeply in the radical and innocent affections of nature, as is not within the diocese of Law to tamper with. . . . The duties of man and wife are such as are chiefly conversant in that love, which is most ancient and meerly [absolutely] naturall; whose two prime statutes are to joyn it self to that which is good and acceptable and friendly; and to turn aside and depart from what is disagreeable, displeasing and unlike. . . . Hate is of all things the mightiest divider, nay, is division itself. To couple hatred threfore though wedlock try all her golden links, and borrow to her aid all the iron manacles and fetters of Law, it does but seek to twist a rope of sand, which was a task, they say, that pos'd the divell (III, Pt. II, 499-500).

The idea of external force such as compulsion of the law binding two human beings together when there is no longer mutual love or sympathy is to Milton a violation of the primacy of the conscience, a transgression of the law of nature, and is an evil denial of Christian liberty that he feels he is compelled to denounce:
And this is the sense of our Canon Courts in England to this day [the sacramental doctrine of marriage] . . . crossing a Law not onely writ'tn by Moses, but character'd in us by nature, of more antiquity and deeper ground then marriage it selfe; which Law is to force nothing against the faultles proprietys of nature; yet that this may be colourably done our Saviours words touching divorce, are as it were congeal'd into a stony rigor, inconsistent both with his doctrine and his office, and that which he preacht onely to the conscience, is by Canonickall tyranny snatch't into the compulsive censure of a judicall Court; where Laws are impos'd even against the venerable and secret power of natures impression, to love whatever cause be found to loath. Which is a hainous barbarisme both against the honour of mariage, the dignity of man and his soule, the goodness of Christianitie, and all the humane respects of civilitie (III, Pt. II, 383).

Though Milton's divorce pamphlets all looked to rule of reason in domestic relations, and though he employed in this long debate logic, reason, authority of other well-known, and well approved reformers who had preceded him, and the knowledge of the Scriptures which he possessed, his argument fell in his own day on deaf ears, so far as real understanding of it was concerned. It failed to convince those for whom it was intended and provoked only misunderstanding and disapproval. Toland comments on the reaction to the first divorce tract:

On the first appearing of this Book, the Clergy did generally declaim against it, and fix'd upon the Author the usual Reproaches of Atheism, Heresy,

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8 Dora N. Raymond, pp. 123-124, mentions "an eminently laudatory" reference to Milton's Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce in Dr. John Hakluyt's Metropolitan Nuncio, May 31-June 6, 1649 issue, but Parker, p. 82, suspects the sincerity of any complimentary reference to Milton in this "burlesque news-sheet."
Leudness, and what not? They daily instigated the Parlament, which little minded their Clamors, to pass their Censure on it; and at last one of them [Herbert Palmer] in a Sermon before that august Assembly, on a day of Humiliation, roundly told them that there was a wicked Book abroad which deserv'd to be burnt, and that among their other Sins they ought to repent it had not yet bin branded with a mark of their Displeasure. 9

Milton was annoyed at the clergy who "inveigh and exclaim on what I was credibly inform'd they had not read." 10 In his second tract, The Judgement of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce (1644), he accuses them of having "stood now almost this whole year clamouring a farre off" muttering that the doctrine was licentious and dangerous "while the book hath bin twice printed, twice bought up & never once vouch-saft a friendly conference with the author, who would be glad and thankfull to be shewn an error, either by privat dispute or public answer" (IV, 12, 15). In the Tetrachordon (1645), he complains that his "sound argument and reason" had been put off "either by an undervaluing silence or the maisterly censuring or a rayling word or two in the Pulpit" (IV, 70).

Milton's last two divorce tracts reveal how "friendly" is his "public answer" to what he considers an unjust or foolish and false criticism. The preface to

10Haller, in his Tracts of Liberty, I, 31, says: "In most cases there is nothing to indicate that the persons who damned the heresy had been at pains to read the book."
Tetrachordon administers the reproof to Palmer, and to Dr. Daniel Featley for having written that the divorce tract advocated the loosing of marriage bonds "to inordinate lust and putting away wives for many other causes besides that which our Saviour only approved, viz. in case of Adultery." Colesterion administers the "punishment" to William Prynne for his Divorce at Pleasure, and to the anonymous author of the Answer to Milton's divorce treatise (the only printed answer to it), and to the printer of the Answer. The title page proverb sets the tone for Colesterion: "Answer a Fool according to his folly, lest hee bee wise in his own conceit." In this pamphlet Milton annihilates his opponent by the method that he is to repeat in a few years with such marked success against Salmasius, regretting, verbally, as he does so, the necessity of his action, and promising treatment on a higher level to a reasonable opponent:

If his intents bee sincere to the public, and shall carry him on without bitternes to the opinion, or to the person dissenting, let him not, I entreat him, guess by the handling, which meritoriously hath bin bestowd on this object of contempt and laughter, that I account it any displeasure don mee to bee contradicted in Print: but as it leads to the attainment of any thing more true, shall esteem it a benefit; and shall know how to return his civility and faire Argument in such a sort, as hee shall confess that to doe so is my choise, and to have don thus was my chance (IV, 273).

The anger and frustration he felt because of the disappointing reception of his soul-searching debate on this phase of domestic liberty Milton expressed in his sonnet:
I did but prompt the age to quit their cloggs
By the known Rules of antient libertie,
When strait a barbarous noise environed me
Of Owles and Cuckoos, Asses, Apes and Doggs,

But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs:
That bawle for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
License they mean when they cry libertie;

The one great lasting achievement of Milton's divorce debate was to cause the bringing forth of his great plea for freedom of expressed thought, the Areopagitica (1644), acknowledged to be his masterpiece in prose. Despite Mark Pattison's acid dissent, "It is a mere pamphlet, extemporised in, at most, a month or two, without research or special knowledge, with no attempt to ascertain general principles," there is general agreement that the principle of freedom of expression argued for with great eloquence in the Areopagitica, the first work devoted primarily to freedom of the press, was not a new idea with Milton. One example of earlier interest in this principle is a passage in The Reason of Church-government: "For me, I have determin'd to lay up as the best treasure of a good old age, if God voutsafe it me, the honest liberty of a free speech from my youth . . . (III, Pt. I, 232).

If Milton's Areopagitica was, in fact, an expression of a

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11 Pattison, p. 87.

long held conviction, the immediate motivating force must be acknowledged to have been the Presbyterian condemnation which, to Milton's evident surprise, had greeted the publication, in August 1643, of his first pamphlet on divorce.

Now Milton had not developed his idea concerning freedom of expression in a vacuum. He had not been untouched by events and changing circumstances of revolutionary England of the 1640's. Prior to 1643 Milton had joined in the general Puritan party contention that prelacy, seeking to render the people subservient to the oppression of the crown, was the only barrier between England and a New Jerusalem. The institution of episcopacy, he believed, was the sole cause of the church's degeneration. But with prelacy abolished, and with Presbyterianism installed in its place, Milton, and many others, were dismayed to see a Puritan clergy determined to make themselves undisputed heirs to the lapsed or endangered powers of the church by means of instituting a Presbyterian system of uniform centralized control over the teaching and practice of religion. This system would compel obedience to church discipline through utilization of all forces of society. To advise Parliament on the steps to be taken toward this reorganization of the church, an Assembly of Divines was summoned in June 1643, a group dominated by Presbyterians inflexibly opposed to toleration of belief. The Presbyterian position at this time had become that Reformation meant the sweeping away of human corruptions in favor of
the divine discipline, so to tolerate differences in belief meant compounding with error. What the Assembly of Divines actually was faced with was the applying of brakes to the revolutionary movement that the Presbyterians themselves had been greatly instrumental in motivating.

Milton was not long in assigning to this Westminster Assembly, representative of the mass of Presbyterian clergy, the absolutist purposes, and the oppressive activities he now believed was characteristic of the majority of Presbyterians. In the Areopagitica he accuses them of having "abrogated and voided out of the Church" the Bishops "but to make room for others into their seats under another name." He charges that they "will soon put it out of controversy that Bishops and Presbyters are the same to us both name and thing." (Within two years he is to render the judgment: "New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.") And he warns that they should take to heart the lesson of their own recent success and the Bishops' disaster: "Their own late arguments and defences against the Prelats might remember them that this obstructing violence [against toleration] meets for the most part with an event utterly opposite to the end which it drives at" (IV, 331, 332).

From the time of the downfall of the Star Chamber in 1640, and of its 1637 Licensing Decree that had attempted an iron clad control of the press, the English reading public had been treated to a flood of books and
pamphlets in as infinite a variety of religious and political opinions as there are shades of the spectrum. While this diversity of expressed opinion seemed to Milton to be a wholesome sign of free intellectual activity that indicated progress and reform, in the eyes of Parliament "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely" was being pursued so excessively by popular agitators that the chaotic state of public opinion was prejudicial to good order and was, in fact, "to the great scandal of Religion and government."

During the months Parliament was deliberating on a comprehensive bill to provide for its own licensing system, stop-gap measures progressively restrictive were taken in an effort to regulate the "frequent disorders in Printing." At length, on 14 June 1643, urged on by a petition of the Stationers Company (in economic interests), for a restatement of the customary restrictions, Parliament finally passed the Licensing Order which required, among other things, that all books be licensed by an official censor before publication. Against this Milton wrote the Areopagitica. The stringent provisions of this Order, setting up essentially the same machinery as that of 1637, of which Milton said it was "the immediate image," strove by the suppression of "undesired publications" to close off all avenues of dissent from the disciplined Presbyterian party. Of this Order, like the Decree of 1637, one might say that nothing was unforeseen except the determination
with which it was defied.

Other than *The Judgement of Martin Bucer*, all of Milton's divorce tracts were published unlicensed and unregistered. The first edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, bearing neither the author's name nor initials, had appeared about 1 August 1643. The second edition, greatly revised and amplified, appeared early in February of 1644. This edition, addressed to Parliament and to the Assembly of Divines, carried Milton's initials on the title page and his full name at the end of the prefatory address. Thus, when Commons, urged on by the Stationers Company, ordered the Committee for Printing on 26 August "diligently to inquire out" the author, printer and publisher of the Divorce Pamphlet, along with a certain other objectionable tract, Milton faced squarely the possibility of being called to account not only for publishing dangerous and unusual opinions, but also for having broken the Parliamentary Ordinance for regulation of printing. . . . In the words of W. R. Parker, "... Milton spat into a strong wind. And discovering what he had done, he spat again."¹³ The *Areopagitica*, as might be expected, was published unlicensed, and unregistered.¹⁴

¹³Parker, p. 61.

¹⁴It is interesting to note that during the period of 1643-1645, Milton issued a total of ten publications (counting all four editions of *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*). Of these, only three were licensed: *Of Education, The Judgement of Martin Bucer, and Poems, 1645*. 
It appears incredible that Milton's great plea for freedom of the press should have failed to be mentioned whatever in the hundreds of pages printed at the time\(^{15}\) (as incredible, but as true that during the entire period of Milton's life there should have been not one single printed reference to his artistically perfect *Lycidas* and *L'Allegro*).\(^{16}\) Surely if the appearance of the *Areopagitica* were ever to be noted it should have been by crusading William Prynne as he tirelessly searched out any and all opposition to Presbyterian discipline. Within six months of the publication of the *Areopagitica*, in his *Fresh Discovery of some Prodigious New Wandering-Blasing-Stars & Firebrands*, Prynne replied in his polemic fashion to attacks on the printing ordinance by Henry Robinson, John Lilburne, and the anonymous tracts of Richard Overton, but he made no mention of Milton.\(^{17}\) This in itself is an irony, for the *Areopagitica* was, in a sense, the most drastically radical tract of its time. Under deceptively general terms, Milton was proposing a "national open mind to the restless tides of progress" to limits beyond any imagined by the clergy in the Westminster Assembly. His approach is humanistic rather than Puritan; he uses few Bible quotations, but draws upon his vast knowledge of

\(^{15}\)Haller, *Tracts on Liberty*, I, 135.  
\(^{16}\)Parker, p. 1.  
\(^{17}\)Haller, *Liberty and Reformation*, p. 187.
Greek and Roman literature, and he fills the tract with unforgettable images. He argues from first principles, philosophical, psychological, utilitarian. Professor Wolfe's one paragraph compendium indicates the breadth of Milton's far ranging ideas encompassed in the *Areopagitica*:

The examination of ideas as an educative process for men and nations; the need for new ideas in an age of transition; the mixed influences of environment; the nature [and inseparability] of goodness and evil; the inevitability of choice in problems of conduct; the stuff of books; the nature of the creative mood and process; the effect of intellectual restraint on creative minds; the censor's inevitable pretence of infallibility; the shooting power of prohibited ideas; the limitation of the state's power in matters of private conduct; the intellectual insecurity of persecutors; the practical impossibility of censorship enforcement.18

He might well have added that this is a prophetic vindication of the invincibility of truth, if given a fair field and no favor.

Milton, alone of the enthusiasts for toleration, was thus agitating for the extension of the principle of toleration to the whole field of secular ideas. So grounded in fundamental justice is his central thesis: "Give me liberty to know, to utter, to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties," that in three centuries its validity has not been impugned. As Wolfe points out, Milton anticipated all the objections that these three centuries have been able to raise against the freedom of the press, while at the same time he

18 Wolfe, pp. 136-137.
exhausted every positive argument that has since been used to sustain free speech and free press in every democratic country in the world. In the great triumvirate of English proponents of the philosophy of liberty, John Locke and John Stuart Mill have added no new arguments in their essays on toleration and liberty to those of Milton. They have, rather, expanded and developed along the lines of reasoning which Milton had already advanced. One may open Mill's essay On Liberty at almost any page and a generalization will be found there that is inherent in Areopagitica. For example, Mill writes:

Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right. . . . A man is capable of rectifying his mistakes by discussion and experience. Not by experience alone. There must be discussion, to show how experience is to be interpreted. Wrong opinions and practices gradually yield to fact and argument: but facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it.19

Milton had said in the Areopagitica:

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making (IV, 341).

The truths of the Areopagitica are just as applicable in the twentieth century as they were in the nineteenth, or in the seventeenth. Every free man sees the

freedom Milton pleaded for as being the very keystone in the arch of his own liberty. But the meaning usually ascribed to liberty and freedom in the twentieth century is not exactly the same as that liberty sought by Milton.

Milton was not a democrat. The one man, one vote philosophy would have been foreign to his understanding. He was, rather, an aristocratic Republican. He was concerned with one class—the regenerated believer, and to him, liberty meant Christian liberty, the freedom of the individual believer, achieved through faith in Christ. Christian liberty is an inward freedom that is attained through the resolution of conflicts on a religious plane. Under the dispensation of the Gospel, believers, freed from oppression of the Canonical Law, voluntarily obey the will of God, substituting an ideal of love, faith, and free activity directed by reason, for meticulous conformity to a complicated code. Thus the rule of the Mosaic Law is replaced by an inward law of faith and love. Milton says in the Christian Doctrine: "We are loosed as it were by enfranchisement through Christ our deliverer from the rule of the Law and of man." But the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, Milton believed, does not imply the abrogation of the fundamental moral law. This law, though unwritten, is irrevocable. It is the Law of Nature given originally to

Adam, of which a certain remnant or imperfect illumination still dwells in the hearts of mankind. Christian Liberty is at the opposite pole from license. It means freedom from slavery to self and sin, through acceptance of a higher service: God's service is perfect freedom.

The real depth of philosophy in the *Areopagitica* lies within the words "voluntarily obey the will of God" and "free activity directed by reason." Here, for the first time, Milton is voicing the doctrine of free will—a doctrine that is central to the later poems. Here he points to the freedom of choice which God has given to man (a freedom which he stresses again and again in *Paradise Lost*), and man's sole accountability for his acts. The reference comes in two long passages that express the heart of the argument in the *Areopagitica*:

Many there be that complain of divin Providence for suffering Adam to transgresse, foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a meer artificiall Adam such an Adam as he is in the motions. We our selves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force: God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he creat passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu? They are not skilfull considerers of human things, who imagin to remove sin by removing the matter of sin. . . . Suppose we could expell sin by this means; look how much we thus expell of sin, so much we expell of vertue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This justifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, justice, continence, yet powrs out before us ev'n to a profusenes all desirable
things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety (IV, 319-320).

Choice must be real, not determined, Milton urges, else there is no virtue in obedience, and no just cause in punishment of disobedience. Adam, or man, is free to choose. God tests these virtues of man by trial, a trial that must be met by a virtue that, though confronted by the beauty and pleasures of a world of sense and having the power to wander beyond all limit and satiety, yet chooses good and not evil. "Obedience is not blind, but a matter of choice" Milton says many times. But one must know, in order to be able to make a choice:

As therefore the state of man now is; what wisdome can there be to choose, what continence to forbeare without the knowledge of evill? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & un-breath'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. . . . That vertue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evill, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank vertue, not a pure (IV, 311).

Not only is there virtue in being able to make a choice, Milton sees value in having to make a choice; here he places the man of tried virtue who had resisted temptation high above the merely innocent whose sheltered lives "had

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protected them from falling, but had also debarred them from achieving any virtue deserving of praise."22

"God uses not to captivat under a perpetuall childhood of prescription, but trusts him [every mature man] with the gift of reason to be his own chooser . . . When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing" Milton says. By reason Milton does not mean reason in our usually understood sense of the word. "It is not a dry light, a nonmoral instrument of inquiry," Douglas Bush says. It is, rather, "right reason," recta ratio, the basic element in Christian humanism, the cardinal principle of which Milton was the greatest exponent in seventeenth-century England.23 Bush continues in his discourse on right reason:

Neither is it simply the religious conscience. It is a kind of rational and philosophic conscience which distinguishes man from the beasts and which links man with man and with God. This faculty was implanted by God in all men, Christian and heathen alike, as a guide to truth and conduct.24

"Right reason," according to Hoopes, "denotes a mode of knowing, a way of doing, and a condition of being."25


Though sin has obscured the "primitive brightness of right reason's effectiveness," an "imperfect illumination still dwells in the hearts of all mankind" and enables man, within limits, to progress toward ultimate truth and virtue. Thus, when Milton writes "Reason is but choosing," he means choosing between truth and falsehood, between good and evil.

Since reason makes judgments between the immutable absolutes of right and wrong, it is the means of moral control in the daily life of man. The supreme faculty in man, it controls "many lesser faculties that serve Reason as chief" (Paradise Lost, V, 101-102). Among those faculties is the will which is free—a God-given freedom—but it can remain free only so long as it follows reason and refuses to yield to other, and improper, controls. In Paradise Lost, Milton, in two lines, states the place and function of reason:

God left free the will, for what obeys
Reason, is free, and Reason he made right (IX, 351-2).

It seems that in Milton's time he, alone, caught this broad and intense vision of liberty, for one looks in vain among his liberal contemporaries for another champion of free expression comparable with Milton himself. It is unrealistic, however, to look for a second, or even a feebler Areopagitica; few if any men in England of Milton's liberal views were qualified to write in the manner of Milton. Professor Wolfe declares that only as a "humanist
escaped from Calvinism could Milton have written the Areopagitica." It is his amazing secular knowledge together with his insight into the human soul and his superlative command of the language, undergirded firmly by his Protestant theology, that has made this an enduring part of man's struggle for liberty.

Why, then, did it have no apparent effect when it appeared? The answer must lie in a number of interrelated circumstances. It is possible that it evoked no pronounced response because the issue it declared for was more academic than actual. The plea to Parliament to rescind the Printing Ordinance was not actually a matter of vital importance to many pamphleteers. Every day men, if they chose not to submit to a licenser, even as Milton, evaded with impunity the laws enforcing censorship. A willing publisher could always be found.

There is, also the distinct likelihood that the London of 1644, in imminent danger from the royalist forces, and torn by passionate controversy, may very probably have had no time for the Attic periods of an Isocratic oration, the essential arguments of which were the common property of all of the opponents of the Assembly. Furthermore, the Areopagitica represented no party; it offered no solution for the pressing ecclesiastical problems. Whereas the advocates of free speech and liberty of

\[26\text{Wolfe, p. 135.}\]
conscience who won immediate attention in 1644 were those who spoke in the language of the time and on the level of the "middle sort," in the idiom of the street, and shop, and tavern, on behalf of easily recognizable sectarian and partisan interests, Milton "free lance scholar, thinker, poet and prophet, little known outside the circle of a few friends, represented only Milton."\(^{27}\) In his Areopagitica Milton spoke for no faction, but he pleaded, rather, for "English Protestant humanist intelligence."\(^{28}\)

For most men, common sense is the standard, and immediate utility the end whereby they judge the value of a solution to a political problem. Now, common-sense is not imaginative, and utility is not far-sighted. But the Areopagitica dazzles the imagination with the long range vision of a future England of free souls, free to pursue their God-given mission of combatting error and searching for truth with their own weapons in their own way. In the summer of 1644 there was small moment for such visions in the tooth-and-nail struggle of Presbyterians, Independents, Separatists, and the like. Milton had, indeed, written "not a pamphlet but a poem."\(^ {29}\) And the Licensing Act was not rescinded in Milton's lifetime.

In the belief that the effect of Milton's

\(^{27}\) Haller, Tracts on Liberty, I, 75.
\(^{28}\) Haller, Liberty and Reformation, p. 187.
\(^{29}\) Haller, Tracts on Liberty, I, 75.
Areopagitica was very considerable, even immediately after its publication, Masson sees reflections of it in the 1645 utterances and writings of John Lilburne, Richard Overton and the licenser John Bachiler.\(^3^0\) But Haller points out that both Lilburne and Overton had been defending free speech even before the Areopagitica, and he cites a statement by Bachiler that indicates strongly that he knew Milton only, and unpleasantly, as the author of one of "the Books which meet harshest censure, such as . . . the Tract about Divorce."\(^3^1\) J. W. Hales, editor of the Areopagitica, is convinced that the real effect of Milton's great plea for freedom of expressed thought came some years later:

> It was not till 'after many days'--not till after his own eyes were closed in death--that the bread Milton cast upon the waters was seen. The Press was not delivered from Licensers till 1694--just twenty years after the decease of their great opponent; just half a century after the publication of the Areopagitica.\(^3^2\)

In one of the personal digressions in the Areopagitica, Milton says that he had been requested to write his protest:

> Many who honour ye [Parliament], and are known and respected by ye, loaded me with entreaties and persuasions, that I would not despair to lay together that which just reason should bring into my mind, toward the removal of an undeserved thraldom upon learning (IV, 330).

\(^3^0\)Masson, III, 431.

\(^3^1\)Haller, Tracts on Liberty, I, 137.

\(^3^2\)Hales, p. xxxv.
We can only conjecture who those "respected" persons were. Perhaps the statesman Henry Lawrence was one, for he certainly knew Milton at that time. At any rate, the persons referred to must have read, presumably approved, and remembered the arguments set forth in the Areopagitica. And there must have been others, among the "better spirits of the time" to whom it was fully intelligible. It could not be expected to have a large general circulation, Hales says, "but was held a sovereign work in its own sphere. It was regarded as a central spring, to which others might resort." 33

Toland says: "Such was the effect of our Author's Areopagitica that the following year Mabol, 34 a Licenser, offer'd Reasons against Licensing; and, at his own request, was discharg'd that Office." 35 Though Mabbott does not directly quote the Areopagitica, his arguments are the same.

Sir Walter Raleigh adds to the sum of conjecture concerning the influence of the Areopagitica:

Some of his impassioned pleadings were possibly not wholly without effect on the politics of the time. It is interesting, at any rate, to find Cromwell, in his letter written in 1650 to the Governor of

33 Hales, p. xlii.

34 Parker cites The Kingdoms Faithfull and Impartiall Scout, no. 16, May 25-June 1, 1649, p. 143 as authority for correcting Toland. It was George Mabbott in 1649 (vice Mabol, in 1645). Parker, pp. 79-80.

35 Darbishire, p. 133.
Edinburgh Castle, adopting one of the main arguments of the *Areopagitica*, and enforcing it against the Presbyterians by a figure which may have been borrowed from that tract. 'Your pretended fear lest error should step in, is like the man who would keep all wine out of the country lest men should be drunk. It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy to deprive a man of his natural liberty upon a supposition that he may abuse it. When he doth abuse it, judge.'

In 1651 Milton, famous on the Continent for his *First Defense of the English People*, was sought out by the German Christopher Arnold, afterwards Professor of History at Nuremberg. Arnold's autograph album, now in the British Museum, contains Milton's signature and the famous modified scriptural quotation: "I am made perfect in weakness." In a letter Arnold wrote to Dr. George Rickert, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Altorf, dated London, August 1651 (published 1662), he describes an interview with Milton. He also cites and describes the *Areopagitica* and comments: "It seems to me that this very curious author had early thought upon the present freedom."  

Another instance of familiarity with Milton's great oration is seen in the use made of it in 1673. Two of Andrew Marvell's opponents in the *Rehearsal Transposed* controversy cited passages from the *Areopagitica* in efforts to embarrass Marvell as a friend and protégé of Milton.

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36 Raleigh, p. 65.
37 Parker, p. 108; Masson, IV, 350-352.
"Fustian bumbast as this [Areopagitica] past for stately wit and sense in that Age of politeness and reformation," scoffed Samuel Parker (probably), erstwhile friend of Milton. 39

To paraphrase Dora Raymond, it seems fruitless to go blindly tapping at critical small trees and fail to see the majestic forest in whose gracious shadows we now walk. "What is written, is written." 40 And when the time was ripe in England for discarding the Licensing Act, the philosophy of freedom in Milton's Areopagitica had exerted its influence openly as well as subtly. In 1679 just before the expiration of the Press Act (which was not renewed for six years), the Areopagitica appeared in the first of three separate adaptations to argue for a free press and against a renewal of the Licensing Act. By this time Whig and Tory political parties had emerged from coalitions, respectively of country interests and Nonconformists, and of the Cavalier-Church parties. Growing Whig power made its first breach in the Tory front by its successful offense against the renewal of the Press Act. In the pamphlet war over the issue shortly before the ordinance expired, Charles Blount contributed to this Whig attack in A Just Vindication of Learning addressed to Parliament. Hales declares that this is "neither more nor less

39 Parker, pp. 112, 119. 40 Raymond, p. 92.
than a mutilated copy of the Areopagitica." Sensabaugh, more charitably, allows that Blount did follow the main lines of Milton's oration, "cutting here, adding there, sometimes paraphrasing and sometimes transcribing verbatim. . . . Whoever listened to A Just Vindication simply heard Milton's oration arranged to fit the needs of a later day." 

William Denton, anti-Catholic pamphleteer, while not a Whig, oftentimes expressed views that coincided with Whig views. Thus in 1681 he joined in the Whig attack on the Press Act. His contribution was his adaptation of the Areopagitica, under the title An Apology for the Liberty of the Press. As an anti-Catholic he, naturally enough, made great use of the early portion of the Areopagitica, in which Milton traces the history of censorship in the early Church. The adaptation as a whole is a poor thing, and the extent of its influence, if any, is not certain. Neither is it known whether Charles Blount turned any public opinion against the renewal of the Press Act. But his adaptation of Milton aroused enough interest to merit notice in an August 1682 issue of Heraclitus Ridens, a Tory paper that discussed timely events. Appraising Whig tactics, the Tory sheet dourly observed: "There was the

41 Hales, p. xlii.
Liberty of the Press, how earnestly was it contended from the denial of it said to be Relique of Popery, Old Milton's Arguments and Word were drest up into an Address to the Parliament for it.\textsuperscript{43} Such a singling out for discussion in the Tory paper seems to indicate that Blount's adaptation of the Areopagitica had made more than a small mark in party contentions. Sensabaugh sees both of these early adaptations as clear instances of how Milton's rhetoric, "as Royalists in the Restoration feared [and as Royalists as early as Bishop Hall in 1649 had feared 'his too-well penned pages'], made inroads on the minds of men and inspired them to march to the measure of his thought."\textsuperscript{44}

After James II's accession to the throne, the Licensing Act was revived in 1685, was renewed in 1693, even after the Glorious Revolution, and might have been continued beyond 1695 through public inertia concerning that issue. But Charles Blount again bestirred himself to convince Parliament that this Act should be allowed to lapse. He adapted the Areopagitica anew under the title Reasons Humbly offered for the Liberty of Unlicens'd Printing. Turning Milton's powerful rhetoric against the stupidities and misjudgments of "the present Licenser," Blount presented a convincing appeal. Sensabaugh gives Blount credit for great influence in Parliament's action. But he adds, "Whatever effectiveness Blount had . . . he owed directly

\textsuperscript{43}Sensabaugh, p. 64. \textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 61.
The very "load-starre" of Milton's life was liberty, but he never failed to emphasize the individual responsibility required for enjoyment of this liberty. "To be free," he says in the Second Defense, "is precisely the same thing as to be pious, wise, just and temperate, careful of one's own, abstinent from what is another's, and thence, in fine, magnanimous and brave . . ." (VIII, 250-251). Failure in this is the same as to be a slave, Milton declares. Thus in the last divorce tract when he angrily asserts that "nothing now adayes is more degenerately forgott'n then the true dignity of man, almost in every respect," he immediately has the explanation for such a deplorable situation:

Although if we consider that just and naturall privileges men neither can rightly seek, nor dare fully claime, unlesse they be ally'd to inward goodnesse, and stedfast knowledge, and that the want of this quells them to a servile sense of their own conscious unworthiness, it may save the wondering why in this age many are so opposite both to human and to Christian liberty . . . (IV, 74).

Milton identifies the closeness of "inward goodnesse and stedfast knowledge," or as he alternately says, "vertue and wisdom." Indeed, the reliance on virtue acquired through learning—so often apparent in the Areopagitica—is the main theme in the tractate Of Education (1644). The end of learning, he clearly states in this tract is

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45 Sensabaugh, p. 162.
to repair the ruins of our first Parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection (IV, 277).46

Milton also looks to education for the training up of virtuous leaders fit "to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and publick of Peace and War" (IV, 280). Thus he first says that the end of learning is mental and moral regeneration, and later that education ought to prepare one for the duties of life. But these aims, a combination of the classical spirit with the Christian are, in reality, the essence of humanistic educational doctrine.47

Someone has said that Milton never said anything one time only. Few, if any, of Milton's philosophic ideals recur more frequently than does this one recognizing the supreme importance of learning in inculcating virtue—which is the source of true and inward liberty—and in providing for sound government. Hanford is of the opinion that Milton believed in education as intensely as any theorist of pure democracy.48 Douglas Bush recalls that


even at Cambridge, Milton as a young man had a vision, "Platonic, Christian and Baconian, of a new era in which free inquiry, the full resources of human and divine knowledge, would create the perfect society." Bush doubtless has in mind the pronouncements Milton made in what was probably his final academic exercise at Cambridge. In this Seventh Prolusion, on the assigned, but congenial, subject "Knowledge renders man happier than ignorance," Milton sets forth ideas that he frequently returns to throughout the remainder of his life:

This [temporal life], however, without knowledge is altogether sterile, and joyless, yea, indeed, worthless. For who can contemplate and examine seriously the ideal forms of things, human and divine, of which nothing can surely be known, unless he has a mind saturated and perfected by knowledge and training? So, in short, for one who lacks knowledge every approach to a happy life is seen to be cut off . . . where no arts flourish, where all knowledge is banished, where indeed there is no trace of a good man, there savageness and frightful barbarism rage about (XII, 255, 259).

On the other hand, there is the opposite, happy condition:

If therefore knowledge be for us the guide and introducer to happiness, if commanded and approved by a most powerful divinity and combined especially with his praise [as Milton is convinced is true], certainly it is not possible for its devotees not to attain unto a high degree of happiness (XII, 257).

In this speech, Milton for the first of many times criticizes on two counts the medieval corruption of the universities: the subjects required to be studied, and the

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method of teaching, urging that the stumbling block of knowledge poorly taught be removed and declaring that a "distinct gain would be added: if one could both know the useful arts and could properly choose the useful in the arts . . . with all these things, which are of no value, despised and eliminated" (XII, 277). In this same Prolusion Milton enthusiastically expresses his hope for the perfection of the human spirit through learning:

So at length, my hearers, when once learning of all kinds shall have completed its cycle, that spirit of yours, not satisfied with this gloomy house of correction will betake itself far and wide, until it shall have filled the world itself and far beyond with a certain divine extension of magnitude (XII, 265-267).

Expression of these principles, or related ones that emphasize the cardinal importance of learning in Milton's view, are to be found in almost all of the prose that Milton wrote during the twenty years he was in the arena of controversy. The examples that follow are intended to be merely representative. 50

Of Reformation is dominated by the ideal of a people universally educated. "To govern well," Milton says as he criticizes politicians of his day for their failure in this very thing,

50 Though Ainsworth's valuable study in this matter is of considerable depth, he makes the admission: "So frequently do the writings of Milton reveal his interest in the growth and training of the human spirit that many of those who know him best may wish for passages which I have not included." p. ix.
is to train up a Nation in true wisdom and vertu,
and that which springs from thence magnanimity,
(take heed of that) and that which is our beginning,
regeneration, and happiest end, likenes to God,
which in one word we call godliness. . . .

Conversely, "To make men governable in this [tyrannical]
manner," he declares, "they [politicians] mainly tend to
break a nationall spirit, and courage by count'nancing
open riot, luxury, and ignorance. . . ." And he rebukes
the prelates because, instead of the "expences . . . pro-
fusely throwne away in trash," in their ceremonies and ap-
purtenances, "rather Churches and Schools might be built,
where they cry out for want, and more added where too few
are (III, Pt. I, 37, 38, 55).

In The Reason of Church-government he severely
criticizes the universities for their sorry instruction of
the gentry, studious men with honest and ingenuous natures,
he says, "comming to the Universities to store themselves
with good and solid learning. . . ." But instead, "fed
with nothing else, but the scragged and thorny lectures of
monkish and miserable sophistry," they were sent home
again with "such a scholastical burre in their throats, as
hath stopt and hindred all true and generous philosophy
from entring. . . ." These gentlemen, Milton says, have
been so poorly educated that they can actually admire the
clergy, "formal outside men prelatically addicted," whose
education has been as badly managed as their own, prelates
"whose unchast'nd and unwrought minds never yet initiated
or subdu'd under the true lore of religion or moral
verte. . . ." Instead, these prelates, Milton charges, have been "slightly train'd up in a kind of hypocritical and hackny cours of literature to get their living by, and dazle the ignorant, or els fondly overstudied in uselesse controversies . . ." (III, Pt. I, 272-273).

Milton offers his first tract on divorce to "the choisest and the learnedest." In the prefatory address he plainly says: "I seek not to seduce the simple and illiterate; my errand is to find out the choisest and the learnedest, who have this high gift of wisdom to answer solidly, or to be convinc't" (III, Pt. II, 378).

The Areopagitica, a plea for men to have the freedom of choosing what they should learn, contains many memorable images. Among the best is the one that presents the City engaged in a war effort, yet full of study and research:

Behold now this vast City; a City of refuge, the mansion house of liberty . . . the shop of warre hath not there more anvils and hammers waking . . . then there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing searching, revolving new notions and idea's. . . .

And a little later he exults that though this same City shall be as it were besieg'd and blockt about . . . then the people, or the greater part, more then at other times, wholly tak'n up with the study of highest and most important matters to be reform'd, should be disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing, ev'n to a rarity, and admiration, things not before discourst or writ'tn of . . . (IV, 340-341, 343).

The tract Of Education stands chronologically about midway between Milton's open criticism of the traditions
at Cambridge and the broad recommendations of widespread education contained in the last two tracts he wrote before the Restoration. *Of Education* marks only one stage of Milton's endeavor to spread the benefits of education throughout England. Here we have Milton's program for disciplining the minds of the English gentry who are to be her leaders—commanders in the field, and leaders in public life. In academies located "in every City throughout this land," groups of one hundred and thirty boys are to spend the years between twelve and twenty reading the world's classics, preparing themselves to make the decisions of their lives in the light of the best books in every field of human activity. This high purpose is a manifestation of the very essence of Milton's Christian humanism—his Renaissance love of learning tempered by the dual assumptions that knowledge is useful only insofar as it provides a better understanding of life in all its phases, and that it is man's responsibility to live the best possible life by means of that knowledge.

It is a carefully worked out, highly integrated system—a philosophical and literary course of study combined with many liberal features. Milton joins books and observations, requires understanding of agriculture and the mechanic arts, encourages appreciation of music, allows time for recreation, combining pure recreation with military arts and skills. He omits the whole program of scholastic disputation, but includes the discipline of
rhetoric, in which he himself was so skilled, and he defers the practice in composition of Theams, Verses, and Orations until the later years in the youths' study. The course of study follows a pattern representing the ascending scale in the Great Chain of Being. Milton says that this is its purpose. Beginning with the "Arts most easie," and those be such as are most obvious to the sense," for the reason that "our understanding cannot in this body found it self but on sensible things," so by "orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature" the youths gradually proceed to higher levels of human knowledge to lead "to the knowledge of God and things invisible" (XII, 277, 278).

A strange deficiency in the leadership of the Puritan Revolution was its failure to manifest any interest in educational reform. One might have expected Cromwell and his followers, unpopular with the upper classes, to make great efforts toward the winning of intelligent democratic support of a rising mass—this through vastly broadened educational opportunities for all classes. But no efforts were made to extend or establish free schools, nor was any such extension advocated by Independent pamphleteers, except by Milton. Two of his statements in the

51 This is exactly opposite, Milton says, to the usual method of teaching Arts employed by the universities, "an old erroour of Universities not yet well recover'd from the Scholastick grossness of barbarous ages . . . (XII, 278).

52 Wolfe, p. 355.
tract Of Education might be interpreted as having a broader application than the limits inherent in his system discussed there. There is an urgency in each of them: "To write now the reforming of Education, though it be one of the greatest and noblest designs that can be thought on, and for the want whereof this nation perishes . . . ." A little farther on in his introductory remarks he says, "Brief I shall endeavour to be; for that which I have to say, assuredly this Nation hath extreme need should be done sooner then spoken" (IV, 275, 276). In 1654, in the Second Defense, he addresses a definite plea to Cromwell: "I could wish you should make a better provision for the education and morals of youth, than has been yet made. . . ." Here Milton's educational plans are based on a class system of intellectual merit. He reveals this as he continues:

And that you should feel it to be unjust, that the teachable and unteachable, the diligent and the idle, should be maintained at the public charge; and that you should reserve the rewards of the learned for those who are already proficient in learning, for those whose merit is already established (VIII, 237).

It was not until 1659, five years later, that he incorporated into his tract The Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church a democratic educational scheme that comes very near to being a plan for "universal learning." Available public funds, he suggests, could be used to build, all over the land, schools with good libraries where young ministerial students could
conveniently receive free education, in return for which they would remain in their own parishes to minister to their neighbors. Although suggested primarily as a solution to the problem of ministerial education, Milton's plan would have extended to all men, for widespread are to be the schools, "where languages and arts may be taught free together, without the needless, unprofitable, and inconvenient removing to another place. So all the land would be soon better civilized." Hours of teaching could be so ordered, he adds, that the students could combine attendance at school with the learning of a trade. Milton here seems to have been anticipating elements of commuters' colleges, of vocational schools, and even of night schools for those who must work during the day. He further suggests that state funds could very profitably be used to build additional public libraries as an aid to general education.

The following year, in his Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth, Milton gives what seems to be truly a plan for a system of public education, the units to be located in the chief towns of the shires:

They shall have heer also schools and academies at thir own choice, wherein thir children may be bred up in thir own sight to all learning and noble education not in grammar only, but in all liberal arts and exercises. This would soon spread much more knowledge and civilitie, yea religion through all parts of the land, by communicating the natural heat of government and culture more distributively to all extreme parts, which now lie numm and neglected, would soon make the whole nation more industrious, more ingenuous at home, more potent,
more honorable abroad. To this a free Commonwealth will easily assent; (nay the Parlament hath had alreadie some such thing in designe) for of all governments a Commonwealth aims most to make the people flourishing, vertuous, noble and high spirited (VI, 145).

The children about whom he is concerned in this passage are not of the gentry and the nobles, but are, rather, those of the middle and lower classes. He plans for them to have not only an elementary education—"not in grammar only," but secondary and university training—"to all learning and noble education . . . in all liberal arts and exercises."

The grand purpose of this prospectus is never very far from his mind:

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, modestie, sobrietie, 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 safetie (VI, 132).

Concurrently with his efforts in behalf of liberty of conscience, Milton engaged in the controversy over the power of kings. That the subject of the power of kings had long been of concern to Milton is apparent from many entries in his Commonplace Book, entries which anticipated with fulness the ideas he later incorporated into his prose tracts, particularly in Of the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649), and A Defense of the English People
Milton's belief in the theory of compact between king and subjects, his hatred of tyranny, his love of sound law, justice, and true liberty, his growing preference for a republican form of government—all these ideas are foreshadowed in these notes from his readings of many years. The step-by-step development of Milton's antagonism to kingship can be followed by his "commonplaces" in the Political Index, with some expansion by using passages from the various sources to which his notes refer.

Here is found the nucleus of Milton's belief concerning the very origin of kingship:

The only reason why kings were first created and chosen was that human society was maintained and knit together by the prudence and leadership of a great person who discovered that, if the laws of those same people could control and restrict the daring of evil ones, they would suffice for the public preservation and defence.53

Milton notes also that "the first original of a K. was in paternal authority. and from thence ought paternally hisselfe how to be toward his subjects." But both the Stuarts, James and Charles, so appropriated the principle of "paternal authority" in support of their theory of divine right of kings that Milton abandons this idea and, indeed, in The First Defense scorns the likening of a king

53 To benefit from Ruth Mohl's preface, translation and extensive annotation of the Commonplace Book, I have used the Complete Prose Works of John Milton, ed. Don M. Wolfe, et al., Yale Edition (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953), I. Citations from the Commonplace Book are all from the Political Index, pp. 420-508.
to a paterfamilias: "a father of course deserves to exercise dominion over his household, all of which he either begot or supports; nothing of the sort with a king, but obviously quite the opposite" (VII, 279).

A king is defined in one of many quotations from Sir Thomas Smith's *Commonwealth of England* as one "who by succession or election commeth with good will of the people to his government, and doth administer the commonwealth by the laws of the same and by equity, and doth seeke the profit of the people as his owne. On the contrarie," Sir Thomas continues, "he that come by force, breaks laws at his pleasure, maketh other without consent of the people, and regardeth not the wealth of the commons, but the advancement of himself, his faction and his kin-dred is a tyrant." Milton quotes Aristotle in support of Sir Thomas: "The tyrant seeks what benefits himself, the king what benefits his subjects."

From Machiavelli's *Discorsi* Milton notes:

After it became customary for the ruler to rule by right of succession, and not by election, the heirs soon began to degenerate from the standards of their ancestors, and leaving off virtuous deeds they thought that rulers had to do nothing but surpass others in luxury and in lust and in every other form of pleasure.

Almost casually Milton mentions that "Scotland was at first an elective kingdom for a long time"—a statement he later incorporated into the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. France, too, he notes approvingly, was an elective kingdom "either to choose or depose . . . until the time of
Huge Capet all the kings of France were elected by the French, who kept for themselves this power, to choose, to exile, and to drive out their kings." Nowhere is there any expression of approval of an absolute monarchy, or of the divine right of kings.

He quotes Machiavelli's statement that "the kingdoms that have good rule do not give their kings absolute power [over them] except over their armies, because in that case alone a sudden decision is necessary." As for the duty of a ruler, it is to "do good, and when he is lacking in beneficence, he seems to counterfeit the recognized role of emperor." Thus, to Milton, a king is a king only so long as his character and actions correspond to his superior position. He goes further than this, for indeed, "a king, if he wishes to do his duty, is not truly a king, but a steward of the people. . . ." On the other hand, "to say that the lives and goods of the subject are in the hands of the K. at his disposition is . . . a thing ther said to be most tyrannous and unprincely."

Milton's own belief that "the law was set above the magistrate" and that "the power of kings and magistrates is . . . from the people," fundamental to his philosophy of government, is reflected in a quotation from the historians Stow and Holinshed: "The crowning of Ks in England not admitted till thire oath receav'd of justice to be administered, according to the laws." Another entry from Holinshed bears out the concept of limited power of
kings: "Wee say all is the princes, that is all is his to defend, but not to spoile."

From his readings in political history it seemed to Milton that kings, upon coronation, promise to obey the laws of the realm, but that few live up to their promises. As an example he refers to the abject dying words of William the Conqueror who confessed, "I am greatlie poluted with effusion of much blood, I can by no meanes number the evils which I have done." Milton comments:

Kings scarcely recognize themselves as mortals, scarcely understand that which pertains to man, except on the day they are made king or on the day they die. On the former day they feign humanity and gentleness, in the hope of capturing the voice of the people. On the latter, having death before their eyes and in the knowledge of their evil deeds, they confess what is a fact, namely that they are wretched mortals.

Many pejorative items in his notes contain ideas, and phrases that Milton used in his prose to express his growing mistrust of kings and kingship: "The clergie" are charged as "commonly the corrupters of kingly authority turning it to tyrannie by thire wicked flatteries even in the pulpit. . . ." "Sulpicius Severus says that the name of kings has always been hateful to free people, and he condemns the action of the Hebrews in choosing to exchange their freedom for servitude." The equating of kings and tyrants becomes frequent, and under the heading "The Tyrant," numerous selections that he quotes decree with one voice: "If a king defies the laws which properly limit his decisions, he becomes a tyrant subject to deposition,
even execution." In answer to the question whether it is lawful to rise against a tyrant, "Sr Thomas Smith prudently answers that 'the common people judge of that act according to the event, and success, and the learned according to the purpose of the doers.'" From Sleidan's Commentaries Milton notes:

Nor do the Princes of Germany, for shameful acts that he had done, fear to bring pressure to bear upon the Emperor, than whom no king in Europe can be greater or more venerable; and no one should think it is a crime to attack a king with accusations for just reasons.

"Kings, stripped of their power by their subjects, or reduced in power, are later reconciled by no reinstatement, not even by the taking of an oath of allegiance," is a warning Milton includes in both the Tenure and Readie & Easie Way when he cautions the "new royalized Presbyterians" to beware a prince "whom they have provok'd." And ultimately he reaches the conclusion that "against a bad ruler there is no other remedy than the sword." He finds agreement in Machiavelli: "To cure the ills of the people, words suffice, and against those of the prince the sword is necessary."

Not only does Milton show in the Commonplace Book his aversion to absolute monarchy and the divine right of kings, but he also clearly indicates how, because of the dangers and ills inherent in a monarchy, it was inevitable that he should have reached the conclusion that "men loving liberty prefer a commonwealth to a monarchy." Again
Machiavelli expresses Milton's belief: "more excellent men come from a commonwealth than from a kingdom; because in the former virtue is honored most of the time and is not feared as in the kingdom. . . ."

In the early tracts against the prelates Milton regards monarchy with what Professor Wolfe calls "traditional English satisfaction." It is the kind of government best suited to the interests of Christian people:

That which is good, and agreeable to monarchy, will appear soonest to be so, by being good, and agreeable to the true well-fare of every Christian, and that which can be justly prov'd hurtfull, and offensive to every true Christian, wilbe evinc't to be alike hurtful to monarchy . . . (III, Pt. I, 38).

In Of Reformation, Milton proudly declares that there is no "Civill Goverment that hath beene known, not the Spartan, not the Roman . . . more divinely and harmoniously tun'd . . . then is the Common-wealth of England " (III, Pt. I, 63). He speaks in highest terms of royal dignity--of its "towing and sted-fast heighth." The king is the "Sovereigne Prince Christs Vicegerent using the Scepter of David;" he is "Gods Vicar" (III, Pt. I, 63, 39-40).

But even in his most lavish praise of monarchy, Milton almost invariably includes limiting phrases. This is a monarchy hedged by laws and charters that restrict unlimited exercise of power by the magistrate, "seeing that the throne of a King, as the wise K. Salomon often

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54 Wolfe, p. 209.
remembers us, is establisht in Justice. . . . " The towering royal dignity rests upon the "unmovable foundations of Justice and Heroic vertue," and Gods Vicar is "therefore to rule by Gods Laws," while England's harmoniously tun'd goverment is

ballanc'd as it were by the hand and scale of Justice . . . where under a free and untutor'd Monarch, the noblest, worthiest, and most prudent men, with full approbation, and suffrage of the People have in their power the supreame, and finall determina­tion of highest affaires (III, Pt. I, 49, 47, 63).

Milton scoffs at the bishops' "worthy Motto, No Bishop, no King." He assures his readers that after refor­mation, the authority of the monarch would not be en­dangered, and draws an analogy that paradoxically states that the king's supremacy is dependent upon Parliament: "The K. may still retain the same Supremacy in the[re­formed]Assemblies, as in the Parliament, here he can do nothing alone against the common Law, and there neither alone, nor with consent against the Scriptures" (III, Pt. I, 70).

The prelates' corruption had extended over so much of the nation's life that reform of the church could not be considered separately from the welfare of the state. In his attack on the bishops, Milton enumerates their en­croachments on civil authority—encroachments that, if al­lowed to continue unchecked, would surely subvert the monarchy into tyranny. And he warns the king not be in­fected with their lawlessness: not only do the prelates
encroach upon the rights of the magistrate ("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?"); they also divert the civil wealth to their own uses ("And what stirs Englishmen sooner to rebellion then violent, and heavy hands upon their goods and purses?"); they stir up civil broils ("What more banefull to Monarchy then a popular Commotion, for the dissolution of Monarchy slides aptest into a Democracy?") (III, Pt. I, 58,57).

The king, even as "Lucius the first Christian King of this Iland," should "betake himselfe to the old, and new Testament, and receive direction from them how to administer both Church, and Common-wealth." If the king will govern with Parliament and in accordance with the divine laws, and the laws of the land, then will be preserved the "holy Cov'nant of Union, and Marriage betweene the King and his Realme." In 1641, then, Milton is still a monarchist. "God forbid," he prays, "that we should separate and distinguish the end, and good of a monarch, from the end and good of the monarchy, or of that, from Christianity" (III, Pt. I, 39).

By March 1642 it was evident to all that Charles and the prelates were allied against the Puritans. While Charles battled with Parliament for supremacy, the prelates undertook to subdue the dissident clergy. Even when it became certain that Charles would resist Parliament by
force of arms, Milton was still favorable enough to monar­
chy that he was not willing to call Charles a tyrant in
his own right. In The Reason of Church-government he still
can say of the monarch, "we acknowledge that the civill
magistrate weares an authority of Gods giving, and ought to
be obey'd as his vicegerent" (III, Pt. I, 203).

It is the prelates who are "the greatest underminers
and betrayers of the Monarch. . . ." These Philistine
prelates, "clippers of the regal power and shavers of the
Law" have, with their prelatical rasor shaved off Samson
the king's "bright and waigthy tresses of his laws and
just prerogatives which were his armament and strength."They have thus been able to "deliver him over to indirect
and violent counsels" (III, Pt. I, 276). That is perhaps
the last time Milton is to offer a defense for Charles.
Henceforth his tyranny will be so labelled.

These prelates, looking only for the royal nod from
"any one that may hereafter be call'd a King" will repeal
and erase every line and clause of the great charters,
Milton believes, and will complete the destruction of all
civil liberty. They will sell the bodies even of the
people as they have already done their souls. And "if it
should happen that a tyrant (God turn such a scourge from
us to our enemies) should come to grasp the Scepter,"

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55R. A. Haug is of the opinion that this immediate
parenthetical disclaimer of Milton's that the hypothetical
tyrant is the actual Charles I was perhaps sufficient to
Milton warns, he will use the prelates as advance soldiers to "aw the people." Prelaty seems to be "another Midas that whatever she should touch or come neer either in ecclesial or political government, it should turn . . . to the drosse and scum of slavery . . ." (III, Pt. I, 271, 272). Milton is now viewing prelaty not so much an aid to monarchy as an aid to a tyrannical monarch.

In this same tract in which Milton has begun to see Charles for what he is rather than for what Milton thinks he should be, Milton makes a rather peripheral statement to which he returns after prelaty has been abolished and is no longer any issue. In refuting Lancelot Andrewes's claim that bishopry dates from the time of the Apostles, that the Apostles had, in fact, appointed bishops as a "remedy against schisme" in the church, Milton, as was his practice, cites authority for support:

Neither yet did this worthy Clement, S. Pauls disciple, though writing to them [factious Corinthians] to lay aside schisme, in the least word advise them to change the Presbyteriall government into Prelaty.

And then Milton strikes at the heart of the doctrine of the divine right of kings:

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. With so good a will doth he use to alter his own chosen government once establish'd (III, Pt. I, 211).

prevent any real suspicion of treasonable speech. Yale edition of Prose Works, I, 852, n. 11.
Shortly before ascending the English throne, James I, in his treatise *The Trewe Law of free Monarchies*, had established his concept of absolute regal supremacy. Citing divine and civil law and the law of nature, but first divine law as his authority, he had quoted this same story of Samuel and the Israelites as prime evidence that kings from Biblical times had ruled by divine right and therefore possessed absolute supremacy. Samuel, in view of the peoples' request for a king, had consulted God and then had revealed to the Israelites the kind of king that God had in mind for them--an absolute monarch. Even detailed account of what such a monarch would do--take his peoples' vineyards and fields and even their servants and children, James maintained in his treatise--did not deter the people in their desire to be so ruled and judged, and to have a king to fight their battles for them. And thus it was done. This relationship between a king and his subjects, James concluded, ought "bee a paterne to all Christian and well founded Monarchies, as beeing founded by God him selfe, who by his Oracle, and out of his owne mouth gave the law thereof."\(^5^6\)

James's position on the power of kings was sanctioned by Charles I and was promulgated as the policy of his government in the *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical* of 1640. This remarkable document, prepared by

Archbishop Laud and his subordinates, reveals just how far the Stuarts, in the person of Charles I, had gone in their efforts to block the irresistible progress of the decline of English feudalism.

The first canon states unequivocally the Stuarts' definition of regal power:

The most High and Sacred order of Kings is of Divine right, being the ordinance of God himself, founded on the prime Laws of nature, and clearly established by expresse texts both of the old and new Testaments.*

"Supream Power" given to "this most excellent Order by God himself in the Scriptures" leaves no doubt about its interpretation:

That Kings should rule and command in their severall dominions all persons of what rank soever, whether Ecclesiasticall or Civill, and that they should restrain and punish with the temporall sword all stubborn and wicked doers.*

Obedience of this injunction was assured by the admonition that it became treasonable for any person or persons in the kingdom to "set up, maintain, or avow ... under any pretense whatsoever, any independent Coactive power, either Papall or Popular (whether directly or indirectly) ... that might challenge royal authority."57

Milton's interpretation of the Old Testament account of God's revelation to Samuel of the kind of king he

*See footnote 57 below.

would give the Israelites is exactly opposite to this interpretation fervently subscribed to by adherents of the theory of the divine right of kings.

As Milton sees it, God had established his "own chosen government" among the Israelites. It was not a monarchy; it was, rather, a commonwealth. But the Israelites had not obeyed God's wishes to live under his established government:

They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods. . . . And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice and make them a king (I Samuel: 9: 7-8, 22).

And so it was in anger and as punishment for those offenses that God had set an absolute monarch over the Israelites. It was certainly not the divine institution of the absolute regal supremacy claimed by the Stuarts.

Milton returns to this account early in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates when he says that kings and emperors of "best note" from the beginning disliked the arrogant title of Sov'ran Lord, adding "although generally

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58 In the First Defense of the English People Milton says:

A commonwealth . . . in the opinion of God, was, under human conditions, a more perfect form of government than a monarchy, and more useful for His own people; for He himself set up this government, and could hardly be prevailed withal a great while after, and at their own importunate desire, to let them change it into a monarchy (VII, 77).
the people of Asia, and with them the Jews also, especially since the time they chose a King against the advice and counsel of God, are noted by wise Authors much inclinable to slavery" (V, 11).

In Chapter II of the First Defense, Milton answers Salmastus's royalist argument that the Israelites, when they asked God for a king, knew that he would be an absolute monarch: "God was angry with them not only for desiring a king after the manner of the nations and not of his own law, but for desiring a king at all" (VII, 85). And Milton concludes his "long, long pages" of answer:

In Isaiah 26.13 the people, in their right minds at last, complain that it has been mischievous to them to have had other rulers than God. All which passages go to prove that the king was given the Israelites in God's anger (VII, 137).

Milton's first detailed exposition of his belief concerning the power of kings comes in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, and it is repeated almost incrementally in Eikonoklastes and The First Defense of the English People:

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 their natural birthright. . . . (V, 10).

In support of his theory that government comes about through a compact between the magistrates and the people, Milton traces the origin of government, beginning with the famous paragraph:
No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally 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 Adam's 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 joynently to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement (V, 8).

To insure their protection, men chose from among themselves one outstanding in wisdom and virtue, or several of "equal deserving . . . not to be thir Lords and Maisters . . . but to be thir Deputies and Commissioners." To those magistrates was given power to require obedience from every one and to execute judgment on anyone who should refuse. To prevent injustice and the arbitrary use of power, Milton says, the people did "invent Laws either fram'd or consented to by all that should confine and limit the authority of whom they chose to govern them."

Thus, in the beginning, "while as the Magistrate was set above the people, so the Law was set above the Magistrate."

When the people found that still more measures had to be taken to assure proper and impartial execution of the laws, they required all kings and magistrates to take oaths "at thir first instalment to doe impartial justice by Law." It was only after such oath-taking that the people would give their bond or covenant to obey, sometimes with the expressed warning that "if the King or Magistrate prov'd unfaithfull to his trust, the people
would be disingag'd" (V, 8-10). Thus the basis of a state is a covenant binding upon both rulers and ruled, but terminable by either.

Milton at this point in The Tenure begins to refute Royalist claims—claims that, at the very time of Milton's writing, Charles may well have been making during his trial for his life. To say that a king has as good a right to his crown and dignity as any man to his inheritance is "to make the Subject no better then the Kings slave, his chattell, or his possession that may be bought and sold." But, allowing that some kings do ascend to their thrones by inheritance, to hold a subject accountable for his actions, whereas a king is claimed not to be accountable, is so unjust that it is a kind of treason against the dignity of mankind. It follows from this, Milton says, that "to say Kings are accountable to none but God, is the overthrowing of all Law and government." For if they may refuse to be held accountable, then "all cov'nants made with them at Coronation; all Oathes are in vaine, and meer mockeries, all Lawes which they sweare to keep, made to no purpose" (V, 11, 12).

Far from being accountable to God only, kings hold their authority through the consent of the people. Thus it follows logically that the people may "as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retain 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" (V, 14).

Time after time Milton returns to Aristotle's definition of a king: "him who governs to the good and profit of his People" and to the perversion of kingship, which is tyranny. "A Tyrant," Milton quotes from St. Basil, "whether by wrong or right coming to the Crown, is he who, regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction." He states repeatedly that kings turning to tyranny may be lawfully deposed and punished: "be he Tyrant . . . the Sword of Justice is above him; in whose hand soever is found sufficient power . . ." (V, 7). He cites many instances of just such depositions and punishings of tyrants in many lands, and in many times, instances that should "teach lawless Kings, and all who so much adore them, that not mortal man, or his imperious will, but Justice is the onely true sovran and supreme Majesty upon earth" (V, 40-41). Milton invariably returns to the principle that is basic to The Tenure, to the Aristotelian idea of law as the proper check upon tyranny and of history itself as a "record of society's gradual development of the art of legal restraint of its sovereigns." 59

In the Eikonoklastes, published in October 1649, Milton refutes chapter by chapter the statements in the Eikon Basilike, allegedly written by Charles I and certainly expressing his sentiments concerning the relationship

between sovereign and subject. Based on the principle that all authority stems from the people, Milton in the Eikonoklastes repeatedly shows the false reasoning and the self-centered egotism of Charles. Milton scorns such declarations of Charles as the one to the effect that his reason and will must prevail because of his superiority to the Parliament, to the Law, and to the people themselves. Charles had written of Parliament: "By Petitioning [him] they confess thir inferioritie and that obliges them to rest, if not satisfi'd, yet quieted with such an Answer as the will and reason of their Superior thinks fit to give." Milton answers that the Parliament of England "Petition'd the King, not because all of them were inferior to him, but because he was superior to any one of them . . . for by plain Law . . . the Parlament is his Superior." Milton refuses to accept the premise of the superior force of the king's will, declaring that "If our highest consultations and purpos'd Laws" are to be terminated by the king's will, then "is the will of one man over Law" and Parliament and the nation are slaves. But this cannot be, "for neither God nor the Lawes have subjected us to his will nor sett his reason to be our sovran above Law but sett his person over us in the sovran execution of such Lawes as the Parlament establish." And Milton turns the argument right back to the basic principle "... no Law could be made but by the great Counsel of a Nation, which we now term a Parlament . . . certainly it
was a Parliament that first created Kings, and not only made Laws before a King was in being, but those Laws especially, wherby he holds his Crown" (V, 179-180, 186).

Chapter XIII of this work develops from the premise: "Kings . . . as all other Officers of the Public, were at first choos'n and install'd onely by consent and suffrage of the People, to govern them as Freemen by Laws of thir own framing . . ." (V, 202). Logically and repetitiously Milton appeals to reason, but few in England early in 1649 were being ruled by reason. Not even Masson claims that the Eikonoklastes was successful in convincing many that Charles should be recognized for the tyrant that he was, not worshipped as a royal martyr. Whereas the Eikon Basilike fell on a "seed ground created by centuries of patriotic superstitious reverence for kingship, appealing to hearts with sympathy from the unanswerable pulpit of the dead,"60 Eikonoklastes spoke only to the reason, the intellect, the scepticism among the unpersuaded. Concerning the total effect of Eikonoklastes, S. R. Gardiner's estimation seems accurate:

In such a case mere negative criticism avails but little. What was needed was the development of a higher loyalty to the nation in the place of the lower loyalty to the King, and the quickening of a sense of the exuberant vitality of the collective life of the people in the place of devotion to the head of the national organization.61

60 Wolfe, p. 222.

Milton was not yet done with defending the principles upon which he believed the Commonwealth was based. When Royalists persuaded the eminent Salmesius to speak out in violent opposition to the young Republic in England, and in ardent support of the Rule of Charles I, and of the succession of Charles II, there was serious concern in England about the harm that his book *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I* might bring. The harm to be feared was not at home in England. There was no English translation of his book, and to the literate who read its Latin, Salmesius offered nothing new in the argument. But the harm might be considerable in the European seats of government, many of which were predisposed against the English Commonwealth. The purpose of the book was to increase and intensify this already existing antipathy to the young Republic. An answer had to be made to it to nullify its effect all over Europe. This task Milton undertook.

*A Defense of the English People* (1651) states Milton's *Tenure* argument at much greater length. Prolonged study of his own sources from the *Commonplace Book* and of all the sources of Salmesius's royalist arguments furnished Milton with voluminous proofs of his central thesis. Throughout the whole of the *Defense* Milton turns back onto Salmesius every claim and argument he had offered in his *Defensio Regia* in support of Charles I. Milton appropriates Salmesius's own authorities, he reinterprets his readings in Scripture, he corrects his references to civil
law, to tradition and custom as he argues the justice of the Commonwealth cause.

Whereas Salmassius contended that Charles had received his power directly from God, that as supreme head he stood above the law and was answerable to none save God, Milton responds with his same argument that Charles I had received his power through a pact with the people of England, that he ruled only by their sufferance, and that like every other citizen, he was answerable to the law, for the law stands supreme over all. If kings are accountable only to God, why do they swear to obey the laws of the land when they accept their crowns? Milton asks. If we grant that the law is superior in authority to the king, then it follows that Parliament, maker of the laws, is superior in authority. But Parliament is made up of representatives of the people of England, from whom the power comes. And so the argument goes full circle many times, with diverse reasoning, until, having literally overpowered Salmassius and buried him under the weight of refutation, at the same time having given his eyesight to defend his countrymen, Milton wearies of the attack: "What follows is but turning the same stone over and over again . . . and is sufficiently answered by what has been said already" (VII, 479).

We do not know whether many European readers were convinced of the justice of the Commonwealth claims against Charles. But we do know that they were treated to the
spectacle of the preeminent and arrogant Salmasius being driven rather ignominiously from the field of his own choosing. It was just as true in Milton's day as it is today that one way to vitiate the apparent value of principles is to destroy the character of the person espousing those principles. That treatment Milton visited upon Salmasius and the ideas of absolute royal power he supported. The fame that came to Milton on the Continent as a result of his victory over Salmasius may have been actuated more by the enjoyment of Salmasius's discomfiture than by a real appreciation of Milton's intentions in *The Defense*. Of the statements by continentals that Masson quotes as evidence of Milton's great fame, only one makes reference to the worth of the book. Concerning the hangman's burning of *The Defense* in Paris, one European scholar writes:

> It is generally good books whose fate it is to perish or be endangered in this way. Men come under the executioner's hands for the most part for their crimes and depravity, but books for their worth and excellence. . . . But they are greatly mistaken who think they can extirpate the writings of Milton and others in this way. . . .62

It may be assumed that English adherents of the Commonwealth to whom Latin was no bar found much in *The Defense* to applaud. It is true that some three months after the publication of the work the Council of State took official notice of it in their Order Book, directing that "the thanks of the Council be returned to Mr. Milton. . . ."

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62 Masson, IV, 342.
But there is no evidence that Milton received any more than these perfunctory official thanks. If it is true that Milton's philosophy of government received only short-lived notice during his lifetime, it played an active part in molding the beliefs of those who were, before the turn of the century, to effect a lasting change in England's government.

Milton and the Independents, Cromwell and the Army had moved to the dividing wall between the Old and the New in government. But they were never able to persuade the tradition-bound people of England to cross over from kingship to a republic, for the liberty that Milton envisaged was still incomprehensible to most of his countrymen. With the death of Cromwell, Puritan hold on the nation weakened, and with chaos and anarchy threatening, the English people, forgetting all the reasoned arguments against the evils of kingship, could see only the security in affairs that a monarchy offered. Milton's impassioned plea for the Commonwealth and against the return of any kind of monarchy in *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660) was no more than smoke in the rising wind of Royalism.

In attendance upon the returning Charles, or following shortly after, many Royalists hastened back from their years of exile and sequestration, determined to secure their old positions of power and privilege through a uniform church and an absolute crown. The Coronation sermon
for Charles II, preached by George Morley, Bishop of Worcester, expressed the sentiments of this Cavalier-Church party. Bishop Morley critically assessed the political theories which had animated the Puritan Rebellion: "When the Soveraignty over the whole which ought to be vested in one, is usurped and shared and exercised by many," as is grossly evident in a "popular State or a Democracy," factions and divisions break out in the state. This, of course, stems from the fact that the many "whether they be more, or fewer, do alwayses under a pretence of Law and Liberty assume unto themselves an Illegal, Arbitrary and tyrannical power." Now, government by the many actually runs counter to the laws of nature and of God, the bishop declared. What is more unnatural than for a body to have more heads than one? Indeed, what is more unnatural and confusing than to leave indistinguished the head from the body politic— that is, the governor from the governed? Yet those very unnatural conditions are rampant in a commonwealth where magistrates are declared to be "servants and vassals unto the people, as being created by them, and accountable to them and consequently alwayses in danger and fear of them." "But Monarchy," the bishop continued, "is more natural and more according to Divine Institution, and consequently, a better form of government than any other." As a corollary, Bishop Morley offered the additional belief: "So of Monarchies, that which is by Succession is much more natural and more according to Divine Institution then
any other kind of Monarchy." The conclusion states the divinity of the principles supporting the throne of Charles II: "Monarchy is from God . . . whatsoever is Destructive to Monarchy, or Inconsistent with Monarchy, is not from God, because Gods Ordinances cannot destroy or clash one against another." It is as if the bishop were refuting Milton's arguments.

Samuel Parker, back in the orthodox fold after the deviancy of some apparent Milton discipleship, completed the pronouncement of Cavalier-Church party doctrine. He argued in his Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie that it was "absolutely necessary to the Peace and Government of the world, that the Supreme Magistrate of every Common-wealth should be vested with a Power to govern and conduct the Conscience of Subjects in Affairs of Religion." Nothing new had been added to the theories of James I and the policies of Charles I. There were only the old arguments. But the Cavalier-Church party, pointing to the chaos of the Puritan Rebellion which they attributed directly to theories of toleration and false government, declared that only through an absolute monarch and a uniform church would stability be attained that would result in peace and prosperity to the State.

63A Sermon Preached at the Magnificent Coronation of The Most High and Mighty King Charles the TId (London, 1661). Quoted by Sensabaugh, pp. 23-24.

64Sensabaugh, p. 25.
Milton's prophecy in *The Readie & Easie Way* that England would be "forced perhaps to fight over again all that we have fought," and tread "back again with lost labour all our happy steps in the progress of reformation" very soon began to be fulfilled. The Royalists, under the ministry of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, established in their position, consolidated their strength by a series of Parliamentary Acts known as the Clarendon Code that, in effect, choked off all dissent from crown and church. With hammer-like blows, act followed act that stripped one freedom after another. The Corporation Act of 1661 ejected from Town Councils and other Corporations all who failed to attest to Royalist views. The 1662 Act of Uniformity required rigid clerical adherence to Anglican rituals and beliefs. On the day they became effective, the provisions of this act caused the ejection of about 2000 of the clergy from their ministries. The consequence of this one act was the great, and permanent, division of the English people into Conformists and Nonconformists, or Church and Dissent. These and the other acts that constituted the Code, all stringent laws curtailing religious and political freedom, failed in their avowed purpose to secure real peace and stability for the nation. They bred, rather, schism, further discord and strife, and they were vigorously enforced until the Revolution of 1689. But the disenchchantment was not long in coming. Samuel Pepys, who had described the near delirious joy of the people at the
Restoration, writes in his Diary in July 1667:

It is strange how everybody do now-a-days reflect upon Oliver, and commend him, what brave things he did, and made all the neighbour princes fear him; while here a prince, come in with all the love and prayers and good liking of his people, who have given greater signs of loyalty and willingness to serve him with their estates than ever was done by any people, hath lost all so soon that it is a miracle what way a man could devise to lose so much in so little time.  

The smoldering conflict over the still unresolved questions concerning liberty of conscience and the power of kings had not been visible during the short honeymoon between the returned monarch and the people of England. But it flamed again in the struggle between the political forces that were to polarize into the Tory and Whig parties. This controversy first centered around the succession of Charles's brother James, a Catholic. It subsided, then rose to a climax in the Glorious Revolution that resulted in the abdication of James and the accession of William and Mary to the throne by compact.

As always, public approval was solicited in pamphlets. The Nonconformist-Whig party strove to convince men of the iniquity of the Cavalier-Church-Tory theory of divine right of kings. It also sought to implant in their minds the rightness of freedom of conscience, and the necessity of restricting regal authority by separating Church and State. It would have been strange if use had not been

made of Milton's words on these very matters, since, earlier in the conflict, he had spoken on them with force and eloquence.

Even if the Whigs had forgotten about Milton, the opposing Tories would have reminded them, for there was seldom a time when Milton's name was not being mentioned in some Tory publication. That party early recognized his threat to their principles and especially to their Clarendon Code. Therefore they attacked his positions as false, and, just as he had done earlier, attempted to discredit the causes for which he stood by vilifying his character. Long before the Whigs were ready to admit the extensive use they were making of Milton's writings in their own arguments, the Tories had assigned to him the label "That Grand Whig Milton." 66

In the face of strong Tory opposition, Whig political philosophy gradually rose in power and influence until it culminated in a revolution in political theory as well as in the dynasty of kings. Through all the battles of ideas as the Whigs had argued against the divine right of kings, against licensing acts, for toleration, for a free press, and for the theory of compact, they had made effective, and constant, use of Milton's arguments for the very same principles. Thus, when by the Act of Toleration, 1689, "English Protestants were ready to let one another

66 Sensabaugh, p. 110.
worship God," Milton's long-sought liberty of conscience was secured. The permanent lapsing of the Licensing Act assured freedom of expressed thought. The concept of absolute monarchy through divine right of kings was discarded when James abdicated and William and Mary were placed on the English throne in 1689. This was recognition of the theory of compact that Milton had eloquently advocated forty years earlier. The Bill of Rights, 1689, secured the liberty of the subject and the power of Parliament against the power of the Crown, a triumph of the issues which had first crystallized in the Puritan Rebellion.

It has still not been finally ascertained whether Milton actually achieved the political stature in his own time often attributed to him. Whether he led many of his contemporaries to accept his positions on individual freedom and the nature of government is a matter of question. But it is obvious that later in the seventeenth century when the great, and permanent, changes were taking place in English philosophy of government, it was John Milton's philosophy, incorporated into Whig theory, that triumphed. This philosophy which proclaims the dignity and worth of the individual man is the basis of human society everywhere in the free Western world.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

"I rather choose the common rule, not to make much ado, where less may serve. . . ."

Among the great mass of commentary on Milton that has made its appearance since the first critical appraisal of him three and a quarter centuries ago, some, as I have earlier pointed out, has, quite naturally, been devoted to the history of Milton's reputation in his own century. Such Renaissance and Milton scholars as Todd, Masson, Raleigh, Grierson, Havens, Hanford, Good, Tillyard, Bush, and Parker have analyzed certain aspects of Milton's relationship to his contemporaries. But these studies are widely scattered among various books, monographs and articles; no comprehensive synthesis of them has previously been made. This present study was undertaken to fill a recognized need for such a synthesis. It has been done in the hope that future Milton students will find it helpful.

From the foregoing survey of seventeenth-century opinions in reference to Milton and his writings, certain conclusions have been arrived at. The chief characteristic of Milton commentary has always been its marked subjectivity. Successive generations of readers, and of
critics, have been conditioned by their own moral and intellectual outlook concerning the issues on which Milton took such a firm stand. During two successive generations in particular, references to Milton by those unacquainted personally with him were more often than not tinged with personal and political malice. Because of this the early criticism inevitably suffered some limitations. Too often there is a dichotomy of feeling revealed in a combination of praise and censure. Almost in a breath Milton's sublimities in *Paradise Lost* will be extolled, while execration is heaped on his prose that embodies the very same philosophic ideals that are to be found in the poem.

Sir Walter Raleigh appeals to the market place for supporting authority for his positive statement: "The success of *Paradise Lost*, when it was published in 1667, was immediate and startling."\(^1\) One may be content with Sir Walter's appeal largely to evidence furnished by the publishers and booksellers—in this case very convincing evidence—\(^2\) or one may desire other witness to testify to the early favorable acceptance of the great poem. Such witness is supplied by the year-to-year tributes to Milton as a poet and artist, reviewed in Chapter II. Evaluation of these tributes can result only in the conclusion that very soon after the publication of his long epic Milton

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1. Raleigh, p. 239.

2. See figures in Chapter II, page 53, above.
was recognized as a poetic genius—a recognition based primarily on *Paradise Lost*, and justifiably so, Hanford says, "for in that poem, by common consent, the influences which shaped Milton's art and thought met in the most perfect balance. . . ." Milton's reputation as a great poet, thus established, continued to increase, without interruption, throughout the century.

But one looks in vain in the seventeenth century, up to John Toland's life of Milton in 1698, for appreciation of Milton's philosophy of life, or even for recognition of its being a statement of essentials that are concerned with "man, the heart of man and human life," and that are relevant to any section of humanity at any time. Those few before 1700 whom we might call friendly to Milton's ideas, and from whom we have printed evidence of approbation, generally made known their approbation in the manner in which one recognizes political principles that are compatible to one's own. Of the many who felt real animosity towards his philosophy, the most vocal often registered their enmity by such defamatory epithets as "Divorcer," "king-killer," "that mercenary Milton," following the principle Douglas Bush attributes to more recent detractors that "what they tell us three times must be true."  

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Critical appreciation of Milton's poetry in his own century was directed to aspects of his work which he himself very probably would have deemed of secondary importance: *Paradise Lost* was praised for its sublimity, its eloquence; there were ardent eulogies of his art and music; its lack of rime was the subject of argument. But nowhere is there recognition that Milton through his religious and ethical theme in *Paradise Lost*, in *Paradise Regained*, and in *Samson Agonistes* was demonstrating to an ailing society the way toward a better world, the fundamental requirement of which is that of first making one's self better. Hanford once wrote, "By a strange fatality the audience for which *Paradise Lost* was ideally intended had at the moment of its publication already ceased to exist." I cannot subscribe, entirely, to that opinion. It is my belief that John Milton, Englishman, was writing, first, to his own countrymen in his own time. Knowing full well that he was leaving something "so written to aftertimes that they should not willingly let it die," he was speaking to Restoration Englishmen, just as he has since spoken "for three lives and downward," indeed, to "generations of lives." But they could not hear the deepest tones of his voice, or they would not listen to what those tones were saying.

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The Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 was a reactionary revolution. The royalists came back into power as the party of reaction, reaction of worldliness against asceticism, of materialism against idealism, of self-interest against disinterestedness, of self-indulgence against duty. Almost in a single day, or as if a page in a book had been turned, England's heroic age had passed away. Instead, Mark Pattison says, "servility, meanness, venality, time-serving, and a disbelief in virtue diffused themselves over the nation like a pestilential miasma. . . ." In a few months, the labor of twenty years was swept away, apparently without a trace of it being left—a total wreck of the principles, of the social and religious ideals with which Milton's life was bound up.

Disappointed of all his political and social hopes, Milton still found and took a magnificent revenge upon his enemies, even amid "... the barbarous dissonance/ Of Bacchus and his revellers. . . ." When the politician had been silenced, only his left hand was crippled. For Milton's powerful right hand which had hung, seemingly useless, by his side all through the years while he served the Commonwealth, was his own still, and it wielded a more Olympian weapon. He was a frustrated, beaten and baffled man in prose and politics, but in the vision of poetry he realized his triumph. "His ideas," Sir Walter Raleigh

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Pattison, p. 141.
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says, "which had gone a-begging among the politicians of his time, were stripped by him of the rags of circumstance, and cleansed of its dust, to be enthroned where they might secure a hearing for all time."\(^7\)

Whether or not one can agree completely with E. H. Visiak when he declares, "Milton ... presents in his works an image both of himself and of his life,"\(^8\) we can concur in Tillyard's view: "Milton's life, his prose, his verse were all of one piece."\(^9\) Thus when Milton was no longer permitted to express, in prose, the conception of society that dominated his mind, and his life, he embodied it as the very substance of his long poems.

In Paradise Lost Milton is demonstrating, by his account of the loss of Paradise and its perfect social order through violation of divine laws, how the world and a good society can be lost through similar disregard of those laws. Milton presents the traditional Renaissance conception of the world as an inseparable mixture of good and evil—a perpetual testing ground for these contending forces of good and evil. He presents, too, man's fundamental responsibility in this world. This responsibility consists in man's maintaining a constant alertness against

\(^7\) Raleigh, p. 37.


evil, and in his conscientious exerting of diligent efforts, through which evil forces, though they cannot be eradicated, can, to some extent, be controlled and be made subordinate to the forces of good.

Now, conditions affecting man in Milton's Paradise were essentially the same as those which constantly prevail in the world of man. Ancestry of the many and various forms of evil which are later to harass the human race resides in the evils, defection to which proved so fateful in the Garden of Eden. While Eve's sin was a flouting of God's plan for the universe—a violation of divine command—Adam's fundamental sin, which cost the human race its divinely ordained happiness, was his deliberate acquiescence in Eve's defection—his wilfully sacrificing the universal and ultimate good in the world in the interest of individual and present benefits. His crime was an instance of defaulting in the moral responsibility on which the welfare of humanity always depends.\(^{10}\)

The central issue of Paradise Regained is "that of setting forth the prerequisites to the establishment of a near-ideal society... The focal point of interest in

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\(^{10}\)This is a digest of Professor E. L. Marilla's penetrating interpretation of the philosophical import of Paradise Lost, contained in his "The Central Problem of Paradise Lost: The Fall of Man," Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature, XV (1953), 5-36. In this view he is joined by Douglas Bush, and to some extent by Tillyard, Hanford, C. S. Lewis, and B. Rajan. I incorporate this view into my dissertation because it is my view also.
the poem is man's estate on earth." In the poem, the "perfect Man," Christ, faces the evils that always assail the faith and resolution of conscientious leaders who are committed to the building of a just and humane society, and he overcomes all the basic moral and spiritual problems which confront fallible man. The values which Christ asserts, in triumphing over all of Satan's temptations, in the poem, are those spiritual and universal ones that must always transcend the personal and immediate. Though Christ is perfect, he is still man in the poem. And therefore, though what he achieves, being perfect, is complete triumph over evil and cannot be duplicated by fallible man, still as Man, his achievements should be inspiration and serve as ideal aims for regenerate man in his same confrontations with evil.

Samson Agonistes seems to have been intended by Milton to serve as a complement to Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Thus it is a part of a trilogy which defines the issues that responsible and conscientious man may meet as he strives to take his place in the social order and to fulfill whatever spiritual mission is destined to be his. When Milton's Samson resolutely determines ultimately to fulfill, at whatever cost in self-sacrifice, the sacredly imposed trust originally given him by Almighty God, Milton

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is declaring, in essence, that man, as a spiritual being, lives and has his being under the requirement that he must unreservedly commit himself, without regard for possible costs in personal sacrifice, to upholding the ideals that are entrusted to him. Milton is saying in his three great poems what Adam learned, what Christ already knew, and what Samson realized, that

all who assume responsibility for leadership shall set ultimate interests of humanity above accomplishment of immediate ends, shall reckon always in terms of universal values, shall dedicate themselves to the preservation of sacred ideals on whatever conditions any given situation may exact.12

Milton thus saw humanity originally free, capable to some extent of guiding its own fate, with a certain instinct towards virtue. But man was subject to a curious fault of disposition, a "levity and shallowness of mind," which prevented most men from taking full advantage of their powers. What God is in the universe, the macrocosm, the divine faculty of reason is in man, the microcosm, and when man's reason is not in active control, his nature becomes a chaos of passions. Passion often usurps reason's sway, and some sort of enslavement follows. Thus, man's continued enjoyment of his God-given freedom is contingent upon his obedience to the laws governing his being as apprehended by reason. "By disobeying reason and law, man surrenders his freedom and incurs death," Haller says.

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And then he adds, "This is justice."\textsuperscript{13} Notwithstanding Adam's fall, the laws of being are still clearly within the power of reason to apprehend, and of the conscience to heed. The instinct towards virtue in men still, in some measure, enables them to renew obedience, to recover liberty, and to live.

\textsuperscript{13}Haller, \textit{Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution}, p. 348.
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B. PERIODICALS


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Date of Examination:

May 9, 1966