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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MILTON'S IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

by



JOHN A. ANONBY

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Throughout Milton's poetry and prose there is an underlying concern for a Christian society which would allow a great measure of personal liberty to the individual, especially to the "wise and good." For Milton, only men who have the spiritual and intellectual qualifications necessary for a true understanding of freedom deserve to be in positions of social and political authority. All others tend to mistake liberty for "licence."

The three main categories of liberty, as Milton outlines them in The Second Defence, are religious, domestic (or personal), and political freedom. A truly Christian society, as far as he is concerned, cannot exist apart from all of these forms of liberty. His ecclesiastical pamphlets stress the freedom of conscience and the right of every person to interpret the Scriptures for himself. They also show Milton's increasing awareness that these freedoms can be realized only in a commonwealth where church and state are separated. His concern for domestic liberty embraces such diversified matters as education, the freedom of the press, and the right to divorce. His desire for political liberty is expressed in his attacks on kingship and in his defences of the various forms of government that appeared between the execution of King Charles I in 1649 and the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In these works, it is apparent that

Milton is far less concerned with particular political platforms than with vindicating the leadership of those whom he considers wise and virtuous.

Milton's ideals for a Christian society are also expressed in his poetry. His basic aspirations are indicated in his early poetry, though they are stated with increasing emphasis and clarity in his religious and political sonnets. He demonstrates in his poetry a growing awareness of man's responsibility for the imperfect state of earthly affairs, but he retains his conviction that human society can be greatly improved if men will pursue virtue and submit to the will of God as set forth in the Scriptures. In Paradise Lost, he offers two models for an ideal Christian society in his portrayals of Heaven and the Garden of Eden. Deviations from his ideals are suggested in his accounts of Satan's rebellion in Heaven and "man's first disobedience" in Eden. The disastrous effects of the Fall on human society, which Milton traces in his outline of history in Books XI and XII of Paradise Lost, can be mitigated, however, by the kind of behavior Jesus manifests in Paradise Regained. Social and political strife will never cease until men resist the enticements of personal power, glory, and fame. Finally, the plight of the saints in this world of confusion and evil receives special attention in Samson Agonistes, where Milton reaffirms his conviction that all earthly affairs are ultimately controlled by God.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: MILTON AND THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

There has been a pronounced tendency in Milton criticism to make sharp distinctions between Milton's prose writings and his poetry. To some extent this procedure can be justified, for Milton the poet clearly overshadows Milton the political polemicist or Milton the theologian. Even Areopagitica, his most eloquent sustained performance in prose, can hardly be compared to the grand epic poem, Paradise Lost, or, for that matter, to the exquisite Lycidas. Dr. Johnson's assessment of Milton's work in his Lives of the Poets is typical of much Milton criticism in his tendency to treat the poetry with great care and to dismiss the prose as the "political notions . . . of an acrimonious and surly republican."¹ Eminent critics such as Addison in the eighteenth century and Coleridge and Hazlitt in the nineteenth focused on Paradise Lost to the virtual exclusion of any serious consideration of Milton's prose.

Some notable exceptions stand out, however. John Toland, an early biographer of Milton, sees in Milton's prose some evidence that he was a defender of freedom.²

David Masson, in his monumental Life of John Milton, does not regard Milton as merely "the great poet of the age" but also "the thinker and idealist" of the "Republican" cause in England.³ Even though it is highly probable, as William Riley Parker suggests in Milton's Contemporary Reputation, that Milton's political and ecclesiastical prose works were not as influential as Masson believes,⁴ it is nonetheless significant that Milton devoted approximately twenty years of his career to the writing of political, social and ecclesiastical pamphlets for the Puritan cause in England during the 1640's and 1650's. Since Milton's fame rests almost entirely upon his accomplishments as a poet, there has been a tendency to regard his prose endeavours as an unfortunate interruption of his poetic career. The main difficulty with this assumption is that it tends to overlook the thematic connections which exist between his prose and poetry. Many of the ideas he expresses in his prose provide us with materials that illuminate the poetry. This is of particular relevance for an understanding of his concept of a Christian society.

The fact that Milton was concerned about political, social, and ecclesiastical issues in his prose works is evident enough. From 1641 to 1642 he produced five anti-prelatical tracts demonstrating the superiority of the presbyterian form of church government to the episcopal, and he suggested that the Protestant reformation would not be

completed in England until episcopacy was uprooted. From 1643 to 1648 he concentrated his attention on domestic and social issues such as education, the freedom of the press and divorce. From 1649 until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 he produced a large number of works justifying the deposition of Charles I and suggesting further measures for political and religious stability in the English Commonwealth.

Detailed studies of Milton's prose pamphlets during this period have appeared since A. S. P. Woodhouse's articles in the 1930's. In "Milton, Puritanism and Liberty," Woodhouse maintains that Milton's background as a humanist conditioned his demands for liberty in such a way as to favour a rational and ethical aristocracy.⁵ Further support for Woodhouse's suggestion appears in the work of Don M. Wolfe, whose article, "Milton's Conception of the Ruler" (1936), is expanded into a full-scale study of Milton's political position during the Commonwealth period in Milton in the Puritan Revolution (1941). Wolfe maintains that Milton's adherence to the idea that the virtuous ought to rule in the state was conditioned by an "essentially religious interpretation of man's freedom."⁶ The difficulties inherent in the position of Milton and the Puritans generally are carefully analyzed by Arthur E. Barker in his well-documented study, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma. Barker in this work shows that Milton and many of his contemporaries

encountered insurmountable difficulties in their desire to form a commonwealth in which the religious principles of the Reformation would be enforced side by side with liberty for all segments of society. Barker contends that the "claims of reformation and liberty" were "conflicting" and therefore irreconcilable.⁷ Milton's own gradual awareness of the dilemma is perceptively analyzed by Michael Fixler, who in Milton and the Kingdoms of God demonstrates that "Milton's whole development . . . may be seen as an attempt to recover the essential truth of the kingdom of Christ beneath the protean shapes it assumed in his experience and in the violence of a revolution" and that he eventually came to focus his aspirations on the inward, "spiritual Kingdom of Christ" which was "ultimately independent of any political program whatsoever."⁸ While Fixler applies his conclusions to Paradise Regained, and though Wolfe devotes a portion of a chapter in Milton in the Puritan Revolution to the "leadership principle" in Paradise Lost,⁹ most of the scholars who have explored Milton's prose works in depth have not related the themes of the prose to his poetry in a comprehensive way. Barker, for example, explicitly states, in Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, that he has not attempted to apply the conclusions of his analysis to the great poems.¹⁰ Since Milton's political, social, and religious views are by no means restricted to his prose works, it will be my purpose in this thesis to explore these themes in his poetry as well

as in his prose, particularly in relation to his ideas of a Christian society.

In much of his poetry and prose Milton expresses, either explicitly or obliquely, a desire for the kind of society which would grant to individuals a large measure of personal freedom in every area of life, particularly to men who possess the spiritual and intellectual qualifications necessary for an understanding of the true nature of freedom. While some of his prose works, such as The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth, illustrate in a fairly specific manner some of his views on the kind of society he envisions, Milton's concern for domestic, political, and religious liberty can be detected in most of his poetry as well. Since he does not believe that true liberty, whether it be individual, political, or social, is possible apart from adherence to the laws of God as revealed in the Scriptures, it becomes clear that his aspirations are directed towards a Christian society. In such early poems as "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and "At a Solemn Music," he expresses his yearnings for the return to earth of an age when "Truth and Justice" would "down return to men" and restore the peace that prevailed in Heaven and earth prior to the eruption of evil, when "disproportion'd sin/Jarr'd against nature's chime."¹¹ His developing awareness of the tendency of men to abuse truth and justice by misusing liberty moved him to express in Sonnet XII a political and

ethical principle fundamental to all of his thought:

License they mean when they cry liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good.

Milton's views on the nature of a Christian society persist in his later, major poetry in spite of the fact that his aspirations for the English Commonwealth had been crushed. Even though Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained can be viewed as Milton's attempt to recover a "paradise within . . . happier far" (PL, XII, 587) which, in Fixler's apt terms, would be "ultimately independent of any political program whatsoever,"¹² they nevertheless implicitly express his fundamental ideas on the kind of leadership which should exist in a theocratic society. This does not mean that Milton in his later years actually expected to see a completely Christianized society anywhere on earth. His own fellow countrymen, for whom he had had such glorious expectations, had demonstrated only too clearly their "noxious humor of returning to bondage . . . through the general defection of a misguided and abus'd multitude."¹³ The tendency of societies throughout history to prefer bondage to true liberty is traced in Paradise Lost back to man's loss of Eden, Milton's symbol of an ideal terrestrial society, which in turn is patterned on Heaven, the ultimate model for any ideal society. The fall of man in Eden and the fall of the angels in Heaven are both regarded by Milton as defections brought about by wilful rebellion against God, the personification of rightful authority. Although Milton certainly

recognizes that in earthly affairs circumstances often seem, perversely, to favour the wicked rather than the just ("to good malignant, to bad men benign" PL, XII, 538), he nevertheless goes on to state the possibility of "subverting worldly strong" forces by means of such Christian virtues as faith, patience, temperance and love (PL, XII, 568, 582-3). Because of man's fallen condition, it is no longer probable, or even possible, for an ideal society to exist. At the end of Paradise Lost, Milton specifically predicts that injustice will abound on earth until the return of Christ. Nevertheless, it is possible for individuals who are regenerated by the power of God to influence the society in which they move by practising and promoting the fundamental Christian virtues which must necessarily form the basis for any kind of Christian society. In Paradise Regained, in which various human societies are weighed in Milton's balances and found wanting, the lust for power which corrupts the concept of true leadership in society is specifically subjected to attack. In this poem, the principle of self-mastery as the essential prerequisite for true power and influence is repeatedly stressed by Milton in the context of ultimate Christian values and ideals. Similar themes are dealt with in Samson Agonistes, which can be seen as a distillation of Milton's mature views relating to a Christian society. In this unique drama, which is devoid of significant external action, he demonstrates most

eloquently the intrinsic connection between external and internal liberty or bondage. Since liberty is dependent on wisdom and goodness, virtues which in turn are finally derived from God, a Christian society is possible only to the extent that individuals within it obey the laws of God.

Since this thesis will attempt to demonstrate that Milton had a basically unified idea of what constituted a Christian society, from evidence in his poetry and prose, it will be necessary to take into account his stature as a political thinker. Sir Walter Raleigh, whose tendency to make unsupportable generalizations appears in his remark that Paradise Lost is a "magnificent . . . monument to dead ideas," goes on to say of Milton's prose that in politics he is "an idealist, pure and simple."¹⁴ Barker, who considers Milton's theory of society to be "essentially religious and ethical" rather than "secular and economic," maintains that he is "an unpractical idealist rather than a political thinker."¹⁵ There is a great deal of validity to this distinction, but it should be qualified in the context of Milton's ideas on the nature of a Christian society. His numerous ecclesiastical and political pamphlets relating to the current issues of the period of the Commonwealth never achieve the stature or magnitude of the works of some of his contemporaries. Thomas Hobbes, for example, devotes a considerable portion of his closely reasoned and systematic political theories in his Leviathan (1651) to a consideration

of the essential features of a Christian commonwealth. James Harrington, in Oceana (1655), also makes an ambitious attempt to achieve political, social, and economic stability in Cromwell's England by means of systematic political theory. Milton attempts in a measure to refute some of Harrington's principles in The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth (1660). The appearance of this pamphlet almost on the eve of the Restoration makes it seem the desperate solution of a stubborn idealist, which in a sense it was. Some of Milton's earlier work, especially his first anti-prelatical tracts, also display at times more idealism than realism. It is not the purpose of this thesis, however, to prove that Milton is a completely consistent or a great political thinker, but rather to show that in most of his poetry and prose he expresses his aspirations for a society in which the basic Christian principles would predominate.

The apparent shifts in Milton's political, social, and religious views, which I shall look at in some detail in this thesis in connection with his idea of a Christian society, tend to obscure the fact that there is a fundamental consistency to much of Milton's thought. It will therefore be necessary to make a distinction between the various political systems which Milton advocates and the basic principles to which he consistently adheres. His political shifts have been traced by J. F. Mack and Ernest Sirluck.

Mack, in "The Evolution of Milton's Political Thinking" (1922), shows that Milton was in 1640 a moderate supporter of the monarchy, in 1649 a defender of the Commonwealth, in 1655 a supporter of Cromwell's dictatorship, and in 1660 an upholder of an elective aristocracy.¹⁶ Ernest Sirluck sees Milton's political thought completing two cycles between 1649 and 1660.¹⁷ These shifts have been analyzed by William Riley Parker, whose recent biography of Milton maintains that many of Milton's prose works were written "under the excitement of the moment" and must therefore not be regarded as statements of "reasoned political theory."¹⁸ A significant qualifying remark on this issue has been made by Barbara Kiefer Lewalski who, admitting that Milton's shifts of thought were due to his attempt to cope with existing conditions in order to save the Puritan cause, shows that Milton's political thought was based ultimately on principle rather than expediency.¹⁹ My detailed study of Milton's poetry and prose makes it apparent that Milton is far less interested in specific political structures than in the religious, domestic, and political freedom which he regards as essential in a Christian society.

This raises the question whether Milton can be considered utopian in his outlook. If by "utopian" is meant an attitude which longs for a stable society characterized by social harmony, security, and liberty, Milton may possibly be considered so. By this definition, most men with political

or social ideals could be regarded as having utopian leanings. If, however, "utopianism" is defined as the belief that social perfectibility can be achieved permanently by some elaborately developed system (the sense in which Michael Fixler regards the term),²⁰ then Milton is very definitely not utopian in his idea of a Christian society. There is considerable evidence for this in Milton's works, both in some of his specific statements concerning utopian schemes and, even more important, in his remarks on basic human rights. In Areopagitica, Milton attacks Sir Thomas More's Utopia and Sir Francis Bacon's New Atlantis for advocating ideal commonwealths which could not possibly be applied to men as they are:

To sequester out of the world into Atlantick and Eutopian polities, which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evill, in the midd'st whereof God hath plac't us unavoidably.²¹

Even Plato, whom Milton regards as "a man of high authority indeed," is criticized for fanciful and "ayrie" ideas in his Laws and Republic (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 522). Milton thus demonstrates his aversion to theoretical schemes which cannot be translated into practice. This does not mean, however, that Milton regards as inconsequential or ineffectual any measures which can be taken to make a society more truly Christian. He admits, realistically, that since the fall of man "good and evill in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 514),

but this does not prevent him from maintaining that "it is more wholesome, more prudent, and more Christian" [italics mine] for a society to allow individuals within it to express their opinions openly (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 565). The Areopagitica thus illustrates not only his recognition that an ideal society is not possible on earth prior to the return of Christ, but also his aspirations for a Christian society in which true liberty and justice would flourish.

Milton's position on utopias is consistent with his belief in the advancement of knowledge. Since "Truth . . . among mortal men is alwaies in her progress" as he maintains in his Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (CPW, III, 256), it follows logically that "the same government is fitting neither for all peoples nor for one people at all times" (A Defence of the People of England, CPW, IV, Part 1, 392). Milton's own shifting political loyalties can be viewed as an inevitable development of his idea that civil liberty is contingent upon the right of people "to choose whatever form of government they prefer" (A Defence, CPW, IV, Part 1, 392). Out of context, this principle would make him appear as a champion of democracy, but such is definitely not the case, however. The "people" to whom he refers here are really "men of the utmost wisdom" whose task is "to discover what may be most suitable and advantageous for a people" (Ibid., 392). This highly significant qualification recurs persistently throughout his poetry and prose, for he feels that a

society can never develop along Christian principles unless the authoritative control is placed in the hands of the "wise and good."

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

The prose works of Milton, which deal with such diversified subjects as church government, education, divorce, and politics, have more in common than their titles might seem to indicate, for in them he constantly expresses his concern for liberty. For Milton, the "gaining or loosing of libertie" is the "greatest change to better or to worse"¹ that can happen to a nation or to an individual. Liberty, however, is not merely a civil or political matter, for he regards man as a spiritual as well as a physical being. Even during his college career he strongly expresses his view that "nothing can be reckoned as a cause of our happiness which does not somehow take into account both . . . everlasting life and our ordinary life here on earth" (Prolusions, VII, CPW, 291). Man's freedom is not complete for Milton unless it involves spiritual as well as civil liberty.² There is, therefore, a vital connection between virtue and liberty, a point which he stresses in his Second Defence of the English People:

. . . true and substantial liberty . . . must be sought, not without, but within, and which is best achieved, not by the sword, but by a life rightly undertaken and rightly conducted (CPW, IV, Part I, 624).

Milton's conception of liberty-freedom based on virtue--is defined further in his statement in the Second Defence that there are three kinds of liberty "without which civilized life is scarcely possible, namely ecclesiastical liberty, domestic or personal liberty, and civil liberty" (CPW, IV, Part I, 624). In this chapter, I shall focus on the first of these, ecclesiastical or religious liberty, which is his fundamental concern in a Christian society.

For Milton, religious liberty is of paramount importance because it provides the basis for all other kinds of freedom. He regards religion as "the true path to liberty" and

. . . the most direct progress towards the liberation of all human life from slavery--provided that the discipline arising from religion should overflow into the morals and institutions of the state (CPW, IV, Part I, 622).

The idea that religion is the basis for human government and freedom was a widely accepted commonplace. Most of Milton's contemporaries, as Barker demonstrates, also felt that civil good was related to religion.³ Bishop Andrewes, for example, had a few decades earlier expressed the familiar idea that "without religion there would be no submission to government."⁴ Much earlier, Calvin in his Institutes of the Christian Religion had declared authoritatively that "no government can be happily established unless piety is the first concern."⁵ In his influential Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Richard Hooker similarly maintains that "true religion is the root of all true virtues and the stay

of well-ordered commonwealths."⁶ Since "true religion" is for Milton as well as for Hooker the basis for a well-ordered state, one might be tempted to assume that their views on religious liberty are similar, if not identical. But such is not the case, for Milton's idea of a Christian society is based on premises which differ significantly from those of Hooker, especially in relation to the matter of Scripture and tradition. In The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, a most eloquent and sustained apology for the structure and practices of the Church of England, Hooker attacks the central tenet of Puritanism, the belief that the Scriptures are "the only rule of all things which in this life may be done by men" (Ecclesiastical Polity, I, Book II, 286). Hooker's work is basically a defense of the traditions which the Church of England had found to be useful, if not specifically founded on the Scriptures. Like St. Augustine, whom he cites as an authority, Hooker maintains that the "custom of the people of God" ought to be kept if it is not contrary to Scripture (Ecclesiastical Polity, II, Book II, 452).

Milton's attitude towards Scripture and tradition is highly significant, for it influences his views on the nature of religious liberty in a Christian society. Unlike Hooker, who regards tradition as an expression of accumulated learning and wisdom, Milton is inclined to repudiate it as "being but a meer face" which "countenances error" if it

does not happen to correspond to his opinion at any particular time (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, CPW, II, 223). In The Reason of Church-Government he inquires, with obvious indignation, whether tradition must "ever thus to the worlds end be the perpetuall cankerworme to eat out Gods Commandements?" (CPW, I, 779). The commandments of God are clearly expressed in "that book, within whose sacred context all wisdome is infolded" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 747). Furthermore, Milton constantly insists that it is the right of any individual, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, to interpret the Scriptures for himself. Religious liberty, which he considers indispensable in a Christian society, is not possible unless private interpretation be allowed:

As for spiritual [libertie], who can be at rest, who can enjoy any thing in this world with contentment, who hath not libertie to serve God and to save his own soul . . . by the reading of his reveal'd will and the guidance of his holy spirit? (Readie and Easie Way, CE, VI, 141).

Milton, who does not hesitate to put into practice his right to interpret the Scriptures for himself, concentrates his attention on three principles which lay the foundation for his basic ideas on the nature of religious freedom in a Christian society. From his point of view, the most fundamental of these Scriptural principles is the doctrine of individual free will. Although most Puritans embraced (to varying degrees) the Calvinistic idea that man has been deprived of freedom of choice as a result of Adam's fall and that God has determined who should be saved.

or lost,⁷ Milton becomes increasingly aware of the difficulty of reconciling the doctrine of predestination with his concept of the justice of God. His changing views on this controversial point prove his willingness to pursue truth as he sees it regardless of consequences. In The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Milton initially argues that the Arminian "sect" has mistakenly charged Calvinists with making God the author of sin (CPW, II, 293), and in the Areopagitica even describes Arminius as being "perverted" in his doctrine (CPW, II, 519-20). At some unspecified period prior to his writing of The Christian Doctrine, however, Milton accepts the Arminian view that predestination is contingent upon God's foreknowledge. He therefore insists in The Christian Doctrine that "God in pity to mankind, though foreseeing that they would fall of their own accord, predestinated to eternal salvation before the foundation of the world those who should believe and continue in the faith" (CE, XIV, 91). Unconditional predestination, he feels, is both unscriptural and unjust. Quoting passages such as Jeremiah 26:3, which states that God would repent of his purpose to punish an individual if he should "hearken and turn . . . from his evil way," Milton argues that arbitrary predestination "would entirely take away from human affairs all liberty of action, all endeavor and desire to do right" (CE, XIV, 67, 71). The relevance of this point to Milton's idea of a Christian society is clearly

evident, for if God himself has granted to each individual the freedom to determine his own spiritual destiny, it would be most unseemly for "any power on earth to compell in matters of Religion" (A Treatise of Civil Power, CE, VI, title page). His insistence on free will becomes a powerful motif in his poetry, particularly in his portrayal of ideal societies in Paradise Lost.

A second Scriptural principle upon which Milton's views on religious liberty in a Christian society are based is the idea that Christ's kingdom is essentially spiritual. Though his awareness of the implications of this principle undergoes considerable change, as Fixler has shown,⁸ it is interesting to note that even in his first anti-prelatical tract, Of Reformation, Milton notes Christ's statement to Pilate that his "Kingdome was not of this world" and deduces from this that Christ's "Scepter" is "unoperative" except in "spirituall things" (CPW, I, 576). Somewhat inconsistently, however, he earlier in this tract optimistically asserts that "a Commonwelth ought to be but as one huge Christian personage" (CPW, I, 572), not recognizing as yet that such an entity could be a Leviathan in some saintly disguise. By 1659, however, Milton sees with far more clarity the significance of Christ's answer to Pilate, for it becomes a central Scriptural principle of his most ambitious formal defense of religious freedom in a Christian society, A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, and

receives careful attention in Paradise Regained.

Closely related to the principles of man's free will and the essentially spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ is another Scriptural idea which is crucial in Milton's conception of Christian liberty. Since he considers religious belief to be primarily a spiritual and private matter (though with some modifications as we shall see), it is not surprising that he stresses Scriptures which deal with the individual Christian's freedom from human laws and ceremonies in religious matters. In his Treatise of Civil Power as well as in his Christian Doctrine he cites such Scriptures as II Corinthians 3:17, "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is libertie," and Galatians 5:1, "stand fast therefore in the libertie wherewith Christ has made us free; and be not intangl'd again with the yoke of bondage" (CE, VI, 28, 30; XVI, 153, 155). In his application of such Scriptures to his arguments, Milton emphatically affirms,

Christian libertie . . . sets us free not only from the bondage of those ceremonies, but also from the forcible imposition of those circumstances, place and time in the worship of God . . . commanded in the old law (CE, VI, 28).

For Milton, there is no place in a Christian society for forcing individuals to comply with religious observances and rites as had been done under the Mosaic law. Christian liberty is the "fundamental privilege of the gospel, the new-birthright of everie true beleever," and this freedom means immunity from "civil power" in "religious things" (CE,

VI, 28). (The political force of this doctrine becomes apparent in Milton's political arguments, which I shall deal with in Chapter IV.) It is necessary to note in this connection, however, that he does not adopt the Antinomian position that the moral law has been abrogated along with the ceremonial law. As Woodhouse has shown, Milton is concerned with the nobler aspects of freedom,⁹ based on devotion to God, concern for one's fellow man, and mastery over one's own passions. Christian liberty is defined precisely in The Christian Doctrine as the deliverance "from the bondage of sin, and consequently from the rule of the law and of man; to the intent that . . . we may serve God" (CE, XVI, 153).

Milton's views on the prerogatives of the human will, the essentially spiritual nature of Christ's present kingdom, and the individual believer's freedom from human ordinances in religious matters--all of which are based upon the Scriptures as he sees them--mold his ideas on the kind of religious liberty he considers indispensable in a Christian society. The matter he regards as most crucial is freedom of conscience. In the Areopagitica he pleads for "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties" (CPW, II, 560), and many years later, in The Readie and Easie Way, he affirms that "liberty of conscience . . . above all other things ought to be to all men dearest and most precious"

(CE, VI, 142). Milton's defense of the right of freedom of conscience is based both on theoretical and practical grounds. His arguments for freedom of belief in the Areopagitica, for example, are related to his conception of the fragmentation of truth as it is perceived in this present world. Since there are many "dissever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth," it is "the golden rule in Theology as well as in Arithmetick" to join "truth to truth as we find it" (CPW, II, 550-1). This search for truth, he continues, cannot make progress apart from the prudence, forbearance, and charity which will permit any individual to express his views according to his conscience. In his Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, he makes the astute observation that freedom of conscience is not a matter to be treated in an arbitrary manner, for "any law against conscience is alike in force against any conscience, and so may one way or other justly redound upon your selves"; he therefore suggests, in terminology which echoes the Golden Rule, that those in power should "regard other mens consciences" in the same way "as [they] would [their] own should be regarded in the power of others" (CE, VI, 1-2). Unfortunately, this important lesson was not learned by the Royalist and Puritan factions as a whole until much later in the century, even though individuals such as Milton and Henry Robinson saw liberty of conscience as "the only means to obtain Peace and Truth."¹⁰

Milton's eloquent defense of the freedom of conscience does not lead, however, to unqualified religious toleration. He is not merely concerned with religious freedom for its own sake, but with the kind of religious liberty which he considers vital in a dynamic Christian society. He champions the freedom of the conscience because he sees it as an "important article of Christianitie," and the conscience itself he defines, significantly, as God's "Secretary" in the hearts of men (CE, VI, 2; CPW, I, 822). In his Apology Against a Pamphlet, one of his anti-prelatical tracts, he expresses his fervent conviction that . . . the testimony of what we believe in religion must be such as the conscience may rest on to be infallible, and incorruptible, which is only the word of God (CPW, I, 912-13).

Many years later, during the chaotic period which immediately preceded the Restoration, he still adheres without deviation to this conviction, for in his Letter to a Friend Concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth (1659) he maintains that liberty of conscience should be granted "to all professing Scripture to be the Rule of thir Faith and Worship" (CE, VI, 104). His adherence to the Scriptures as the final court of appeal in all religious matters shows his strongly Protestant and Puritan bias in the matter of religious freedom in a Christian society. In his Treatise of Civil Power, also written in 1659, he praises Parliament for its recent acts which had asserted "only the true protestant Christian religion, as it is contained in the holy

scriptures" (CE, VI, 1).

It is not surprising that Milton's belief in the authority of Scripture conditions his ideas on religious toleration in a Christian society. It gives rise, on the one hand, to his rather remarkable willingness to tolerate schisms and conflicting points of view among Protestants; on the other hand, it accounts for his extreme hostility and intolerance towards Roman Catholicism. His periodic attacks against Roman Catholicism in his prose works indicate that his attitude remains inflexible. For Milton, "popery" is always a potential threat to a Protestant commonwealth, for he feels that it would by its very nature seek to uproot "all religions and civill supremacies" which oppose it (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 565). "The Papist," he maintains, "punishes them who beleeeve not as the church beleevs though against the scripture" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 18). Because "popery" does not confine itself to the Scriptures in its beliefs and practices, he contends that it can hardly "be acknowledgd a religion; but a Roman principallitie rather . . . more rightly nam'd a catholic heresie against the scripture" (CE, VI, 19). It is because he feels that freedom of conscience would not be permitted in any society in which Roman Catholicism holds control that he opposes "popery" with such vehemence. In both Of Civil Power and Of True Religion he also argues that Roman Catholic forms of worship are idolatrous and therefore

impious. For this reason, it is perfectly permissible in a Christian society to disrupt the worship practised by Roman Catholics. Anticipating that the reader might regard this as a violation of the principle of the freedom of conscience which he has championed, he categorically postulates that "we have no warrant to regard Conscience which is not grounded on Scripture" (Of True Religion, CE, VI, 173).

Milton's unflinching Puritan attitude towards Roman Catholicism could possibly mislead a casual reader of his prose works into assuming that Milton would not permit diverging religious views in a Christian society. Nothing, interestingly enough, could be further from the truth. Milton's prose is full of passages which plead for toleration, charity, and forbearance among Christians. His position, which at first glance might appear contradictory, is basically consistent, for he holds undeviatingly to the principle that "true religion" is "the true Worship and Service of God, learnt and believed from the Word of God only" and that heresy is "a Religion taken up and believ'd from the traditions of men and additions to the Word of God" (Of True Religion, CE, VI, 165, 167). "Popery" is "the greatest Heresie" (*Ibid.*, 167) because it is not based only on the Scriptures, whereas the numerous Protestant schisms are not heretical as long as they do not deviate from the Scriptures. The increasing proliferation of new sects within Protestantism does not distress him in the slightest;

it is an indication of the dynamic search for truth, a "hastning of reformation" brought about by "the fierce encounter of truth and falshood" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 794, 796). He goes so far in his insistence upon the individual's personal responsibility in religious belief as to assert that "a man may be a heretick in the truth . . . if he beleeeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determins, without knowing other reason" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 543). He realistically recognizes that complete unanimity in Scriptural interpretation is unattainable; furthermore, he perceives that any honest inquirer after truth will inevitably change his own ideas from time to time. Since "opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making," it is the responsibility of every true Christian to "unite into one generall and brotherly search after Truth" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 554). The true religion which Milton wishes to see established in a Christian society is based on "the Word of God only"; "no true Protestant," therefore, can persecute "his fellow Protestant, though dissenting from him in som opinions"¹¹ without violating the principle upon which Protestantism was founded: the right of the individual to interpret the Scriptures for himself.

Milton's position in the matter of religious toleration can be seen more clearly in relation to the stand taken by some of his Puritan contemporaries. When the

Puritans first came to power in the early 1640's, they were largely united in their aversion to the episcopal system of church government supported generally by the Royalists. Differences of opinion began to emerge, however, when the Presbyterians used their influence in Parliament to achieve the kind of church discipline they considered Scriptural. Independent and Leveller groups, which had previously been identified with the Puritan resistance towards prelacy, now began to press for greater religious freedom than the Presbyterians wished to allow. The year 1644 proved particularly fruitful in the number of works which appeared in the cause of religious toleration and the freedom of conscience. Milton in the Areopagitica had pleaded for freedom of conscience within the context of essential Christian truth as contained in Scripture. William Walwyn's The Compassionate Samaritane was also published in 1644, though anonymously. This work, which is a defense of the religious freedom of separatist groups, expresses Walwyn's opinion that "no man [should] be punished or discountenanced by Authority for his Opinion, unlesse it be dangerous to the State" and that "Liberty of Conscience [should] be allowed for every man . . . to worship God . . . in that manner as shall appear to [him] most agreeable to Gods Word."¹² Milton and Walwyn appear reasonably tolerant in comparison with the influential Puritan preacher, Richard Baxter, who objected strenuously to the multiplication of schisms during the

1640's. Baxter recognized that doctrinal differences would result when individuals interpreted the Scriptures for themselves; he therefore suggested that these differences be tolerated. To this extent, Baxter's position resembles that of Milton and Walwyn. Unlike Walwyn and Milton, however, Baxter finds "Disunion and Separation . . . intolerable."¹³ For him, the emergence of schisms is a symptom of religious degeneration, whereas Milton regards it as a sign of further reformation. It must be recalled, however, that Milton sees no place in a Christian society for tolerating Roman Catholicism, overt impiety, or open manifestations of superstitious practices. It is interesting to contrast this position with that of Roger Williams, whose defense of the freedom of conscience, The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, also appears in 1644. Williams, who sees the irony of so much blood being spilt for the cause of the Prince of Peace, maintains that freedom of conscience should "bee granted to all men in all Nations and Countries," even to "the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or Antichristian."¹⁴ Williams' stand can be seen as the logical conclusion to the movement towards greater religious freedom demanded by the Puritans, but his position is by no means representative of his period, as Barker has pointed out.¹⁵ There were still many who feared the possible consequences of unrestricted toleration, and some pamphleteers vehemently opposed the stand taken by Williams. The right-wing Puritan position is

forcefully expressed by Thomas Edwards, who in 1647 in his treatise against toleration, The Casting Down of the last and strongest hold of Satan, asserts,

This general toleration throws down all at once; it overthrows the Scripture in that it allows a liberty of denying the Scriptures to be the word of God, in that it sets up the conscience above the Scriptures, making every man's conscience, even the polluted, defiled, seared consciences, the rule of faith and holiness before the pure and unerring word of God¹⁶

On one level, Edwards's approach to religious toleration appears analogous to Milton's, for Milton would have agreed that "the rule of faith and holiness" is the "unerring word of God." There is, however, a marked difference in their attitude towards the conscience. Edwards is aware of the propensity of the conscience towards self-deception, whereas Milton idealistically regards it as God's "secretary"¹⁷ and sees divergences of opinion rising out of the freedom of conscience as a necessary stage in the advancement of knowledge in a Christian society.

Milton's concern for the freedom of conscience and for religious toleration makes him increasingly aware of the necessity of separating the jurisdictions of the church and the state in a Christian society. His later pamphlets, such as his Treatise of Civil Power and his Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the Church, deal very specifically with his more mature views on this subject, but there are indications even in his early anti-prelatical tracts that he begins to give the

matter serious consideration. In the first anti-prelatical treatise, Of Reformation in England (1641), he argues that "Englishmen as members of the Church" should be permitted to elect their "Pastors to Functions that nothing concerne a Monarch" (CPW, I, 600). Since he feels that this would not impair the political power of the king; he maintains that the presbyterian form of church government would make it possible for the ecclesiastical and political spheres to "consent . . . together without any rupture in the State, as Christians, and Freeholders" (Ibid., 600). At this point in his career Milton seems to feel that the separation of the church and the state could be satisfactorily achieved if the episcopal form of church government were abolished and replaced by Presbyterianism. Making specific reference to King James's famous aphorism, "No bishop, no king,"¹⁸ Milton suggests that prelacy, which appears to support the monarchy, is actually a threat to regal authority. What Milton refuses to recognize is that such monarchs as Queen Elizabeth and King James knew in fact what they were about, having found the episcopal form of church government a useful means for asserting the royal prerogative in ecclesiastical affairs. Queen Elizabeth's supremacy in the Church of England made it convenient for her to command that sermons be read regularly from the Book of Homilies, a collection of sermons dealing largely with exhortations to obedience to rulers and magistrates in the interests of social order

and peace.¹⁹ Such ministers as John Donne and Lancelot Andrewes achieved stature within the Church of England as a result of their willingness to make use of their abilities to support the crown as well as the church. In his sermons, Bishop Andrewes frequently comments on the Scriptural authority for having the two "pillars" of religion and justice in the commonwealth, and for the need to have a divinely appointed ruler--specifically, the monarch--to uphold them.²⁰ This commonplace royalist view is expressed in similar imagery by Donne. In Sermon LXV, he depicts the secular and ecclesiastical powers as two great cedars, and finds parallels in the functions of Moses and Aaron in the Old Testament, with the important distinction that Moses, the secular leader, exercised jurisdiction over Aaron, the high priest.²¹ During the precise period that Milton's anti-prelatical tracts were being published, Thomas Fuller in The Holy State (1642) expressed the episcopal position in no uncertain terms. The king, he affirms, is "the supreme Head on earth over the Church, in his Dominions" and derives his authority from God, from nature and the Scriptures, and from the laws of the state.²² Possibly an even more influential work, however, was Bishop Joseph Hall's Episcopacie by Divine Right (1640), which had ignited the controversy in which Milton became involved. Hall asserts that the presbyterian form of ecclesiastical government introduced by Calvin in Geneva is an historical novelty and

that the English reformation, having been brought about by the monarchy, is not only more orderly but more harmoniously related to the Scriptures. Episcopal government, he declares, is

. . . an holy, and lawful . . . and divine institution . . . of God's ordinance . . . [whereas] Presbyterianism . . . has no true footing, either in Scripture, or the practice of the Church, in all ages.²³

Milton's answer to the episcopal position in his tracts consists mainly of attacks against the prelatical appeal to tradition and Scripture. Tradition poses no problem whatsoever for Milton, who cryptically asserts in Of Prelaticall Episcopacy (CPW, I, 624) that if episcopacy be merely of "humane constitution," then human beings "being borne free" have the "same humane priviledge" of removing it. (Milton's tendency to disregard traditions, legal or otherwise, later enters into his political pamphlets, as we shall see.) The episcopal appeal to the authority of the apostles as evidence for the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of bishops is also discounted by Milton who, in exercising his right to interpret the Scriptures for himself, concludes that there is no evidence in the New Testament for "any difference between a Bishop, and a Presbyter," both simply being ministers of a congregation (Ibid., 624). The presbyterian form is, therefore, "ordain'd and set out to us by the appointment of God in the Scriptures" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 750). The controversy between the advocates of either the episcopal or the presbyterian form

of church government could not be resolved, as Barker has shown, for they could not agree in their interpretations of Scripture about what the "one right discipline" really was.²⁴

Milton's opposition towards prelacy is motivated by his concern for religious freedom, which he feels cannot exist in a society where the state controls the church. He soon discovered, however, that the triumph of the presbyterian form of church government was not in itself a guarantee that the church would be free from state control. In 1643 Parliament, which consisted largely of Presbyterians who wished to prevent either the return of episcopacy or the emergence of political or ecclesiastical radicalism, issued an ordinance for the licensing of the press, a measure which Milton attacks so eloquently in the Areopagitica. In 1653, when Cromwell gained power, Milton's hopes for the complete separation of church and state appeared to be on the verge of fulfillment, for Cromwell as a military general had championed the cause of toleration and the freedom of conscience. In one of his speeches, Cromwell expresses his gratitude to God for "that liberty from the tyranny of the Bishops to all species of Protestants to worship God according to their own light and consciences."²⁵ During the Protectorate, Independency flourished, for Cromwell supported the right of "godly men of different judgments"²⁶ to worship in independent congregations. Cromwell in his

church policy insisted, however, on civil support for church ministers.

Milton by this time had arrived at the conclusion that the separation of church and state could not be fully achieved unless the church repudiated any kind of state support. In his Second Defence, his adulation of Cromwell is perceptibly qualified on this crucial issue. Much though he admires Cromwell's fervent support for religious toleration, he feels that Cromwell should put a complete stop to the state's support of the church:

I would have you leave the church to the church and . . . not permit two powers, utterly diverse, the civil and the ecclesiastical, to make harlots of each other. . . . I would have you remove all power from the church (but power will never be absent so long as money, the poison of the church, the quinsy of truth, extorted by force even from those who are unwilling, remains the price of preaching the Gospel) . . . (CPW, IV, Part I, 678).

These views remain basically unchanged but are developed more fully five years later in Milton's Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the Church (1659), a sequel to his Treatise of Civil Power which had been published earlier in the same year. In his Likeliest means to remove hirelings, Milton appears to have drawn to some extent upon John Selden's Historie of Tithes, a work which had aroused considerable opposition when it was published in 1618. Selden makes the point that the exacting of tithes cannot be based upon the New Testament Scriptures, and that "since our Saviour . . . till towards the end of the first foure hundred [years], no Paiment of

them can be proved to have been in use."²⁷ Selden's work shows a detachment which Milton's treatise lacks, but his arguments are basically similar to Selden's. What is noteworthy in Milton's pamphlet is the vehemence with which he expresses his opinions. The "effect of hire," he declares, "is the very bane of truth in them who are so corrupted" and is much "more dangerous" to "true religion" even than force (CE, VI, 46). The enforcing of tithes is a threat to "Christian privileges" which will "be disturbd and soone lost, and with them Christian libertie" (CE, VI, 64). For Milton, a truly Christian society cannot exist until "religion [is] set free from the monopolie of hirelings," and "no modell whatsoever of a commonwealth will prove succesful or undisturbd" unless this obstacle to Christian liberty be removed (CE, VI, 45).

It might seem strange that Milton, who so greatly desires a society in which Christian piety, wisdom, and justice might flourish, nevertheless becomes increasingly antagonistic towards any kind of integration of church and state. For example, he specifically states in his Treatise of Civil Power that a national church such as had existed in the Jewish commonwealth during the Old Testament period was "excercis'd more in bodily than in spiritual worship" in such a way as to make the church a kind of commonwealth and the commonwealth a kind of church: "nothing of which can be said of Christianitie, deliverd without the help of

magistrates" (CE, VI, 16, italics mine). The essentially spiritual nature of the church had been a conviction of Milton's even during the period in which he was supporting the presbyterian form of church government. Paraphrasing I Peter 2:9, he describes the true church as "indeed, a holy generation, a royall Priesthood, a Saintly communion, the houshold and City of God" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 844). Since the way to enter this "houshold and City of God" is by faith--the individual's personal, private faith in God through Christ--no power on earth has any right to interfere with the individual whose belief is based on the Scriptures. True Christian piety cannot be achieved by force, but by the individual's own free will assisted by the grace of God. Civil interference in religious matters, whether by means of force or "hire", would not produce a genuinely Christian society; it would "compell hypocrisie" and violate "the fundamental privilege of the gospel" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 22, 28).

Milton's conviction concerning the true nature of the church is consistent with his mature views on ecclesiastical organization. Having witnessed the threat to complete freedom of worship latent in presbyterian consistories as well as in episcopal administrations, Milton eventually becomes an advocate of complete independency in church government. The separation of church and state in a Christian society cannot be adequately executed unless

political authorities recognize "that the settlement of religion belongs only to each particular church by persuasive and spiritual means within it self" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 39). It is the responsibility of the individual church to exercise discipline upon its members, of which the most severe form sanctioned by the Gospel is simply excommunication (Ibid., 14). Supporting this argument further, Milton maintains in Means to Remove Hirelings (CE, VI, 83) that "seeing the Christian church is not national, but consisting of many particular congregations, subject to many changes," its problems are "not to be decided by any outward judge." Any individual church, "however small its numbers," he declares,

. . . is to be considered as in itself an integral and perfect church, so far as regards its religious rights; nor has it any superior on earth, whether individual, or assembly, or convention, to whom it can be lawfully required to render submission (The Christian Doctrine, CE, 307).

Independent church government also has for Milton the advantage of permitting "any believer . . . to act as an ordinary minister, according as convenience may require, supposing him to be endowed with the necessary gifts" (Ibid., 241). There is evidence that even during the early 1640's, when he advocates presbyterianism, Milton tends to blur the distinctions between the clergy and the laity which had been so pronounced under episcopal domination. In The Reason of Church-Government he points out that "all Christians ought to know that the title of Clergy S. Peter gave

to all of Gods people" and that "the functions of Church-government ought to be free and open to any Christian man though never so laick, if his capacity, his faith, and prudent demeanour commend him" (CPW, I, 838, 844). By the time he writes The Christian Doctrine, probably around the time of the Restoration,²⁸ he concludes that complete congregational independency is the only type of church government which grants any individual the religious freedom and opportunity for spiritual growth which he considers vital in a Christian society.

Milton recognizes that religious freedom cannot be guaranteed in a society where the church is controlled by the state. He also begins to see that religious liberty can be impaired by purely ecclesiastical bodies such as church councils; it is his awareness of this fact that pushes him towards complete independency. He further perceives that religious freedom can be threatened within individual churches, and it is therefore significant that his definition of the church makes allowance for the individual whose conscience will not permit him to join any particular congregation:

The universal visible church is the whole multitude of those who are called in every part of the world, and who openly worship God the Father through Christ in any place whatsoever, either individually [*italics mine*], or in conjunction with others (The Christian Doctrine, CE, XIV, 233).

While Milton regards it as a Scriptural duty for Christians

to worship together, he concedes that situations might arise in which it is neither convenient nor advisable for an individual to worship with others. He therefore affirms that "such as cannot do this [i.e. worship together] conveniently or with full satisfaction of conscience" are not to be considered as being excluded from God's blessing. His conception of independency thus allows for "congregations" of only a single individual. This is completely consistent with his view of individual liberty and the essentially spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom on earth, principles which in turn influence his idea of true worship in a Christian society--worship that is not restricted in form nor conditioned by time or place. Permeating Milton's idea of religious liberty is the passage from John 4:23, which he cites in The Christian Doctrine (CE, XIV, 235): "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." These views are expressed in a number of his later sonnets, and are amplified in the magnificent poetry of Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes.

CHAPTER III

DOMESTIC LIBERTY IN A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Milton's concern for personal liberty in every area of life is demonstrated throughout his prose works. Even though his fundamental concern in a Christian society is for spiritual or religious liberty (for "who can enjoy any thing in this world with contentment, who hath not libertie to serve God?" (Readie and Easie Way, CE, VI, 141), Milton also stresses the necessity of domestic and civil (or political) freedom. While "religion" is "the best part of our libertie" (CE, VI, 116), domestic and civil liberty are also of such importance that "civilized life" is "scarcely possible" without these forms of freedom as well (Second Defence, CPW, IV, 624).

In his review of his early prose works in the Second Defence, Milton lists as his contributions to domestic liberty Of Education, Areopagitica, and the divorce tracts. Domestic liberty, he states, is concerned with three problems: the nature of marriage, the education of children, and freedom to express oneself (CPW, IV, 624-6). Though in fact Milton's ideas on domestic liberty are not confined to the particular works he mentions in the Second Defence, his classification of education, domestic

relationships and freedom of expression under the heading of domestic liberty is useful for it indicates some of his major concerns relating to personal freedom in a Christian society.

One important means to domestic liberty is education. A dynamic Christian society cannot possibly function without adequate educational opportunities, for "every approach to the happy life seems barred to the man who has no part in Learning" (Prolusions, VII, CPW, I, 291). "Who," Milton asks, "can worthily gaze upon and contemplate the Ideas of things human or divine, unless he possesses a mind trained and ennobled by Learning and study?" (CPW, I, 291). His enthusiastic panegyric on learning in his seventh Prolusion, in which he argues that learning makes men happier than ignorance, is supplemented by his treatise, Of Education, in which he expresses further his ideas on the value of learning and the deficiencies of the educational methods of his day.

Milton's definition of a "complete and generous Education" is "that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and publike of peace and war" so that a man might gain "an universall insight into things" (CPW, II, 378-9, 406). This clearly illustrates how completely Milton has absorbed the Renaissance ideal of the universal man, an ideal which can be traced back to Aristotle's Politics. Aristotle

maintains that education should develop all of a man's powers and equip him for all of the activities of business, leisure, war and peace.¹ Similarly, Castiglione in The Book of the Courtier (1528, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561) concerns himself with the education and description of the perfect courtier, soldier, and scholar. Vives, the Spanish humanist who lived in England during the early part of the reign of Henry VIII, expresses similar ideals in The Education of A Christian Woman (1523) and the Introduction to Wisdom (1524). Ascham's Scholemaster (1570) is "specially purposed for the private brynging up of youth in Gentlemen and Noble men's houses."² Mulcaster's Positions (1581) is dedicated to the worthy cause of "bringing up of youth, both to enrich their minds with learning, and to enable their bodies with health."³ Sidney's Arcadia and Spenser's Faerie Queene have in common a concern "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline."⁴ Peacham's Compleat Gentleman (1622) expresses the same commonplace in its subtitle, "Fashioning him absolut, in the most necessary and commendable Qualities concerning Minde or Body, that may be required of a Noble Gentleman."⁵ Milton's Of Education demonstrates very similar Renaissance aspirations.

In the seventh Prolusion and in Of Education, Milton also displays the Renaissance and Classical view on the vital relationship between education and political

influence. Like Plato, who in his Republic suggests that power and wisdom should be united in the guardian or ruler class by means of a rigorous educational program, Milton advocates the necessity for political leaders to know the beginning, end, and reasons of political societies; that they may not in a dangerous fit of the commonwealth be such poor, shaken, uncertain reeds, of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counsellors have lately shewn themselves, but stedfast pillars of the State (Of Education, CPW, II, 398).

Milton would undoubtedly have concurred with T. S. Eliot's statement in "The Idea of a Christian Society" that "a nation's system of education is much more important than its system of government,"⁶ because he recognizes with increasing clarity that political stability is largely dependent on the knowledge, wisdom and integrity of a nation's leaders. "Even a single individual," Milton affirms, "endowed with the gifts of Art and Wisdom [is] sufficient to lead a whole state to righteousness" (Prolusions, CPW, I, 292). Milton's position is in agreement with Ben Jonson's apt remarks on the influence of education on the state:

I have ever observed it to have been the office of a wise patriot, among the greatest affairs of the state, to take care of the commonwealth of learning. For schools, they are the seminaries of state; and nothing is worthier the study of a statesman, than that part of the republic which we call the advancement of letters.⁷

The very survival of the state is, for Milton, dependent on the efficacy of its educational system. In his reference to Of Education in his Second Defence he affirms that

nothing can be more efficacious than education in moulding the minds of men to virtue (whence arises true and internal

liberty), in governing the state effectively, and preserving it for the longest possible space of time (CPW, IV, 625).

Milton is not concerned merely with learning for its own sake. The purpose of education, as he outlines it in his seventh Prolusion, is to develop man's spiritual as well as the intellectual capacities. He therefore maintains that "the more deeply we delve into the wondrous wisdom" and skill manifested in creation, "which we cannot do without the aid of learning," the more "wonder and awe we feel for its Creator" (CPW, I, 292). The tenor of Milton's argument is reminiscent of Bacon's in The Advancement of Learning and The New Atlantis, works in which Bacon attempts to justify scientific inquiry on the grounds that it explores the "works and creatures of God" and thereby glorifies God "for his marvellous works."⁸ In Of Education, Milton similarly contends that man is unable to "arrive . . . cleerly to the knowledge of God and things invisible" apart from the "orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature" provided by education (CPW, II, 368-9). These particular remarks bring out the affinity between Milton and earlier Christian humanists such as Bacon and Erasmus, who in his Education of a Christian Prince (1516) asserts that all learning should be measured by the standard of Christian belief.⁹ Milton's view that the end of learning is "to know God aright and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him" also has close parallels to Erasmus'

ideal of a Christian prince whose power, wisdom, and goodness reflect the attributes of God.¹⁰ It is, therefore, apparent that Milton, along with earlier Christian humanists, is convinced that education must be geared towards a Christian philosophy, without which a Christian society could not survive.

Milton's suggestions for educational reform further reflect his educational ideals for a Christian society. Clearly discontented with educational methods in England ("for the want [of educational reform] . . . this nation perishes"), Milton affirms that the reforming of education is "one of the greatest and noblest designs, that can be thought on" (CPW, II, 362-3). Feeling that education has been disseminated inefficiently and ineffectively, he presents Of Education as a pattern for an education not only more comprehensive but also less time-consuming than contemporary methods. This reflects the attitude of Erasmus in De Ratione Studii. Erasmus affirms that it is possible, by means of his "right" method of instruction, "to carry forward youths of merely average intelligence to a creditable standard of scholarship, and of conversation also, in Latin and Greek, at an age when, under the common schoolmaster of today, the same youths would be just stammering through their primer."¹¹ Perhaps the most obvious feature of Milton's tractate on education, however, is the great stress he places on classical authors and their works. The influence

of Erasmus is apparent here as well, Erasmus having been a leader in advocating classical authors as the basis for a humanistic education.¹³ Milton in Of Education regards the learning of such languages as Greek and Latin as simply a means to an end, specifically the acquiring of the knowledge which has been accumulated by "people who have at any time been most industrious after wisdom" (CPW, II, 369). He thus goes on to list classical authors and their contributions to arithmetic, geometry, agriculture, physiology, astronomy, geography, natural philosophy, medicine, moral philosophy, economics, politics, literature, and finally logic, rhetoric and poetics. His own familiarity with most of these subjects has been demonstrated by Donald Lemen Clark, who has reconstructed, largely from evidence provided by T. W. Baldwin's research into Renaissance and Jacobean petty and grammar schools, the probable curriculum of St. Paul's School which Milton attended.¹⁴ Its curriculum appears to have stressed linguistic studies as a means to classical learning, and it included such works as Erasmus' Colloquies,¹⁵ written especially for the curriculum of St. Paul's School when it was founded by Colet, a friend of Erasmus. It is apparent, therefore, that Milton was more influenced by the Christian humanism of St. Paul's School than by the more medieval emphasis of Cambridge, which shared "the Scholastick grossnesse of barbarous ages" along with other universities (CPW, II, 374). He consequently

suggests in Of Education that his ideal academy should be "at once both School and University" and should offer a complete course of "generall studies" equivalent to that required in a master of arts' program, though considerably enriched. This is to be taken in its entirety by the student between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, a task that would require of the student the diligence and self-discipline which Milton considers essential for an adequate education. Unlike Erasmus, More, Vives, and Mulcaster, Milton seems to have no place for female students in his academy.¹⁶

Milton's educational aspirations for a Christian society as expressed in Of Education demonstrate a fusion of humanist and Puritan ideals. Even though the humanist emphasis on classical learning is clearly predominant in the work, both in its content and tone, there are intermittent qualifying remarks which reveal the Puritan side of Milton which is so apparent in his later work, particularly in his final poetry. He affirms, for example, that the end or purpose of learning is "to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright" (CPW, II, 366-7). It is illuminating to compare this statement with Sidney's remark in his Defence of Poesie, that the final end of learning is

to lead and draw us to as high a perfection, as our degenerate soules made worse by their clay-lodgings, can be capable of.¹⁷

While both statements suggest in some way the fall of man

from a better state or condition, Sidney's remark can be accommodated far more easily than Milton's into a purely ethical framework. Sidney's statement has a Platonic, or more specifically, neo-Platonic tone, whereas Milton's is distinctly theological and specifically Puritan in its emphasis. Sidney goes on to mention that "vertuous action" is the end of all earthly learning,¹⁸ a goal which Milton also stresses in Of Education, but with a significant addition. For Milton, "true vertue" must be "united to the heavenly grace of faith" in order to lead to "the highest perfection" (CPW, II, 367). His idea of the end of education is, therefore, conditioned by a Puritan insistence on the fallen condition of man and his ultimate dependence upon God's grace. Similarly, his idea of education as the means for making an individual both "dear to God and famous to all ages" is qualified by his admission that the success of his ideal academy is not dependent only on the "spirit and capacity" of his age but on God's decree (CPW, II, 385, 415). Furthermore, his outline of courses for study in Of Education does not merely list portions of Scripture, but includes the typically Puritan insistence on the Scriptures as the final authority. The moral works of Plato, Cicero and other classical writers are useful, but the works "of David, or Solomon, or the Evangels and Apostolic scriptures" are "determinat" or absolutely authoritative in "the knowledge of vertue" (CPW, II, 396-7). This is also the case in the

realm of politics and law. Greek and Roman political and legal writings are of use "as farre as humane prudence can be trusted," but such matters have been "deliver'd first, and with best warrant by Moses" (CPW, II, 398), whom Milton a few years earlier describes as "the only Lawgiver that we can believe to have been visibly taught of God" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 747). Milton's idea of education and learning in a Christian society is conditioned, therefore, by two powerful factors, a genuine love of the classics and a deep personal commitment to the Scriptures, a combination which singles him out as a Christian humanist.

Milton's adherence to the Scriptures as the final authority in learning manifests itself in some of his later views on the matter of education for the ministry. Even though he had acquired an intensive liberal arts education at St. Paul's and Cambridge, and had done exhaustive reading in preparation for the ministry (until he considered himself "Church-outed by the Prelats" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 823), Milton decides in Means to Remove Hirelings (1659) that preparation for the ministry requires little formal academic training. University training in particular he considers unnecessary. It is a "fond error, though too much beleevd among us, to think that the universitie makes a minister of the gospel. . . . That which makes fit a minister, the scripture can best informe us to be only from above" (CE, VI, 93). The theological disputations

held by university professors and graduates are, he contends, "such as tend least of all to the edification or capacitie of the people, but rather perplex and leaven pure doctrin with scholastical trash" (CE, VI, 95). It is interesting to note, however, that though Milton considers the Scriptures to be the basic texts required for training towards the ministry, he also suggests that written sermons and notes, commentaries, and the theological surveys known as "marrows of divinity" are of value. Milton's own Christian Doctrine is, in fact, a contribution to works of this kind. He also reveals his scholarly bias by assuming that ministerial trainees would learn at school the original languages in which the Scriptures had been written, and would acquire some knowledge of arts and sciences on the side. To facilitate learning for the ministry, he suggests further that the state should "erect in publick good store of libraries," so that reading materials might be readily available (CE, VI, 95). Nevertheless, the knowledge of the Scriptures is the chief prerequisite for ministerial training.

One further aspect of Milton's ideas on education in a Christian society deserves consideration, namely the matter of educational distribution. Milton in Of Education erects an ideal academy which offers a complete education to the "noble and gentle youth" of the land (CPW, II, 406). Milton's tractate can thus be seen as following in the tradition of Plato's Republic, Erasmus' Education of a Christian

Prince (1516), Elyot's The Book Named the Governor (1531), and other works which have in common a concern for educating those who would be occupying positions of political or social influence. He does not suggest in Of Education the criteria by which his one hundred and fifty students should be selected, except to indicate that they are to be of high social standing. They are "noble and . . . gentle youth" (CPW, II, 406), indicating his basically aristocratic attitudes.

Milton's views are not, however, entirely static on this matter. In his address to Cromwell in his Second Defence he suggests that there ought to be "more thought for the education and morality of the young than has yet been done" but he goes on to say that "the rewards of the learned" should be kept "for those who have already acquired learning" so that the teachable and diligent alone would receive public support (CPW, IV, 679). His perspective broadens considerably by 1659, however, for in his Means to Remove Hirelings he suggests that schools with libraries should be erected "in greater number all over the land . . . where languages and arts may be taught free together . . . at the publick cost" (CE, VI, 80). This instruction is to be conditional, however, upon the willingness of the recipients to use their education to serve freely their own country, "without soaring above the meannes where they were born" (CE, VI, 80). These suggestions indicate that Milton

has come to see the value of greater and more widespread educational opportunities than he demonstrates in Of Education, but he continues to resist the idea that education should provide the common people with the means to rise socially. Even in the Readie and Easie Way to establish a free Commonwealth, in which he maintains that a significant "part of our freedom consists in the civil rights and advancements of every person according to his merit," it is primarily for the "nobilitie and chief gentry" that he wishes to see established schools and academies for "all learning and noble education" (CE, VI, 143-5). Although he does not intend that education should disrupt the existing social structure, he nevertheless feels that a great increase in opportunities for learning would in itself facilitate the spread of "much more knowledge and civilitie, yea religion through all parts of the land" and would as a result "soon make the whole nation more industrious . . . at home, more potent, more honorable abroad" (CE, VI, 145), in short, a nation more closely attuned to his idea of a Christian society.

Milton's views on education and learning undoubtedly influence his conviction that freedom of expression is vitally necessary in a Christian society. The "existence of freedom to express oneself" is an aspect of "domestic or personal liberty" without which learning and truth cannot thrive (CPW, IV, 624). In Areopagitica he pleads for the

"liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties," for without this freedom there would be "the discouragement of all learning, and the stop of truth, not only by disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindring and cropping the discovery that might bee yet further made both in religious and civill Wisdome" (CPW, II, 491-2, 560). The occasion for Areopagitica was the 1643 ordinance of Parliament for licensing the press, a measure which Milton regards as "a second tyranny over learning," because it indicated that the Presbyterians were becoming as tyrannical as the prelates had been under Archbishop Laud. His protest in Areopagitica and his remarks in other prose works indicate, however, that he is not merely concerned with the freedom of the press, but with freedom of expression generally.

Restrictions upon the freedom of expression clashed with Milton's idea of a just society. In Areopagitica he contends that censorship had not been put into effect by any of the "best and wisest Commonwealths through all ages," and that no "well instituted State" which valued learning at all "did ever use this way of licencing" (CPW, II, 507, 522). Milton finds himself on this issue at odds with Plato, who in his Republic and Laws suggests that the works of poets should be censored to insure that nothing opposed to morality or the well-being of the state can make its

appearance.¹⁹ Milton therefore attempts to demonstrate that Plato is concerned with imaginary rather than real commonwealths, though he acknowledges that he is in complete agreement with Plato's "unconstraining laws of vertuous education" and "religious and civil nurture" (CPW, II, 526). That is, a just society for Milton is not some utopian or ideal community where problems or disagreements can never arise, but is simply a commonwealth where complete freedom of expression is not only tolerated but encouraged:

For this is not the liberty which wee can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth, that let no man in this World expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply consider'd, and speedily reform'd, then is the utmost bound of civill liberty attain'd, that wise men looke for (CPW, II, 487).

If freedom of expression is essential in a just society, it is particularly essential in a Christian society, which should not only be "govern'd by the rules of justice and fortitude" but has within it "a Church built and founded upon the rock of faith and true knowledge" (CPW, II, 541). It should not, therefore, be so "pusillanimous" as to prevent opposing points of view by means of censorship of any kind (CPW, II, 541). It is not only "more wholesome" and "more prudent" but also "more Christian" for a society to be tolerant of dissent within its ranks (CPW, II, 565), for no reform is possible in the Church or in the state without "the fierce encounter of truth and falshood together" (CPW, I, 796). Such an "encounter" is, of course, possible only

in a society where freedom of expression is permitted.

Milton's arguments for freedom of expression in a Christian society, like his views on education, display a blend of humanism and Puritanism. His concern for the liberty of expression is strongly influenced by his commitment to the "dignity of Learning" (CPW, II, 532) and its role in the development of man's potentialities. He also demonstrates a humanistic optimism in his views on man's reason, which he regards as the image of God (CPW, II, 492). Man's reason, however, cannot be manifested unless he employs his powers of choice, for "reason is but choosing" (CPW, II, 527). Like Aristotle, who in his Nicomachean Ethics affirms that moral virtue is arrived at by means of rational choice,²⁰ Milton maintains that virtue is "but a name" unless it involves the "freedom to choose" between good and evil (CPW, II, 527). Milton's preoccupation with the role of evil in the world, however, brings out his Puritan tendencies. Since God has "plac'd" man "unavoidably . . . in this world of evill," it is man's responsibility "to ordain wisely" his choices in life, for "it is by evil that virtue is chiefly exercised, and shines with greater brightness" (CPW, II, 526; DDC, CE, XV, 115). Freedom of expression is vitally necessary for a Christian society, Milton argues, for moral development is dependent on "the knowledge and survey of vice," and the "scanning of error" is required "for the confirmation of truth" (CPW, II, 516). In imagery

which echoes St. Paul's description of the militant believer in the sixth chapter of Ephesians and which anticipates the struggles of Christian in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Milton describes the "true warfaring Christian" as one who is willing to confront the "adversary," evil, in the "dust and heat" of life.²¹ A Christian society, far from being a static society in which every person believes and speaks the same thing, is on the contrary a dynamic, pulsating society in which individuals may freely express their ideas in their constant search for further truth. If opposition is not permitted, there can be no "unfained goodnesse" but rather hypocrisy, a perpetual threat to a truly Christian society, which Milton later describes so aptly as "the only evil that walks Invisible" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 795; PL, III, 683-4).

Milton's concern for a Christian society motivates him, however, to place some safeguards on the freedom of expression. Recognizing that absolutely unrestricted liberty of expression could introduce forces which might militate against Christian morality, Milton declares that, while he opposes licensing, he does not wish to be "condemn'd of introducing licence" (CPW, II, 493). Even in Athens, he points out, "where Books and Wits were ever busier then in any other part of Greece," the magistrate took "notice of" blasphemous, atheistical, and libellous books and initiated action against their authors (CPW, II, 494). Milton

suggests, therefore, that works which are "impious or evil absolutely either against faith or maners no law can possibly permit" (CPW, II, 565), a position generally accepted by most of his contemporaries. For example, the Royalist preacher, Jeremy Taylor, argues in his Discourse of the Liberty of Propheying that "there may be no Toleration of Doctrine inconsistent with piety or the publique good" even though he is opposed to "the iniquity of persecuting differing opinions."²² Milton also insists that an author should be willing to be held responsible for any views he expresses in his works. In his counsel to Cromwell in the Second Defence he recommends that those who wish "to engage in free inquiry" should be allowed "to publish their findings at their own peril" (CPW, IV, 679). It is apparent, therefore, that though Milton does not condone irresponsibility or license in any way, he nevertheless feels that an individual has a right to publish or proclaim his views "without the private inspection of any petty magistrate" (CPW, IV, 679), provided that he is prepared to be held responsible for his views.

Milton's attitude towards freedom of expression harmonizes with his ideas on religious freedom in a Christian society. This is particularly evident in his remarks on Roman Catholicism through the Areopagitica, which is clearly written from an ardently Protestant point of view. Restrictions upon the religious freedom of Roman Catholics,

which preclude liberty of expression, are for Milton justifiable because he regards "Popery" as a threat to "all religions" (CPW, II, 565). Milton thus affirms that censorship had never predominated until some of the popes took it upon themselves to censor either heretical works or those dealing with "any subject that was not to their palat" (CPW, II, 503). The crux of Milton's argument in this regard is that freedom of expression should not be granted to those who have demonstrated their refusal to permit others the same basic right, an argument reflected in the attitude of right-wing democrats towards communists in our own period. Milton is also opposed to allowing freedom of expression to Roman Catholics for political reasons. Since "Popery . . . extirpats" not only religious but "civill supremacies, so it self should be extirpat" (CPW, II, 565). Elaborating on this point further in his Treatise of Civil Power, Milton still maintains that "if they ought not to be tolerated, it is for just reason of state more then of religion . . . being . . . supported mainly . . . by a forein power" (CE, VI, 19). His position is by no means unusual, for almost everyone who did not advocate complete toleration excluded Roman Catholicism, as Sirluck has pointed out.²³ Even Jeremy Taylor, who admires the "pompous service" in Roman Catholic worship, regards the claims of the Papacy as a threat to "the publick interests of the Commonwealth."²⁴ In spite of Milton's arguments relating to

the political and civil dangers inherent in Roman Catholicism, however, it is basically his contempt for a "fugitive and cloister'd vertue" and his resistance towards a "rigid externall formality" in a Christian society which accounts for his intolerant attitude towards Roman Catholicism (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 515, 564). Roman Catholicism is a potential enemy of the freedom of expression, which includes not only the right to speak "the truth with boldness" but the "liberty . . . of winnowing and sifting every doctrine, . . . of thinking and even writing respecting it, according to our individual faith and persuasion," for without this liberty there is neither religion nor gospel--force alone prevails--by which it is disgraceful for the Christian religion to be supported (DDC, CE, XIV, 11-13; XVII, 325).

It is quite apparent that for Milton a Christian society cannot exist apart from the freedom of expression, which in turn allows for the exercise of personal responsibility upon which true virtue is based.

A third aspect of personal freedom to which Milton devotes his attention is the right to divorce. From one point of view, it might seem rather odd, or even slightly presumptuous, to consider his ideas on divorce side by side with his noble and idealistic views on education and the freedom of expression in a Christian society. We have, however, Milton's sanction in this regard, for in his Second Defence he affirms that "domestic or personal liberty" is concerned not only with education and free expression

but with "the nature of marriage itself" (CPW, IV, 624). It is also worth noting that his works on the subject of marriage, which are mainly defenses of the "pious necessities of divorcing" under certain conditions (CPW, II, 262), are far more numerous than his specific contributions to the matter of educational reform or the freedom of expression. The reason for this is not hard to find, for Milton had been married for only a short time when his first wife, Mary Powell, returned to her parents for a protracted interval, during which time he produced two editions of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1643-4), translated Martin Bucer's views on divorce (1644), wrote a lengthy commentary on biblical passages relating to divorce (Tetrachordon, 1645), and issued a violent polemic against some of his detractors who opposed him for his ideas on divorce (Colasterion, 1645). Even though he was reconciled to Mary soon after these publications, his convictions concerning the rights of divorce remain basically unchanged, and reappear many years later in The Christian Doctrine, a compendium of theology in which he outlines the beliefs and practices which he considers essential for a Christian society. Marriage, he argues, "consist[s] in the mutual love, society, help, and comfort of the husband and wife," and may be dissolved "on grounds of the highest equity and justice" if the necessary conditions are not fulfilled (CE, XV, 121, 161). While some biographers have undoubtedly

exaggerated the effects upon Milton of Mary's virtual desertion (Belloc, for example, contends that Milton's marriage was "a moral earthquake" which accounts for the "hidden and awful protest" evidenced in his unorthodox ideas),²⁵ there is little doubt that Milton's traumatic experience largely accounts for the impassioned quality and strained logic of portions of his divorce tracts.

Marriage without the possibility of divorce is for Milton the worst form of tyranny, an insufferable barrier to "that honest liberty" which is "the greatest foe to dishonest license," for "no effect of tyranny can sit more heavy on the Common-wealth, then this household unhappiness on the family" (Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, hereafter cited as DDD, CPW, II, 225, 229). It is an "unworthy bondage" in any society, but particularly in a Christian one, for it is

a hainous barbarisme both against the honour of mariage, the dignitie of man and his soule, the goodnes of Christianitie, and all the humane respects of civilitie (CPW, II, 238).

If a marriage persists without mutual love simply because divorce is not permitted, the result, Milton argues, is hypocrisy, which in turn militates against "all hope of true Reformation in the state, while such an evill as this lies undiscern'd or unregarded" in the homes of people throughout the land (CPW, II, 229-30). With rather tenuous logic, Milton also proceeds to demonstrate that existing canonical restrictions on divorce, far from restraining

abuses, have precisely the opposite effect by making the ordinance of marriage so formidable that men "not daring to venture upon wedlock" are likely to behave in such a manner as to make "all inordinate licence . . . abound" (CPW, II, 236). Marriage regulations which do not include adequate provisions for divorce are thus totally incompatible with Milton's idea of religious as well as personal freedom in a Christian society.

Recognizing that it was not sufficient to prove that divorce has been approved by "the noblest and wisest Commonwealths, guided by the clearest light of human knowledge," Milton also attempts to show that divorce has been allowed by "the divine testimonies of God himself" in the laws He gave "in person to a sanctify'd people" (CPW, II, 350). Milton's reference is to the first two verses of the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, in which divorce is permitted if a man has "found some uncleannesse" in his wife (cited in CPW, II, 242). Milton's appeal to this passage exemplifies the Puritan tendency to support every view with the uncontrovertible authority of Scripture, but in this instance Milton confronts a difficulty, for Christ had specifically interpreted this passage as Moses' concession to the Israelites' hardness of heart. Exercising his right to interpret the Scriptures for himself, Milton is forced, as Barker has shown, into the unorthodox position of maintaining that Christ has not abrogated the Law of Moses, a

view which appears to contradict his earlier statement in the Reason of Church-Government that the Gospel involves "our liberty also from the bondage of the Law" (CPW, I, 763).²⁶ With reference to Christ's pronouncement that divorce should not be permitted except in cases of fornication, Milton in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce ingeniously contends that a narrow interpretation of Christ's words is "inconsistent both with his doctrine and his office" and his declaration that his "yoke is easie and his burden light" (CPW, II, 238, 240). Unfortunately, however, Milton goes beyond this to appeal to the law of nature, which he regards as being "of more antiquitie and deeper ground then mariage it selfe" (CPW, II, 237). He apparently feels that his appeal to the law of nature is difficult to refute, for he makes use of it again in Tetrachordon in a further attempt to wrestle with the obvious difficulties posed by Christ's statements on divorce:

Christ heer teaches no new precept, and nothing sooner might direct them to find his meaning, then to compare and measure it by the rules of nature and eternall righteousness, which no writt'n law extinguishes, and the Gospel least of all (CPW, II, 636).

In spite of his appeal to the law of nature, however, Milton seems to be aware that this law is not only difficult to define but can be interpreted according to convenience or expediency. He turns, therefore, back to the Scriptures themselves in his endeavour to find authority for his ideas on divorce. The term "fornication," he maintains, has been

misunderstood; its scope goes far beyond sexual immorality and includes "willfull disobedience to any the least of God's commandments" (CPW, II, 673). Christ has, therefore, permitted divorce for reasons other than adultery, which is not as great a breach of marriage as a "perpetuall unmeetnes and unwillingnesse to all the duties of helpe, of love and tranquillity" which constitute a true marriage (CPW, II, 674).

Milton's demand for the right to divorce on the grounds of incompatibility is accompanied by his insistence that both parties after a divorce are free to remarry. This appears, however, to disregard Christ's statement that anyone who marries a divorced person commits adultery. This difficulty Milton surmounts by affirming that only an individual who has had "any plot in the divorce" is not to be permitted to marry either of those who have been divorced (DDD, CPW, II, 243). As Sirluck has shown, Milton thus goes much further in his demands regarding divorce than most of his Protestant contemporaries in England, who frequently allowed innocent parties to remarry in cases of adultery or desertion.²⁷ Milton discovered, however, that a number of the leading Protestant reformers on the continent had advocated broader divorce measures than were customarily practised in England, and he makes frequent references to them. Luther, he observes, had allowed divorce "for the obstinate denial of conjugal duty," and Erasmus "who for

learning was the wonder of his age" had maintained that "the words of Christ comprehend many other causes of divorce under the name of fornication" (Tetrachordon, CPW, II, 708-9). Calvin, to whom Milton also refers, had in his Institutes of the Christian Religion attacked the Roman Catholics for constructing "a den of abominations when they made a sacrament out of marriage," particularly in restricting the right of a man to remarry after divorcing an adulterous wife.²⁸ Milton places particular emphasis, however, upon the work of the Protestant reformer, Martin Bucer. It was not until after Milton had published his Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce that he discovered to his delight that Bucer almost a century earlier had published statements on divorce which closely paralleled his own views. Bucer's De Regno Christi, published posthumously in 1557, was particularly useful to Milton, for it had been written in England and dedicated to Edward VI with the specific purpose of promoting the Protestant reformation in England. Bucer's ideas on divorce in a Christian society coincided so remarkably with Milton's views on the freedom of divorce that he translated into English large sections of the second book of Bucer's work as a defence of his Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce and addressed the translation to the Parliament of England. Bucer's defence of the rights of divorce and remarriage, not only in cases of adultery or desertion, but in situations in which love, harmony and the

fulfillment of mutual obligations were lacking, expresses the essence of Milton's ideas of true matrimony (Bucer, CPW, II, 466). Milton in his introduction to his translation consequently feels free to affirm that greater leniency on the matter of divorce is not only "most lawfull" and "most necessary" but "most Christian" (CPW, II, 436).

Milton's use of the term "Christian" in relation to his ideas on divorce indicates that he argues from a particular point of view. Even though he recognizes that his plea for a reconsideration of the subject of divorce could be misconstrued by licentious and evil men, he nevertheless considers it his duty and right as "an instructed Christian" to defend the freedom of the upright, in spite of abuses committed by the wayward:

What though the brood of Belial, the draffe of men, to whom no liberty is pleasing, but unbridl'd and vagabond lust . . . will laugh broad perhaps, to see so great a strength of Scripture mustering up in favour, as they suppose, of their debausheries . . . (DDD, CPW, II, 224-5).

His basically aristocratic attitude is implicit here; he is not concerned with perversity of the rabble, but with the freedom of the "wise and good." For Milton, it is far more important in a Christian society to preserve the godly than to place restraints on the wicked. Even God, he affirms, has extended the benefit of his "equitable and humane . . . laws of divorce . . . to those whom he knows will abuse them through the hardness of their hearts, thinking it better to bear with the obduracy of the wicked, than to refrain from

alleviating the misery of the righteous" who have been "sanctified both in body and soul, for the service of God" (DDC, CE, XV, 165-7, 367). There is no reason, therefore, why man should "set straiter limits . . . then God has set" and make the "Christian warfare" even more of a struggle than God has ordained (DDD, CPW, II, 228). If companionship of mind and soul--the most vital aspect of marriage--is lacking, there is "not the least grain of a sin" in obtaining a divorce, provided that the individual is "worthy" enough "to understand himself" (CPW, II, 253). Milton's emphasis here, as in the matter of religious freedom, is on the individual's personal responsibility to God for his own actions.

Since divorce is basically a private matter, he contends that "the absolute and final hindring of divorce cannot belong to any civil or earthly power . . . the matter of divorce is not to be try'd by law, but by conscience, as many other sins are" (CPW, II, 343-4). Divorce, being a personal affair, is not within the scope of legal jurisdiction. Nevertheless, Milton is aware of the necessity of making a distinction between divorce and the circumstances surrounding it. In a Christian society, the magistrate has no right to prevent a divorce "against the will and consent of both parties, or of the husband alone"; it is, however, the magistrate's responsibility to see that "the condition of divorce be just and equall" (CPW, II, 343-4). The

punishing of adultery and disputes relating to financial support are matters to be executed by "the Christian Magistrate . . . to whose government all outward things are subject . . . it being his office to procure peaceable and convenient living in the Commonwealth" (CPW, II, 343-4). It is apparent that Milton's concern for personal freedom in a Christian society does not allow for unaccountable behavior and irresponsibility in the matter of divorce more than in any other area of human activity.

There is one aspect of Milton's divorce tracts which modern readers find slightly offensive. This is Milton's apparently masculine bias. Even though Milton declares that The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce is written for "the good of both sexes," most of the tract seems to be concerned with preserving "that right which God from the beginning had entrusted to the husband" (CPW, II, 220, 344). His plea for the right to divorce upon "the will . . . of the husband alone" (CPW, II, 344) is an implicit denial of equal rights between the sexes. The general superiority of men to women is also tacitly assumed in a heated remark in the Second Defence in which Milton expresses his resentment towards women who usurp authority over their husbands and towards men who allow themselves to be dominated in this way:

For in vain does he prattle about liberty in assembly and market-place who at home endures the slavery most unworthy of man, slavery to an inferior (CPW, IV, 625).

While Milton's remarks indicate a masculine point of view, it is necessary to take into consideration that he is by no means unusual in his ideas on the proper relationship between the sexes; he simply expresses, as Rajan has demonstrated in Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader, "the deepest and most impersonal feelings of the time."²⁹ St.

Paul's idea that "the man was [not created] for the woman, but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:9) was, along with many similar Scriptures, commonly accepted by almost everyone in Milton's age; his use of these passages in The Christian Doctrine (CE, XV, 121) would hardly have been challenged by anyone in his day. His concern for domestic harmony is not, however, confined only to the well-being of the husband. He regards it as "a most mercifull Law" that "afflicted wives" be permitted to divorce their husbands on the grounds of "senselesse cruelty" (CPW, II, 324). A point frequently overlooked is that Milton in Tetrachordon goes so far as to concede that the husband should "contentedly yeeld" to the authority of his wife "if she exceed her husband in prudence and dexterity" (CPW, II, 589). While Milton clearly regards such a situation as exceptional, he makes this concession for the sake of what he regards as a law even more basic than the laws governing the marriage relationship, namely that "the wiser should govern the lesse wise" (CPW, II, 589)--the principle which permeates all of his religious, social, and political ideas. It is,

therefore, also relevant to his views on domestic liberty in a Christian society. The function of education is to foster knowledge and wisdom in the nation; the freedom of expression provides the means whereby the wise and good can make their influence felt; finally, personal liberty in such matters as divorce releases the upright from any kind of bondage which could impair their effectiveness in the society of which they are such a vital part.

Milton's views on domestic liberty do not receive their final statement in his prose; they reappear in his sonnets and in his major poems. The freedom of expression for which he pleads in Areopagitica is demonstrated, for instance, in his bold defence of his divorce tracts in Sonnets XI and XIII and in his harsh attack on "The New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament." His concern for the freedom of education permeates his descriptions of the ideal society of Eden in Paradise Lost, though the limitations of human knowledge are clearly drawn in portions of Paradise Lost as well as Paradise Regained. His ideas on liberty and bondage in marriage are pursued in his portrayal of the dynamic relationship of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost and the disastrous relationship of Samson and Dalila in Samson Agonistes.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTY IN A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Milton's concern for political and civil liberty, as it appears in his prose works, corresponds very closely to his ideas on religious and domestic freedom in a Christian society. It is, in fact, his fervent desire for religious and personal liberty which motivates him to rally to the support of "Queen Truth" rather than of King Charles during the political conflicts between the Puritans and the Royalists in the 1640's (Second Defence, CPW, IV, 628). His constantly shifting political leanings can be much more easily understood if it is kept in mind that his social and political theories, as Barker maintains, are "essentially religious and ethical, not secular and economic."¹ While Milton did not publish any explicitly political treatises until 1649, the year of King Charles' execution, his works on ecclesiastical and domestic liberty during the 1640's touch on issues which have political implications, just as his political pamphlets express some of his fundamental ideas on the nature of spiritual and personal freedom in a Christian society.

The affinity between Milton's political tracts and his works on religious and domestic liberty is particularly

evident in his attitude towards custom and tradition. His tendency to repudiate or ignore tradition, which underlies so much of his thought in his political writings, also appears in his early anti-prelatical works and his divorce tracts. In Of Reformation, his first anti-episcopal treatise, he brands as "Antiquitarians" and "votarists of Antiquity" those who advocate the retention of episcopacy because of its place in traditional ecclesiastical practice; such supporters of tradition are, for Milton, the chief hinderers of the further advancement of the Protestant reformation in England (CPW, I, 541). In The Reason of Church-Government, he finds it convenient to attack tradition on the grounds that it frequently nullifies the teachings of the Scriptures as he interprets them: "must tradition then ever thus to the worlds end be the perpetuall cankerworme to eat out Gods Commandements?" (CPW, I, 779). Milton's resistance towards the tyranny of custom characterizes not only his defence of spiritual liberty, but of domestic liberty as well, for he opens The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce with the complaint that "for the most part . . . Custome still is silently receiv'd for the best instructor," drawing "the most Disciples after him, both in Religion and in manners" (CPW, II, 223). With complete consistency, he carries his aversion towards tradition and custom into the turbulent sphere of politics, where it vitally influences his ideas on political and civil freedom

in a Christian society and also helps to account for his shifting political views to a substantial degree.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Milton introduces his first formal political tract, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649), with a sally against those who would rather be governed by the "double tyrannie of Custom from without, and blind affections within" than by reason (CPW, III, 191). The Tenure, written, as he affirms in The Second Defence, to "reconcile men's minds" to the trial and death of King Charles I, was not as successful in weaning the people from their addiction to custom as he could have hoped, for he finds it necessary in Eikonoklastes, published later in the same year, to challenge the royal mystique by enlightening further those "who through custom, simplicitie, or want of better teaching," have been mesmerized by "the gaudy name of Majesty" (CPW, IV, 627; III, 338).

Milton's attitude towards tradition is influenced by his conviction that the people in any kind of society have a right to change their form of government or their laws if they so desire. This conviction, which is so intimately connected to his idea of political freedom, is anticipated in his postulation in Of Prelaticall Episcopacy that, since prelacy is a human constitution, "we have the same humane priviledge, that all men have ever had since Adam, being borne free . . . to remove it" (CPW, I, 624). It involves no major shift in Milton's thinking when he applies this

kind of reasoning to political issues. In his Commonplace Book he includes a notation that "the form of state [should] be fitted to the peoples disposition,"² which indicates that he is fascinated by the idea that the people in a society possess the right to alter their political institutions at will. By the time he comes to write The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, he does not hesitate to assert that, seeing "all men naturally were borne free . . . 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 remaines fundamentally" (CPW, III, 198, 202). The conclusion which Milton draws from this is that the people have the right to retain or depose any political authority, whether king or magistrate, "meerly by the liberty and right of free born Men, to be govern'd as seems to them best" (CPW, III, 206). This point is emphatically reasserted in A Defence of the People of England (1651), where he argues that "he who deprives a people of the power to choose whatever form of government they prefer surely deprives them of all that makes up civil liberty" (CPW, IV, 392).

It is interesting to compare Milton's belief that people have the fundamental, natural right to alter their form of government with the position of Thomas Hobbes, whose ideas on this point are expressed in Leviathan, published in the same year (1651) as Milton's Defence of the People of

England. Hobbes would not disagree with Milton's contention that men were born free, but he more realistically regards man's desire for freedom as a potential weapon for continuous conflict and confusion, and suggests, therefore, that a stable commonwealth cannot be formed unless all men are willing to relinquish their right to govern by delegating absolute power to one authority, who thereby becomes "the sole legislator" and is not subject to civil laws.³ While Hobbes' position is weakened considerably by his concession that the obligation of subjects towards the sovereign should last "as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them,"⁴ it is nevertheless more conducive to political stability than Milton's idea that the people have the right, merely as "free born Men," to "retain or depose any political authority . . . as seems to them best" (Tenure, CPW, III, 206). His radical views on this point are significantly modified in his later political pamphlets, as we shall see in connection with his ideas on representative government, but they illustrate the extent to which he is willing to go in his resistance towards entrenched customs and traditions.

Milton is not content to base his arguments concerning the right of people to change their form of government on the grounds of natural law alone. As a Christian, he feels it necessary to fortify his position on this aspect of political liberty by appealing to the Scriptures. The

prerogative of people to alter their form of government, "though it cannot but stand with plain reason," he argues in The Tenure, "shall be made good also by Scripture" (CPW, III, 206). Citing Deuteronomy 17:14, "When thou art come into the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt say I will set a King over mee, like as all the Nations about mee," Milton declares that God himself has granted to people "the right of choosing, yea of changing, thir own Government" (CPW, III, 2067). He seems to feel particularly pleased with this evidence, for he repeats it in his Defence of the People of England, adding that it is a "divine law" to which "God himself bears witness" (CPW, IV, 343-4). That he intends it to be applicable to a Christian society is suggested by his argument in Eikonoklastes that Christ has declared "professedly his judicature to be spiritual, abstract from Civil managements, and therefore leaves all Nations to thir own particular Lawes, and way of Government" (CPW, III, 587).

Most of Milton's arguments for the inalienable right of people to change their government at their discretion are motivated by his attempt to attack the traditional prerogatives of kingship. It should be noted that in his early pamphlets he shows no resistance towards the institution of the monarchy per se or towards King Charles I as a person. In Of Reformation in England, he praises Charles I as "a free, and untutor'd Monarch" and even suggests that the king

is "Christs Vicegerent"; immediately afterwards, however, he boldly inserts his conviction that ecclesiastical affairs "nothing concerne a Monarch" (CPW, I, 599-600). In this pamphlet and in The Reason of Church-Government he argues at length that prelacy is a threat to the monarchy, thus indicating that at this time he is not an opponent of the king. The polarization of Royalist and Puritan forces during the 1640's made it increasingly apparent, however, that the king had committed himself to the support of the traditional episcopal ecclesiastical structure in England. In The Readie and Easie Way, Milton many years later admits that English monarchs since the time of Elizabeth had opposed "Presbyterian reformation" on the grounds that it would "diminish regal autoritie" (CE, VI, 142). The tension between the Puritans and the monarchy had greatly increased during the reigns of the Stuarts, who attempted to enforce their views on the divine right of kings to rule in all social, ecclesiastical, political, and economic affairs. While Queen Elizabeth, for example, had ordered that sermons from the Book of Homilies be read in churches throughout the land (including exhortations on obedience to rulers and magistrates),⁵ King James I in The Basilicon Doron goes so far as to affirm that the king is "a little God" who sits on God's throne and is accountable to none but God himself.⁶ Because of the resistance of the Puritans towards monarchical ecclesiastical policies, James brands them as "very pestes in the Church

In The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, he argues that there is a basic difference between true kingship and tyranny, a distinction which he finds, for instance, in Aristotle, whom he praises as "the best of Political writers" (CPW, III, 202). A king, according to Aristotle, is one who governs for "the good and profit of his People, and not for his own ends" (CPW, III, 202).¹¹ The opposite of this is tyranny, in which the ruler pursues only his own good, a situation which Milton considers intolerable. Specifically referring to an excerpt from Aristotle's Politics, Milton illustrates that "Monarchy unaccountable is the worst sort of Tyranny; and least of all to be endur'd by free born men" (CPW, III, 204).¹² Traditional material relating to the downfall of tyrannical rulers was universally available in Milton's day. For example, Lydgate's Fall of Princes (1439) was supplemented by the highly popular Mirour for Magistrates, which featured the "untimely falles of such unfortunate Princes and men of note" throughout the history of Britain.¹³ It was augmented considerably from edition to edition after being suppressed initially in 1555, as Lily Campbell has shown in her edition of the Mirour.¹⁴ Another popular work was The Theatre of God's Judgments, which went through a number of editions between 1598 and 1648. Its purpose was to illustrate "the admirable Justice of God against all notorious sinners . . . specially against the most eminent persons in the world"

and to show "how the greatest Monarchs in the World ought to be subject to the Law of God, and consequently the Lawes of Man and Nature."¹⁵ Similar themes were dealt with in More's History of King Richard III, the works of such sixteenth-century chroniclers as Polydore Vergil, Hall, and Holinshed, Shakespeare's history plays, and the fifth book of Spenser's Faerie Queene.¹⁶ Milton's interest in the subject of the fall of tyrannical and incompetent princes is suggested by his own History of Britain, a work full of examples of monarchs who had met violent deaths or who had been deposed as a consequence of vice, greed, or political incompetence. A random example is the following:

Archigallo . . . by peeling the wealthier sort, stuff'd his Treasury, and took the right way to be depos'd (CE, X, 27).

When Salmasius attempted in his Defensio Regia pro Carolo I (1649) to show that kings ruled by divine right and that the king of England had the final authority in civil affairs, Milton appealed to English custom by proving that English "courts of law are established or abolished by authority of Parliament, not the king" (A Defence, CPW, IV, 499). Tradition was a double-edged weapon, and Milton was able to wield it as adeptly as his opponents.

In his attempt to apply his views on political freedom to a Christian society, Milton recognized that he also had to deal with the traditional Scriptural commonplaces relating to the duties of citizens towards their rulers.

One of these was St. Paul's admonition in Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Another was St. Peter's command in I Peter 2:13-17, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors . . . Honour the king." These verses had appeared in countless writings during the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods, especially in the works of supporters of the monarchy or the status quo. The great Elizabethan preacher, William Perkins, though a Puritan in many of his ideas on worship and doctrine, in his A Discourse of Conscience (1596), had interpreted these passages as evidence that the monarch was the "supreame governour under God in all causes and over all persons."¹⁷ Long before this, a reference to Romans 13:1 had been included in the exhortation to obedience in the Book of Homilies.¹⁸ Since Paul had also written in Romans 13:2 that "they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation," it seemed to be quite apparent that rebellion against rulers had no place in the political activities of Christians.

In The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Milton copes with this difficulty in an ingenious manner. Exercising his right to interpret the Scriptures in political affairs as well as in religious and domestic issues, Milton astutely points out that St. Peter admonishes Christians to

submit "as free men" to civil authorities who carry out their responsibilities in punishing evil-doers or rewarding the good (CPW, III, 209); it is not possible, he continues, to submit "as free men" to any form of tyrannical government:

To any civil power unaccountable, unquestionable, and not to be resisted, no not in wickedness, and violent actions, how can we submit as free men? (CPW, III, 209).

He also goes on to show that it is impossible to reconcile Peter's suggestion that kingdoms and magistracies are "human" ordinances with Paul's statement that "there is no power but of God" unless they both refer to "lawfull and just power" (CPW, III, 209-10).

In a further comment on Paul's words, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," Milton declares in his Defence of the People of England that Paul did not state what "the higher powers" signified, for "he had no intention of abolishing the rights and institutions of the various countries or of allowing absolute sway to the lust of a single individual" (CPW, IV, 382). Milton does not deny that "the appointment of magistrates comes from God," for "without magistrates and civil government there can be no state or human society," but he maintains that if a ruler or dignitary belies his office by acting in a manner contrary to God's ordinances, he cannot be truly ordained of God; Christians are not, therefore "obliged or instructed to obey such a power or magistrate" (CPW, IV, 383, 386).

By interpreting Romans 13:1 and I Peter 2:13-17 in this particular way, Milton undermines the foundations upon which theories of the divine right of kings were based.

Milton's idea of political freedom in a Christian society is further clarified by his arguments in his Defence of the People of England to the effect that the Gospel has not only freed believers from spiritual bondage, but from political tyranny as well. He specifically affirms that Christ, by means of "his birth, his slavery, and his suffering under tyranny . . . has won for us all proper freedom" (CPW, IV, 374). Lest the reader, in this instance Salmasius, should retort that this freedom is essentially of a spiritual nature, Milton states that he is not speaking "of inward freedom only" but also of "political freedom," for Christ "at the cost of his own slavery . . . put our political freedom on a firm foundation" (CPW, IV, 374). Milton, in this context, also interprets Paul's assertion, "You are bought with a price; be not the slaves of men," as an expression "not of religious liberty alone, but also of political" (I Corinthians 7, CPW, IV, 374). Finding further evidence in the Scriptures for his ideas on political freedom, Milton suggests that Christ's statement in Matthew 17 concerning taxation ("the children are free") shows that "it is no part of a king's right to exact heavy tribute from those who are his sons and free men" because "we . . . are by the intervention of Christ free, either

as citizens or as Christians" (CPW, IV, 375-6). The conclusion which Milton draws from this obscure episode in the Gospels is that Christ has denied kings the right "to rob, plunder, kill or torture his own subjects, and more particularly Christians" (CPW, IV, 376). While Milton's logic in applying these Scriptures to the sphere of politics borders on the specious, it nevertheless reflects his conviction that political tyranny of any kind is completely out of place in a Christian society.

It is illuminating to compare Milton's interpretation of Romans 13:1 and I Peter 2:13-17 with the views of such influential Protestant leaders as Luther and Calvin, both of whom are cited in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. Milton's conception of the political freedom of Christians resembles some of Luther's ideas in Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed (1523). Luther affirms that Christians, because they are under the government of the Holy Spirit, "need no law or sword"; he goes on to say, however, that a true Christian, by his "very nature" and his concern for his neighbour, "submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honours those in authority."¹⁹ Even though Luther is opposed to tyranny, as Milton suggests in The Tenure (CPW, III, 243-44), he declares in A Sincere Admonition . . . to All Christians to Guard Against Insurrection and Rebellion (1522) that insurrection is "an unprofitable method of

procedure" and that the overthrow of tyranny is in God's control.²⁰ It is apparent from passages such as these that Luther does not go as far as Milton in connecting the spiritual and the political liberty of Christians.

Milton's transference of Christian freedom from the spiritual to the political sphere is almost diametrically opposed to Calvin's assertion in The Institutes that

We are not to misapply to the political order the gospel teaching on spiritual freedom, as if Christians were less subject, as concerns outward government, to human laws . . . as if they were released from all bodily servitude because they are free according to the spirit.²¹

Calvin states that "we must . . . be very careful not to despise or violate that authority of magistrates . . . even though it may reside with the most unworthy man," for "unbridled despotism is the Lord's to avenge."²² This point is qualified, however, by his remarks that God uses the "deeds of men" to break "the bloody scepters of arrogant kings," and that "it behooves us to spitt upon [the] heads" of earthly princes who "rise against God," which Milton cites in The Tenure.²³ Calvin distinguishes between the resistance of private individuals to authority, which he forbids, and the right of magistrates, who represent the people, to "withstand . . . the fierce licentiousness of kings," because magistrates "have been appointed protectors of God's ordinance . . . of . . . the freedom of the people."²⁴ Even this concession, however, does not approach the revolutionary implications of Milton's position in The

Tenure that the people have a right to choose or depose a king or magistrate "though no Tyrant, meerly by the liberty and right of free born men" (CPW, III, 206), nor does Calvin's idea of Christian liberty harmonize with Milton's affirmation, in the Defence of the People of England, that the Gospel has "set God's people free" from political tyranny (CPW, IV, 374).

Milton's willingness to repudiate custom and tradition for the sake of political freedom as he sees it, and his belief that spiritual liberty should be accompanied by political liberty in a Christian society, might seem to indicate that he considers a firm and stable government to be of relatively small importance in a Christian commonwealth. The fact that this is not the case can be seen if two points are observed. First, Milton is realistic enough to concede that "there can be no state, or human society, or life itself" without civil government and magistrates; only "a knave," he states, would refuse to admit "that he should willingly submit" to the lawful authority of magistrates who seek to reward the good and punish the wicked (CPW, IV, 385-6). He is not an irresponsible revolutionary in his political views, in spite of his conviction that people have the innate right to alter their forms of government. This brings us to the second point. While he regards particular forms of government as comparatively insignificant, he never deviates from his fundamental belief

that political stability is ultimately dependent on the wisdom and integrity of a nation's leaders. Even though his political writings indicate that he supported a variety of political structures throughout his career, he adheres staunchly to the principle that good leadership is of far greater consequence than particular political systems and forms. In his first anti-prelatical tract, Of Reformation, he expresses his approval of the government of England, "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 supream, and finall determination of highest Affaires" (CPW, I, 599). By the time his Tenure of Kings and Magistrates is published (1649), he has moved so far from his approval of monarchy as a necessary institution that he pleads for the right of "any, who have the power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King," but he emphatically reasserts his Platonic belief that men of "vertue and true worth" are "by right . . . Maisters" (CPW, III, 191). Milton's increasing aversion towards kingship in such pamphlets as Eikonoklastes and A Defence of the People of England must be viewed in relation to his ideas on true leadership, though he, like others, is influenced by the circumstances of the time. Hereditary kingship, he maintains in Eikonoklastes, tends to violate the principle that leadership should reside in the "best of men," for hereditary

kings are "commonly not . . . the wisest or the worthiest by far of whom they claime to have the governing" (CPW, III, 486). Similarly, in his Defence, he asserts that there should be "no king but the one who surpasses all others in wisdom and bravery," according to the law of nature, "for nature gives the wisest dominion over the less wise" (CPW, IV, 425-6), and in his Second Defence (1654), he categorically postulates that "there is nothing in human society more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, nothing in the state more just, nothing more expedient, than the rule of the man most fit to rule" (CPW, IV, 671-2). Since Milton regards this principle as most "pleasing to God," it is evident that it is particularly applicable to a Christian society. Finally, on the eve of the Restoration of the Monarchy, he pleads in The Readie and Easie Way (1660) for the election of a general council of the "ablest men" (CE, VI, 126).

The fundamental consistency of Milton's main ideas on political leadership is apparent in spite of the variety of political structures which he supports or advocates in his writings. Even though he is a supporter of the English monarchy in Of Reformation, he assumes that the king is in habitual consultation with "the noblest, worthiest, and most prudent men" (CPW, I, 599). In such writings as Eikonoklastes and A Defence of the People of England, he is a supporter of Parliament, which for him represents the

wise and just in the nation. By the time he writes his Second Defence, however, he has become an admirer of the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, which was, in effect, a dictatorship. This apparent shift is not as great as it initially appears, for while he praises Cromwell for taking up the reins of government after most of the members of Parliament had proven themselves "inadequate and unfit," he goes on to suggest that Cromwell would "no doubt . . . restore to us our liberty" by taking to heart the counsel of "men who are eminently modest, upright, and brave" (CPW, IV, 671, 674). When he writes The Readie and Easie Way, he fervently advocates a "free Commonwealth without single person or house of lords," and affirms that such a commonwealth is "by far the best government, if it can be had," because it is more likely to put power into the hands of the "ablest" men (CE, VI, 124, 126). Even though Milton's political shifts are influenced to "a marked degree" by "the exigencies of the times," as Mack and Parker have convincingly shown,²⁵ he constantly adheres to the basic principle that political leadership should be exercised only by those who are truly qualified for it, namely the wise and virtuous.

Milton's idea of true leadership in a Christian society of course embraces the traditional Classical and Renaissance commonplaces relating to political issues. Plato's desire to combine political power with such virtues as wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice in The Republic

is reflected throughout Milton's writings. Milton also demonstrates the concern of such Christian humanists as Erasmus and Sir Thomas Elyot to fuse these traditional virtues with Christian standards and ideals. In The Education of a Christian Prince (1516), Erasmus maintains that qualifications for leadership in a Christian society consist of a strong, personal devotion to Christ as well as wisdom, self-control, and a concern for one's subjects.²⁶ In The Book Named the Governor (1531), Elyot affirms that, along with such attributes as sapience, temperance, fortitude, and magnanimity, a Christian ruler must recognize that honour proceeds from God and must act accordingly.²⁷ In his Second Defence, Milton similarly suggests that Cromwell should accept counsel in political matters from those of his fellow men who had demonstrated their justice, moderation, courage, and also their piety, during the civil war (CPW, IV, 674-5). Like Erasmus, who considers it highly incongruous for one to be a ruler "who daily is a slave to passion,"²⁸ Milton asserts that he who cannot control himself . . . should not be his own master, but like a ward be given over to the power of another. Much less should he be put in charge of the affairs of other men, or of the state (CPW, IV, 684).

The stress Milton places on self-control, or temperance, as a necessary qualification for political authority, has led such critics as Wolfe to contend that Milton has confused personal morality with statesmanship.²⁹ This criticism

would be valid except for the fact that Milton insists on other criteria for leadership as well. While Milton maintains in The Tenure the Aristotelian principle that "bad men" are "all naturally servile," and that men "of vertue and true worth" are "by right . . . Maisters" (CPW, III, 190), it is clear from the context of his prose works as a whole that he also regards knowledge (and the wisdom which results from it) to be of crucial importance for leadership in a Christian society. The kind of leaders Milton envisions in Of Education are those who have not only been regenerated by means of "the heavenly grace of faith" but have also become fitted by a liberal education "to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and publike of peace and war" (CPW, II, 367, 378-9). His view on the importance of learning as a means to political competence is further suggested by his panegyric on King Alfred in his History of Britain. This king, he states, not only "thirsted after all liberal knowledge," but "permitted none unlearn'd to bear Office, either in Court or Common-wealth" (CE, X, 221).

Other traditional components of leadership to which Milton subscribes are courage and justice, which he deals with in an individualistic manner, especially in his later poetry. Mere physical courage, as demonstrated in warfare, is of far less importance than the ability to cope with the vicissitudes of life in times of peace. Although he

admires those who, with Cromwell, had fought for liberty, he declares that the victories won in the "warfare of peace" are "hard indeed, but bloodless, and far more noble than the gory victories of war" (Second Defence, CPW, IV, 681). The particular foes to be guarded against in times of peace, he suggests, are avarice, luxury, ambition, ignorance and superstition. In the digression which he appends to his History of Britain, where he reappraises the events of the civil war, he pessimistically sees the men of Britain as "valiant indeed and prosperous to win a field but to know the end and reason of winning, unjudicious and unwise" (CE, X, 325). True courageous leadership involves not merely military prowess, but the ability to "administer incorrupt justice to the people, to help those cruelly harassed and oppressed, and to render to every man promptly his own deserts" (Second Defence, CPW, IV, 681). Milton places great stress on piety, justice, and temperance, for he regards these components of "true virtue" as the foundation of political liberty:

to be free is precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just . . . temperate . . . magnanimous and brave, so to be the opposite to these qualities is the same as to be a slave (CPW, IV, 680, 684).

Milton is particularly concerned about the purpose and function of leadership in a Christian society. He insists that leadership must never be exercised in an arbitrary or self-indulgent manner, but must constantly

be directed towards the maintenance of law and order. This commonplace idea can be traced back to the works of Plato and Aristotle, and is, in fact, specifically cited by Milton in his political pamphlets. He shows that Plato had taught that "magistrates should be termed not the masters but the servants and helpers of the people," and shows that Aristotle had held that magistrates are "the guardians and ministers of the laws" and that a true ruler is one "who governs to the good and profit of his People, and not for his own ends" (CPW, IV, 379-80; III, 202). The passages to which Milton refers can be found in Plato's Laws and Aristotle's Politics and Nicomachean Ethics. Plato points out that the survival of a state is dependent on the rulership of law, and that "the magistrates are servants to the law."³⁰ Aristotle, similarly, holds that magistrates "should be made only guardians and ministers of the law," and that a good king cares for his subjects "with a view to their well-being, as a shepherd does for his sheep."³¹ The concept of the leader as a servant is, for Milton, particularly applicable to a Christian society. In The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, he argues that arbitrary, tyrannical, and self-indulgent rulership is totally incompatible with the spirit of Christianity, which is expressed by humility and an unselfish concern for others:

Surely no Christian Prince . . . would arrogate so unreasonably above human condition, or derogate so basely from a whole Nation of men his Brethren, as if for him only subsisting, and to serve his glory (CPW, III, 204).

In the Defence of the People of England, he pursues this idea further by demonstrating that Christ had clearly shown his disciples that his followers were not to imitate the men of the world in their endless struggle to achieve power over their fellow men. The rule which must be followed in a Christian society is the statement of Christ in Matthew 20:25-27:

The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (CPW, IV, 378).

The conclusion Milton draws from this is that any Christian leader, whether king or magistrate, must regard himself merely as a "minister of the people," for "clearly one cannot wish to dominate and remain a Christian" (CPW, IV, 379). Emphatic though Milton is in this pamphlet, he becomes more vehement in The Readie and Easie Way, in which his antagonism towards the monarchical form of government is even more pronounced. While in the Defence he states that "amongst Christians . . . there will either be no king at all, or else one who is the servant of all," his fear of the imminent restoration of the monarchy in 1660 prompts him to contend that "Christ apparently forbids his disciples to admitt of any such heathenish government" as the "gentilish" institution of kingship (CPW, IV, 379; CE, VI, 119, 124). Milton goes on, however, to clarify his position. The monarchical form of government, which has a tendency to

exalt one man "like a Demigod," is less likely than "a free Commonwealth" to approach the Christian standard of servitude in leadership, for in Milton's "free Commonwealth," the leaders "are perpetual servants and drudges to the public at thir own cost and charges . . . yet are not elevated above thir brethren . . ."(CE, VI, 120).

Yet, notwithstanding Milton's desire for the kind of leaders who would seek to serve rather than to dominate, his idea of a Christian society is far from egalitarian. In spite of his manifesto in the Tenure to the effect that "all men naturally were born free," and that consequently "the power of Kings and Magistrates is . . . only derivative, transferr'd and committed to them in trust from the People" (CPW, III, 198, 202), Milton constantly reverts to his basic position that the best interests of everyone are most effectively maintained when leadership and authority are in the hands of the wise and virtuous. The Tenure itself is prefaced by his distinction between "Vulgar and irrational men" and those of "vertue and true worth" who are "by right thir Maisters" (CPW, III, 192, 190). Even though the people, "meerly by the liberty and right of free born Men," have the prerogative of changing their form of government, he strongly advocates that it is "the task of those Worthies which are the soule of that enterprize" to restore or maintain order and stability (CPW, III, 206, 192). In Eikonoklastes, which appeared a few months later,

Milton no longer speaks of the rights of the people as a whole, but of "public reason, the enacted reason of a Parliament" as the real law "in a Free Nation" (CPW, III, 360). His latent contempt for the populace finally emerges at the end of this tract, where he brands those who had been stirred by the account of the death of King Charles I in Eikon Basilike as "an inconstant, irrational, and Image-doting rabble . . . begott'n to servility" (CPW, III, 601). Milton's willingness to dispense with Parliament itself under certain circumstances is indicated in the Second Defence, in which he regards the dissolution of an incompetent Parliament as a necessary step to the assumption of full power by the capable Cromwell, though he goes on to suggest that Cromwell should take counsel from his wise and virtuous colleagues.

The ambiguities of Milton's views on political freedom in his political pamphlets are clarified to some extent in his Readie and Easie Way. In this treatise, Milton attempts to prevent the restoration of the monarchy by offering a pattern of a free commonwealth. Though it was written in great haste and desperation, it is a useful indicator of Milton's basically constant aspirations for a Christian society: spiritual and civil liberty in proportion to one's merits. As far as political or civil freedom is concerned, Milton stresses that, in a free commonwealth, "every person" must be advanced "according to his merit"

(CE, VI, 143). Consistent with this principle is his suggestion that a free commonwealth should not have a House of Lords (CE, VI, 124). Hughes has argued from this that Milton was revolutionary in his insistence that honour should go to men of talent rather than men of family.³² While this is partially true, it must be noted that the House of Lords had been abolished a number of years prior to the appearance of the Readie and Easie Way; Milton can, therefore, be seen as a revolutionary only in relation to the established institutions prior to the civil war. Furthermore, he specifically indicates that his free commonwealth "requires no perilous, no injurious alteration or circumscription of mens lands and proprieties" (CE, VI, 133). His suggestion that every person should be promoted "according to his merit," appears democratic only outside the context of the rest of his ideas. Unlike the Levellers, such as Lilburne, who opposed "all arbitrary usurpation, whether regall, or parliamentary, or under what vizer whatever" on the grounds that all men are "by nature . . . equal and alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty,"³³ Milton tends rather to agree with Baxter, who in A Holy Commonwealth had stated that "the multitude of the people are usually of lamentable understandings, utterly unfit for such weighty things" as government.³⁴ Power in the hands of the common people, "none being more immoderat and ambitious to amplifie thir power," tends towards "a licentious and unbridl'd democratie"

in Milton's view (CE, VI, 130). He leans towards the position of Rainolde and Marvell. In A Book Called the Foundation of Rhetorike (1563), Rainolde flatly states that "for the encrease of vertue, God dooeth nobilitate with honour worthie menne, to be above others in dignitie and state."³⁵ In "Upon Appleton House" Marvell, a close acquaintance of Milton, perceptively recognizes that the "naked equal Flat,/ Which Levellers take Pattern at" is not necessarily conducive to political stability:

. . . what does it boot
To build below the Grasses Root;
When Lowness is unsafe as Hight,
And Chance o'retakes what scapeth spight?³⁶

The kind of representative government Milton advocates is hedged about with so many modifying factors that it becomes quite apparent that he is not a democrat in any fundamental sense. Milton feels, not that political leadership should necessarily reflect the will of the majority, but that, in a Christian society, the leadership should represent the best interests of everyone. Since bad men, for example, are "all naturally servile" (Tenure, CPW, III, 190), they are not in a position to appreciate freedom, for "none can love freedom heartilie, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but licence" (CPW, III, 190). The type of government Milton wishes to see established is, as he indicates in his History of Britain, the kind that would allow good men "the freedom which they merit" and would simultaneously give to "the bad the curb which they need"

(CE, X, 324). Since ignorant men are blinded by superstition and wicked men are bound by their passions and lusts, they are not free in any case; the just and virtuous, however, know how to handle the sharp and double-edged sword of liberty, and are, therefore, qualified to rule. These ideas underlie Milton's equivocations in The Readie and Easie Way. Even though he states that a grand or general council should be chosen by the people, and that the sovereignty assumed by the council should be "delegated only," he quickly shifts his ground by suggesting that the council, "being well chosen, should be perpetual" (CE, VI, 126). Admitting that this idea "may seem strange at first hearing, by reason that mens mindes are prepossessed with the notion of successive Parlements," Milton pauses briefly to consider the merits of "partial rotation," a reference to the principle advocated by James Harrington in his utopian Oceana (1656). Harrington had argued that a stable government could be achieved only by a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy in which a perpetual balance of power was maintained by means of regular rotation by secret ballot; this form only, he affirmed, could bring about "an equal commonwealth."³⁷ Milton, who sees such a system as having "too much affinitie with the wheel of fortune," concludes that no member of the grand council should be removed except for some crime or by death (CE, VI, 127-8).

In the middle of his pamphlet, Milton suddenly is

beset by further anxiety. He appears to have noticed that his initial suggestion concerning the election of the grand council by the people is also too democratic. Might not the people elect members who are not fully qualified to rule? He recognizes that there is little point in making the council perpetual if it is poorly chosen in the first place. Milton suggests, therefore, that the franchise itself should be restricted to those who are "rightly qualifi'd," so as not to commit "all to the noise and shouting of a rude multitude" (CE, VI, 131). What Milton fails to take into consideration here, of course, is that there is likely to be very little agreement as to who are "rightly qualifi'd" to exercise the franchise. In any case, he goes on to mention that these qualified individuals should have the right to nominate as many as they will, and that out of that number "others of a better breeding" (CE, VI, 131) will choose the better candidates. This process, he suggests, should continue until the best and worthiest men are elected, permanently, to the grand council. Whether these methods are even remotely practical is not the major issue here, however. The point is that Milton is attempting to find a method which will inaugurate and perpetuate the leadership of the wise and virtuous, without which a Christian society is an impossibility.

Recognizing that the population as a whole might be reluctant to place all effective political power in the

hands of a permanent grand council, Milton makes one major concession by suggesting that some kinds of political power could be decentralized. To "prevent all mistrust," he will allow the chief towns of every county to have separate "ordinarie assemblies" in which legislation on regional and local affairs may be conducted (Readie, CE, VI, 132). This measure, he feels, will provide the people in general with the means "toward the securing of thir libertie" in matters which concern them most (CE, VI, 132). Even here, however, Milton introduces a few safeguards. These regional assemblies are not to be formed until the educational system has been mended in such a way as to "make the people fittest to chuse, and the chosen fittest to govern" by training the people in such virtues as "faith . . . temperance, modestie, sobrietie, parsimonie, justice," and by teaching them to "place every one his privat welfare and happiness in the public peace, libertie and safetie" (CE, VI, 132). Furthermore, Milton indicates that the power of these regional assemblies will not be extended to such matters as foreign affairs, public revenue, and civil laws, all of which are to be controlled by the supreme council, who are to be the "true keepers of our libertie" (CE, VI, 132).

Having presented what he considers to be the best pattern of a free commonwealth, which is "the most agreeable to all due libertie and proportiond equalitie, both human, civil, and Christian" (CE, VI, 119), Milton is

determined not to subject his political program to the hazards of a popular election. If, in spite of his suggestions for a free commonwealth, the people should wish to return to the tyranny of kingship, they must not be permitted to do so. Milton justifies his arbitrary position on the grounds that it is not unjust "that a less number compell a greater to retain, which can be no wrong to them, thir libertie," for "they who seek nothing but thir own just libertie, have alwaies right to winn it and to keep it, when ever they have power, be the voices never so numerous that oppose it" (CE, VI, 141). His definition of political liberty and its purpose finally emerges at this point. It "consists in the civil rights and advancements of every person according to his merit" (CE, VI, 143). This brings out clearly Milton's concern, not for the democratic voice of popular opinion, but for the wise and virtuous who can both recognize true liberty and exercise it in the best interests of the commonwealth as a whole.

In spite of Milton's idealistic desire to see the final political authority in the control of those who are most qualified to rule, The Readie and Easie Way is not utopian in intention. As in the Areopagitica, written about sixteen years earlier, where he states that "this is not the liberty which wee can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth, that let no man in this World expect," and that "errors in a good government and in

a bad are equally almost incident" (CPW, II, 487, 570), Milton in The Readie and Easie Way presents his suggestions for political liberty with only "as much assurance as can be of human things" (CE, VI, 133). Similarly, his aversion, in Areopagitica, to "Atlantick and Eutopian polities, which never can be drawn into use" and which "will not mend our condition" (CPW, II, 526), is echoed in The Readie and Easie Way, which Milton specifically maintains is "without the introduction of new or obsolete forms, or terms, or exotic models" (CE, VI, 133). Such utopian schemes, Milton argues, are not only ineffectual, but actually detrimental to freedom in a Christian society, for they

manacle the native liberty of mankinde; turning all vertue into prescription, servitude, and necessitie, to the great impairing and frustrating of Christian libertie . . . (CE, VI, 133).

By affirming that he is not advocating any "perilous" or "injurious alteration or circumscription of mens lands and proprieties" (CE, VI, 133), Milton indicates his suspicion of such contemporary utopian schemes as Gerrard Winstanley's Law of Freedom in a Platform (1652) and James Harrington's Oceana (1656). Winstanley's work propounds a socialistic utopia in which the use of money is outlawed except in foreign trade, and where the earth's produce is shared equally by everyone. Winstanley maintains that the basic evils in the world are caused by the present faulty system of economics and government:

The inward bondages of the minde, such as coveteousness, pride, hypocrisie, envy, sorrow, fears, desperation, and madness, are all occasioned by the outward bondage, that one sort of people lay upon the other.³⁸

While Harrington's Oceana is not nearly as radical as Winstanley's Law of Freedom, it also involves a complete revision of the existing order. Harrington wishes to enforce an agrarian law which would perpetually limit the estates of any individual to the arbitrary value of £2,000, and advocates constant rotation in the government, with "the senate proposing, the people resolving, and the magistrates executing."³⁹ Milton's resistance to measures of this nature is specifically indicated by his assertion that his proposals in The Readie and Easie Way will not need "the hedge of an Agrarian law," which he feels can never be successful, "but the cause rather of sedition, save only where it began seasonably with first possession" (CE, VI, 134). Milton's idea of a Christian society does not involve a complete disruption of the existing order of things; neither does it assume that all of the misery on earth, as Winstanley contends, is the result of inadequate economic or social polities. For Milton, inner bondage is not "occasioned by . . . outward bondage," as Winstanley maintains; on the contrary, political enslavement is the inevitable consequence of internal bondage. Perhaps the closest parallel to Milton's idea of a Christian society among his contemporaries is to be found in Baxter's views as expressed in A Holy Commonwealth (1659). Baxter, who specifically

states that he is not attempting to write a "Treatise of Politicks," nevertheless declares that "the Happiest Commonwealth is that which most attaineth the Ends of Government and Society, which are the publick Good, especially in matters of everlasting concernment . . . the best form of government" is that which "doth most powerfully tend to their spiritual and everlasting welfare, and their Holiness, Obedience, and pleasing of God."⁴⁰

Milton's political ideals for a Christian society are expressed most fully at a time when it appeared most unlikely that they would be realized. The Readie and Easie Way, which appears just prior to the Restoration, is characterized by an undercurrent of pessimism which occasionally emerges as desperation. Milton is aware that the "misguided and abus'd multitude" is leaning strongly towards the reinstatement of kingship, and that the "way we are marching" will make the fulfillment of his hopes for a free commonwealth only a remote possibility (CE, VI, 147-149). The hopes he had, in such early pamphlets as Of Reformation and Areopagitica, for England as a leader among the nations in the "reforming of Reformation it self" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 553) are expressed with less fervour in The Readie and Easie Way. Furthermore, as Fixler has shown, Milton in his later works is increasingly less influenced by eschatological expectations.⁴¹ This is indicated in the ways in which Milton expresses his desire for the return of Christ to

earth in Of Reformation and in The Readie and Easie Way. In the earlier pamphlet, he sees the "great and Warlike Nation" of England "casting farre from her the rags of her old vices" and becoming the "soberest, wisest, and most Christian People" in readiness for the return of "the Eternall and shortly-expected King" (CPW, I, 616). In The Readie and Easie Way, however, Milton substitutes for "shortly-expected King" the words "only to be expected King" and predicts prosperity for England only "if God favour us, and our wilfull sins provoke him not" (CE, VI, 133). He also repeats in The Readie and Easie Way a disparaging remark he had made in his first Defence of the People of England concerning the sons of Zebedee who "vainly imagined" that the kingdom of Christ "would soon be set up on earth" (CPW, IV, 378 cp. CE, VI, 119). It is important to note, however, that Milton's idea of a Christian society was not basically affected by his waning aspirations. He came to recognize, with increasing clarity, both that Christ's coming might not be as imminent as he had first anticipated, and that England was not likely to attempt to become an ideal Christian society in preparation for the second advent of Christ. Nevertheless, the concern he demonstrates throughout his prose for a Christian society directed by the wise and virtuous appears in his poetry as well, and gives focus and dynamism to his greatest literary achievements, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes.

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL IDEALS IN MILTON'S POETRY PRIOR TO PARADISE LOST

We have surveyed Milton's views on religious, domestic, and political liberty in a Christian society, as expressed in his prose; we shall now trace the development of his ethical and political ideals in the poetry prior to Paradise Lost. While Milton's career as a pamphleteer for the Puritan cause in the 1640's and 50's undoubtedly affected his development as a poet by forcing him to make a great deal of use of his "left hand" in the "cool element of prose" (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, I, 808), his right hand did not remain completely idle. During this period he produced not only most of his best sonnets, but demonstrated in his poetry an increasing maturity in his attempts to cope with the religious and political issues of the period. His early preoccupation with the idea of death, particularly premature death, and his explicitly stated poetic aspirations give many of his first poems an aura of self-centredness which tends to detract from their appeal to the reader. During the 1640's and 50's, however, a subtle change takes place. His increasing involvement with contemporary conflicts forced him to adopt specific points of view on social and political matters. These points of

view are reflected in the sense of conviction and assurance which increasingly characterizes his occasional poetry from 1640 to 1660 and which later gives dynamism to Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes.

In his earliest poetry, Milton expresses very few views which can be specifically related to his idea of a Christian society. Nevertheless, this poetry is relevant to a study of his social, ethical, and religious views, because it indicates his early ideals and intellectual and emotional struggles, some of which persist throughout his later work. This is particularly true of his attempts to come to terms with the problems of suffering, death, and evil. His earliest poetic exercises are elegies lamenting the death of various people within his acquaintance, such as his Latin poems on the deaths of Richard Ridding, the senior beadle of Cambridge University, and of Lancelot Andrewes, the Bishop of Winchester and former Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge. In both cases, Milton objects to the apparently indiscriminatory and arbitrary nature of death. In the earlier poem, he addresses Death with the query, "why do you not make your prey of those who are useless burdens of the earth?" (Elegy II, Hughes, 13), and in his elegy on the death of Andrewes, "what pleasure is there in . . . sharpening your unerring darts against a noble breast, and driving a spirit that is half-divine from its habitation?" (Elegy III, Hughes, 22) These rhetorical

sallies against death admittedly lack the sincere pathos of the opening lines of "On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough," where he laments the loss of his infant niece:

O fairest flower no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken Primrose fading timelessly . . .
(Hughes, 35).

Neither do they demonstrate the sense of indignation which Milton expresses through the words of the "Pilot of the Galilean Lake" in Lycidas:

How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain,
Anow of such as for their bellies' sake,
Creep and intrude and climb into the fold . . .
(113-15, Hughes, 123).

The main point is not, however, whether Milton really grieved over the loss of the particular persons whose deaths are celebrated in these passages; what is of greater significance is his distress that death can, at any time, slit "the thin-spun life" (Lycidas, 76) of someone before his potentialities have been realized on this earth, a possibility which he could hardly avoid applying to his own situation as a young, developing poet.

Milton's preoccupation with the idea of death was accompanied by a capacity to enjoy life, as indicated in his early poetry. In his "Song: On May Morning," he expresses his delight in "mirth and youth and warm desire" and in the beauty of the "yellow Cowslip and the pale Primrose" (Hughes, 42). His capacity to respond to a great variety of sensuous as well as intellectual stimuli is

indicated in the delightful companion-pieces, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso (1631?), poems in which the pleasures of mirth and contemplation are delicately juxtaposed. In these two works, Milton does not lapse at any point into the kind of melancholy expressed, for instance, by Keats or Rupert Brooke, the early twentieth-century British poet. In his "Ode on Melancholy," Keats states that "in the very temple of delight/Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine"; in "The Great Lover," Brooke expresses his deep love for life's joys in the context of an attempt to "cheat drowsy Death."¹ Dr. Johnson's comment that "no mirth can indeed be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth"² seems inappropriate if applied to L'Allegro as well as to Il Penseroso, as Dr. Johnson intended, but the statement nevertheless is a fair appraisal of some of Milton's early poetry. In his first English sonnet, for instance, his response to the song of the nightingale is a mingled one, for he contrasts the "fresh hope" suggested by the nightingale's song with the ominous screech of the "rude Bird of Hate" who would fain "foretell" his "hopeless doom" (Hughes, 53).

The significance of the problem of evil in general and of premature death in particular is that it brings into focus the matter of the justice of God, a subject that recurs throughout most of Milton's poetry and prose and profoundly influences his views on human society. As a

Christian, Milton initially resolves the problem of death by asserting his belief that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished. There is nothing surprising in this. What is worth observing, however, is that Milton's handling of these traditional Christian commonplaces increases in sensitivity and subtlety as he develops, and his poetry shows an improvement in accord with his increasing maturity.

In such early poems as his elegies on the death of Lancelot Andrewes and Nicholas Felton, Milton moves with unconvincing rapidity from his expressions of grief to his statements that the deceased have entered the delights of the kingdom of "the eternal Father," and that death is simply an agent appointed by God to reap His harvest (Hughes, 23-25). By the time he comes to write his first really significant poem, On the Morning of Christ's Nativity (1629, Hughes, 42-50), however, he explores the problem of evil and suffering in a far more comprehensive manner. The poem does not manifest the "blind anger" of the elegy on the death of Felton (Hughes, 24), but presents instead a sustained attempt to assess the ultimate significance of Christ's advent in relation to the world of imperfection and misery in which man finds himself. Man is born into the confining limitations of "a darksome House of mortal Clay" and is subject to "speckl'd vanity" and "leprous sin" (14, 136, 138); worse still, he is not merely defenseless against the onslaught of physical death, but has earned for himself

the "deadly forfeit" of eternal damnation (6). This gloomy picture of the human condition does not pervade the poem as a whole, however, for Milton has made it clear at the outset that it has been ordained that Christ would "with his Father work us a perpetual peace" (7). The manner in which he expands on this theme is of great significance, for it indicates his awareness that the advent of Christ did not solve, in an immediate sense, all the problems of the world. Milton would, ideally, like to have seen the cessation of vanity and sin and their disastrous effects on earth. In a manner reminiscent of Virgil's depiction of the return of the Golden Age in the fourth Eclogue³, he allows his "fancy" to imagine an ideal society in which Truth and Justice would rule in the hearts and affairs of men:

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men
Th' enamel'd Arras of the Rainbow wearing,
And Mercy set between,
Thron'd in Celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering,
And Heav'n as at some festival,
Will open wide the Gates of her high Palace Hall
(XV, 141-8).

The rich imagery of this stanza has not been explored fully even by Barker, who in "The Pattern of Milton's Nativity Ode" briefly states that Milton throughout the poem has drawn "on a vast reservoir of pagan and Christian suggestion."⁴ Milton, with great skill, here blends the Classical conception of the Golden Age with imagery taken from the Hebraic-Christian tradition. The Classical depiction of

the return of Justice to earth is, in this ode, absorbed into the Christian vision of the union of heaven and earth in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse, which shows the descent of the new Jerusalem to earth, signifying that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" (Revelation 21:3). Milton's description of "Truth and Justice," with "Mercy set between" seems to suggest the two cherubim on each side of the mercy-seat (the top of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies) where the presence of God resided in the Jewish temple during the Old Testament period. "The Rainbow" brings to mind Ezekiel's vision of "the glory of the Lord," which is described as "the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain" (Ezekiel 1:28). The wide open gates of Heaven portrayed in the last line of the stanza are described in language very similar to that of Revelation 21. Milton's beatific poetic vision suddenly is interrupted by his realization that all this relates to the future, for "wisest Fate says no,/This must not yet be so" (149-50), an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God, who has ordained that Christ must redeem man's loss "on the bitter cross," and that such events as the final resurrection and judgment must occur before "our bliss/Full and perfect is" (153, 165-6).

If Milton had concluded the poem precisely at this point, the poem would still have been a good one, for he has

convincingly portrayed the means whereby Christ "with his Father" will release "our deadly forfeit" and "work us a perpetual peace" (6-7). The eternal beatitude of the saints in Heaven, from one point of view, makes a kind of divine comedy out of the problem of evil, suffering, and death, a position which he anticipated in some of his early elegies. In The Morning of Christ's Nativity, however, he moves abruptly from his portrayal of the "full and perfect" bliss of the saints in Heaven to a consideration of the significance of Christ's birth in relation to the situation on earth. Since "wisest Fate" (really the will of God, for "what I will is fate," PL, VII, 173) has decreed that the return of the "age of gold" will not take place until after the second advent of Christ, it is clear that "speckl'd vanity" and "leprous sin" will not immediately be removed by the birth of Christ. Milton sees, however, that this cloud of gloom has a silver lining, for Christ, the "Sun of Righteousness," has started to dispel the darkness of the domain of evil:

. . . for from this happy day
Th' old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway,
And wroth to see his Kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly Horror of his folded tail (167-72).

The flight of the heathen deities, which he portrays throughout the rest of the poem, symbolizes the retreat of error and vice at the advance of the truth of Christianity. From this poem, then, can be deduced one of Milton's early ideas

relating to a Christian society. While he recognizes that the appearance of Christianity on the earthly scene will not completely overthrow the power of evil in human affairs and immediately usher in a new age of gold in which justice, truth, and mercy rule, he nevertheless demonstrates that the truth of Christianity is a liberating force in the lives of individuals and nations, and that it will ultimately triumph.

Milton's attempt to reconcile the existence of evil and suffering in this world with his conception of the justice of God appears in a number of poems following the Nativity Ode and in his prose works (particularly in the Areopagitica); it also underlies the "great argument" of Paradise Lost. His emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the final bliss of the righteous in the Nativity Ode recurs constantly in these subsequent works. In his beautiful poem, "On Time," for example, he optimistically foresees man's ultimate deliverance from the power of "Death," "Chance," and "Time," and the triumph of "Joy," "Truth," "Peace," "Love," and "everything that is sincerely good" (Hughes, 80). Along with this poem, however, are a number of works which illustrate a broadening of Milton's perspective. In "At A Solemn Music" and in "Upon the Circumcision" another significant theme emerges: man's responsibility for the imperfect state of affairs in this world. Milton's reference in the Nativity Ode to "our deadly forfeit"

reappears in "Upon the Circumcision" as man's "rightful doom," a phrase which suggests both the justice of God and the guilt of mankind, and he proceeds to demonstrate that "we still transgress" the law of God (Hughes, 43, 81). In "At A Solemn Music" (Hughes, 82-3), he nostalgically contrasts the harmony of heaven and earth prior to man's fall with the dissonance caused by "disproportion'd sin," which

Jarr'd against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord . . . (19-22).

Milton's fascination with the idea of mankind's "first obedience and their state of good," as expressed in this poem, clearly foreshadows the theme of Paradise Lost, where he deals at far greater length with "Man's First Disobedience . . . and all our woe/With loss of Eden" (PL, I, 1, 3-4). These three short poems, written around 1632-33, can be regarded as a kind of trilogy in which Milton touches on a theme that comprises the substance of much of his greatest poetry: that men have forfeited the possibility of an ideal world because of their sins, but that by keeping "in tune with Heav'n" ("At A Solemn Music," 26), they can receive a foretaste of the joy and peace which will be the final heritage of the saints.

This theme receives considerable attention in Comus (1634), where it is expanded and analyzed at length. In this highly eclectic poem, in which he draws heavily upon commonplaces of Renaissance Platonism and Christian humanism,

Milton presents some of his fundamental views on human behavior, views which influenced his idea of a Christian society. His preoccupation with the problem of evil, demonstrated in so many of his early poems, appears in the speech of the Elder Brother. The conviction that "evil on itself shall back recoil,/And mix no more with goodness" (593-4) is an integral part of his idea of the justice of God, for "if this fail,/The pillar'd firmament is rott'n-ness,/And earth's base built on stubble" (597-9). Nevertheless, Milton's emphasis in this poem is not explicitly on God's justice or on God's grace (though these ideas are implicit throughout Comus), but on man's personal responsibility for his destiny. At the very outset of the poem, the attendant Spirit indicates that his "errand" is only to those who "by due steps aspire/To lay their just hands on that Golden Key/That opes the Palace of Eternity" (12-15, *italics mine*). The source of virtue is in heaven, but it must be practised on earth, a process which demands strenuous human effort. This idea is expressed aptly by Ben Jonson in his masque, Pleasure Reconciled to Vertue (1619):

in heaven she [virtue] hath hir right of birth . . .
Strive to keep hir your owne (344, 346).⁵

Milton incorporates it into the speech of the Elder Brother who, in referring to his sister's "hidden strength" of "chastity," affirms that though "Heav'n gave it," it "may be term'd her own" (416-420).

Milton regards the spiritual and physical disfigure-

ment resulting from a failure to pursue virtue as a consequence of human irresponsibility. It is because most men "are unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives" that they yield to their passions, symbolized by "fond intemperate thirst," and are thereby changed "into some brutish form of Wolf, or Bear, / Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog, or bearded Goat . . . to roll with pleasure in a sensual sty" (9, 70-71, 77). This was a commonplace theme that had appeared in such diversified works as Plato's Republic, where irrational appetite is described as beast-like;⁶ in Jonson's Pleasure Reconciled to Vertue, where as a result of inordinate pleasure man is "quyte change[d] . . . in his figure" and wallowing in "ye sty of vice;"⁷ in Thomas Carew's masque, Coelum Britannicum, which had been performed at Whitehall in 1633, a year prior to the appearance of Comus, and had illustrated the natural deformity resulting from vice by means of animal personifications of various forms of evil;⁸ this theme was also implicitly treated in the animal imagery of Shakespeare's plays, especially in Richard III and King Lear.⁹ Comus, is, however, closer in essential details and in spirit to the second book of the Faerie Queene than to any of these other works.¹⁰ What particularly impresses Milton is that Spenser places Guyon in situations which require the exercise of his will against temptation--"that he might see and know, and yet abstain," for the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world . . . necessary to the constituting of human vertue, and the

scanning of error to the confirmation of truth (CPW, II, 516).

Milton's firm conviction that "virtue may be assail'd but never hurt" (589), a major theme in Comus, is also Spenserian in spirit. By his account of Guyon in the Cave of Mammon, Spenser had illustrated that Guyon was perfectly safe as long as he "Ne suffred lust his safetie to betray" (F.Q., II, vii, 64). Though the Lady in Comus is temporarily immobilized "in stony fetters" (819), her assailant is also unable to touch "the freedom of [her] mind" (663). Milton's belief in the necessity of temptation to demonstrate true virtue, aptly termed "the happy trial" (592), underlies the idealism and optimism of Areopagitica ("who ever knew Truth put to the wors in a free and open encounter" CPW, II, 561), and influences the great poetry of his later years.

Though Comus contains very few explicit references to social and political issues, it is a useful indicator of Milton's early ideas on domestic liberty and its social and political ramifications. Comus was written while Milton was still in his twenties, but many of the views he expresses in it recur throughout the remainder of his work and become an integral part of his idea of a Christian society. The idea that "virtue . . . alone is free" (1019) and that intemperance enslaves man was a commonplace that Milton adhered to with a strong sense of personal conviction throughout his entire life. It enters into his social and political views, appearing in such works as his Second

Defence of the English People, where he affirms that "to be free is precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just, and temperate" and that a nation composed of people who have fallen "into slavery to [their] own lusts" will find themselves enslaved politically as well (CPW, IV, 684). This theme, as we shall see later, is explicitly interwoven into Paradise Lost. There are, nevertheless, some lines in Comus indicating that Milton was concerned with the social consequences of vices such as intemperance. Because some men, by means of "lewdly-pamper'd Luxury," have acquired unto themselves an excessive amount of "Nature's . . . store," many a "just man . . . now pines with want" (768-774). His underlying assumption is that God cannot be blamed for the social injustices created by human greed, for "most innocent nature" has an adequate supply for every one, provided that her bounties are dispensed in "unsuperfluous even proportion" (762, 773). He also suggests that selfishness and greed contribute to the spiritual degeneracy of a society, for "swinish gluttony"

Ne'er looks to Heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder (776-78).

There is, therefore, a vital connection in Milton's thinking between the "holy dictate of spare temperance" and the "sage/And serious doctrine of Virginity" (moral purity and awareness), for both are concerned with the mystery that "the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body," a

Pauline doctrine that Milton makes specific reference to in An Apology Against A Pamphlet (1642, in CPW, I, 892). Any form of physical indulgence, whether it be gluttony, drunkenness, or fornication, impedes the pursuit of virtue which alone can give the spiritual perspective that makes "this dim spot,/Which men call Earth" a tolerable and even enjoyable place in which to live (5-6).

It is important to note, however, that while earth is a "dim spot" in comparison to Heaven, it is by no means repudiated by Milton. The contrast in the poetic quality of the speeches of Comus and the Lady has led critics such as Enid Welsford to argue that Milton has kept beauty and goodness apart from each other.¹¹ F. R. Leavis finds the speeches of Comus "richer, subtler and more sensitive than anything in Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained or Samson Agonistes," and certainly superior to anything else in the poem itself.¹² But the appeal which Comus has for the reader (somewhat similar to the attraction of Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost) should not be regarded as faulty poetic craftsmanship on Milton's part. It adds greatly to the dramatic aspects of the poem, and also reinforces his theme of virtue triumphing over vice by making the temptation meaningful. Milton is not really separating beauty from goodness at all. It is a mistake to make a simple distinction between the Lady's stark appeal to goodness or truth and Comus' eloquent defence of the beauties and bounties of

nature, for while the Lady's position is clear enough, the same cannot be said for Comus' specious arguments. Comus attempts to show that the Lady's conception of virtue is incompatible with the enjoyment of nature, but he does so by misrepresenting the doctrine of temperance. For Comus, temperance involves feeding on "Pulse" and wearing nothing but "Frieze"--in short, asceticism or, in his words, "lean and sallow Abstinence" (709). He then asks

Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
 With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
 Covering the earth with odors, fruits, and flocks,
 Thronging the Seas with spawn innumerable,
 But all to please and sate the curious taste?
 (710-14).

This question echoes that of the lustful Sullen Shepherd in Fletcher's The Faithful Shepherdess (1608-9),

Hath not our Mother Nature for her store
 And great encrease, said it is good and just,
 And wills that every living Creature must
 Beget his like?¹³

In both cases, these arguments seem plausible enough when taken out of context, but Comus and the Sullen Shepherd are both motivated by incontinence. The Priest's response to the Sullen Shepherd consists of a sharp reprimand in which he exposes the Shepherd's "lust" and "branded soul."¹⁴ The Lady responds to Comus' arguments by pointing out to him that the gifts of "most innocent nature" (762) are best enjoyed by means of true temperance, or moderation, and not by over-indulgence and indiscriminating self-gratification. Nature's plenitude and abundance, to which Comus makes his

appeal, are not to be abstained from, but enjoyed with thanksgiving. The "giver" is "better thank't/His praise due paid" by a moderate partaking of his gifts than by either "sallow Abstinence" or "swinish gluttony" (775-6; 709, 776). Either of these extremes is, for Milton, a form of bondage. True liberty allows for the full development of man's capacity for the enjoyment of life and the beauties and bounties of the earth. Milton's position on this point remains constant throughout all of his work. In L'Allegro, for example, he requests the company of both "The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty" and "Mirth," for the two are not incompatible, but together produce "unreproved pleasures free" (36-40). The kind of "mirth" that does not afterwards require "repenting" is strongly advocated by Milton in Sonnets XX and XXI, written during the unsettled period of Cromwell's protectorate. Milton suggests to Henry Lawrence, the Lord President of Cromwell's Council, and to his son Edward that it is "not unwise" to "interpose" into their stressful political lives periods of necessary relaxation consisting of "neat repast . . . with Wine" and music (Hughes, 169). That gluttony and drunkenness are not intended is delicately implied by Milton's qualifying phrases, "light and choice," and "whence we may rise," which suggest temperance and moderation.¹⁵ In Sonnet XXI, Milton resolves "to drench" his "deep thoughts" in "mirth, that after no repenting draws," for such periods of refreshment, though

they may be less "wise in show" than unnecessary labour, are "cheerful hour[s]" sent by God (Hughes, 169). Milton's idea of a Christian society is not one in which every individual grimly fills out his lifespan with ceaseless drudgery. Though each man is in the direct field of vision of the "great task-Master's eye," Milton expects him to be aware that God's "yoke" is "mild" and that "mild Heav'n a time ordains" for the temperate delights of mirth, food, wine, and song (Sonnets VII, XIX, XXI, in Hughes, 76, 168, 169). Nature's abundance, as the Lady in Comus recognizes, is a cause for enjoyment and thanksgiving, as Adam also realizes in Paradise Lost:

. . . . I
 Adore thee, Author of this Universe,
 And all this good to man, for whose well being
 So amply, and with hands so liberal
 Thou hast provided all things . . . (VIII, 359-63).

Milton's appreciation of the legitimate pleasures and delights in life is, however, supplemented by a pervading sense of the seriousness of life which manifests itself in his personal aspirations and in his dedication to God, virtue, and liberty. His desire to fulfill the ideals of Christian humanism by becoming "dear to God and famous to all ages" (Of Education, CPW, II, 385) indicates his basic goals for a Christian society, though he manifests a corresponding awareness that differences between men are such that "this is not a bow for every man to shoot in" (CPW, II, 415), and that God has chosen some "of peculiar grace/Elect

above the rest" (PL, III, 183-4). Even though it is at times difficult to accept fully Milton's claim, in his Second Defence, that he had at no time in his life been influenced by "ambition, gain, or glory" (CPW, IV, 587), it must be acknowledged that his aspirations were closely fused with a sense of spiritual dedication and Christian duty. Many of his early poems reveal his desire to excel in the arts of poetry and to achieve greatness as an English epic poet. His early conception of his vocation as a poet is indicated, for example, in "At A Vacation Exercise" (Hughes, 30-32), which he wrote at the age of nineteen. In this poem, he recognizes the power of poetry to influence others by means of "willing chains and sweet captivity," and he expresses his ambition to write a poem of great significance, in his "native Language," on "some graver subject" that would encompass Heaven and earth (52, 1, 30). In his poetic address to Manso (a patron of Tasso) whom he had met on his Italian journey in 1638-9, he expresses his desire to compose an epic featuring such early British heroes as Arthur (Mansus, Hughes, 130), a sentiment he repeats a year later in his elegy on the death of his college friend, Charles Diodati, Damon's Epitaph (Hughes, 137). Similar aspirations are expressed in the autobiographical sections of The Reason of Church-Government, where he divulges his intention to "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die" (CPW, I, 810). One of

the possibilities he entertains is that of employing the epic form to outline the "pattern of a Christian Heroe" (CPW, I, 814) in the manner of Ariosto, Tasso, or Spenser. It is important to note that the kind of topic Milton envisions is conditioned by his realization that, "being a Christian," his primary objective must be to enhance "Gods glory by the honour and instruction of [his] country" (CPW, I, 810). Like Sidney, who in his Defence of Poesie, affirmed that poets were regarded by Aristotle as "the auncient treasurers of the Grecians' divinitie" and that the Romans saw the poet as "Vates, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or Prophet,"¹⁶ Milton sees the poet as a kind of priest who, though not officiating in a specific ecclesiastical capacity, has been endowed with power

to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of vertu, and publick civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of Gods Almightynesse, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church, to sing the victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious Nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of Kingdoms and States from justice and Gods true worship . . . (Reason of Church-Government, CPW, 816-17).

In this eloquent passage, Milton expresses not only his idea of the role of a poet in a Christian society, but his concern for justice and true religion, which he wishes to see prevail in such a society. The sincerity of his personal dedication to God is suggested by the fact that he wrote these words in a pamphlet specifically devoted to the cause

of religious liberty, even though this pamphlet and many of his other prose works represented a postponement of the poetic career he had envisioned for himself. This preoccupation with issues related to personal, religious, and political freedom, although it seemed to interrupt his development as a poet, supplied him with materials for his greatest poetry at a later date. Nevertheless, he did not abandon poetry completely from 1640 to 1660, but left a fairly large number of short poems which form a useful commentary on the religious and political themes to which he devoted so much attention in his prose.

Milton's concern with his vocation as a poet, and his increasing awareness of the necessity to champion the cause of liberty as he saw it, are both manifested in the greatest poem of his earlier career, Lycidas. In this pastoral elegy, he makes use of such traditional devices as shepherd-poets, the lament of Nature's woods and flowers, and the apotheosis at the end. The poem displays a wide variety of influences ranging from Theocritus to Spenser, of which Virgil's Eclogues and Spenser's Shepheardes Calender are probably the most significant.¹⁷ The sincerity of his grief at the drowning of a fellow student, Edward King, has been frequently questioned, though probably no more emphatically than by Dr. Johnson, whose aversion to the "inherent improbability" of the pastoral setting made him assert that "where there is leisure for fiction there

is little grief."¹⁸ Tillyard defends Milton's sincerity on the assumption that the poem demonstrates "deep feeling," but goes on to show that the real subject is not Edward King but "Milton himself."¹⁹ This position is challenged by Daiches, who maintains that the poem is not only about "Milton himself" and then offers the broader and more compelling suggestion that Lycidas deals with "man in his creative capacity, as Christian humanist poet-priest" and with the problem that "man is always liable to be cut off before making his contribution."²⁰ While Milton is concerned with his own situation as a young aspiring poet and faces the possibility that he, like Edward King, could also be cut off by death and thereby fail to realize his potentialities on earth, his outlook in the poem extends to "all that wander" in the "perilous flood" of forces beyond man's control, though his focus is directed especially towards those who are genuinely striving to master "the faithful Herdsman's art" (185, 121). Lycidas demonstrates his attempt to reconcile the facts of death with his conception of the justice of God, a concern which, as we have seen, underlies much of his earlier poetry. Why does God permit the wicked to carry on with their iniquities, while well-motivated, talented individuals such as King are allowed to succumb to the caprices of the elements? If it is God's will to see peace and righteousness prevail on earth as well as in Heaven, why does He not intervene on behalf of the

saints? How can a truly Christian society dominated by the "wise and good" ever come into being if those who could make the greatest contribution to such a society are cut off in their prime of life? These questions are implicit in the poem, and contribute to its intense power and its tone of sincerity.

The three major segments of Lycidas all conclude with an attempt to analyze the justice of God in terms of rewards or punishments. In the first movement, the persona asks, in a manner reminiscent of Cuddie in Spenser's October Eclogue, whether there is any point in cultivating the arts of poesy.²¹ Phoebus replies to the effect that true praise and fame are only to be found in Heaven, where "all-judging Jove pronounces lastly on each deed" (82-3). The ultimate reward of the righteous is thereby assured. The problem of the continuing abuse by evil shepherds of the "worthy" and "hungry Sheep" on earth remains, however, and occupies Milton's attention in the second movement. His reference to those who "for their bellies' sake,/Creep and intrude and climb into the fold" (114-15) echoes Christ's parable of the good shepherd and the evil hireling in the Gospel of John, and his depiction of the starved and sickly sheep in the next few lines recalls the treatment of the sheep of Israel by their cruel, greedy shepherds in Jeremiah 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 34:1-19. The most direct influence upon Milton's incorporation of these ideas into his

pastoral elegy was, however, probably Spenser's May Eclogue, though the tradition can be traced, as Hanford points out, back to such works as Mantuan's Adulscencia,²² or even to works of a different kind, such as Dante's Divine Comedy, as Hughes demonstrates.²³ The May Eclogue in The Shepheardes Calender contains a dispute between two shepherds, Palinode and Piers, who represent respectively an irresponsible, self-centred minister and a conscientious one. Though the argument which prefaces the eclogue indicates that the bad shepherd is "the Catholique" and the good shepherd "the protestant," it is probable that Spenser's poem is a valid defense of the Puritan remonstrances against the prelates.²⁴ In any case, this is the way Milton interprets and employs the May Eclogue in Animadversions:

Let the novice learne first to renounce the world, and so give himselfe to God, and not . . . that hee may close the better with the World, like that false Shepheard Palinode in the Eclogue of May, under whom the Poet lively personates our Prelates. . . . Those our admired Spencer inveighs against, not without some presage of these reforming times (CPW, I, 722).

Milton immediately follows up his point with a lengthy passage taken from Spenser's poem, part of which is reproduced here from Milton's text:

But tract of Time, and long prosperity
 (That nurse of vice, this of insolency)
 Lulled the Shepheards in such security
 That not content with loyall obeysance
 Some gan to gape for greedy governance (CPW, I, 723;
 cp. Poetical Works of Spenser, p. 437, lines
 117-121):

Piers' prediction of the day of judgment "when great Pan

account of shepherdes shall aske" (54) finds a resounding echo in Lycidas, where the second movement ends with the warning that the

. . . two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more (130-1).

Reesing's suggestion that the "two-handed engine" refers to the crozier of Christ, the good Shepherd, is as adequate an interpretation as any, for it not only fits harmoniously into the pastoral imagery of the poem, but can be supported by such traditional references as "thy rod and thy staff" from the twenty-third Psalm.²⁵ This movement of the poem concludes with a sense of assurance concerning the justice of God, whose judgment upon evil-doers is certain and final.

The question still remains, however, whether it would not have been better for Lycidas to have been spared to make his full contribution to his needy fellow men on earth. This problem is resolved obliquely, but nonetheless effectively, in the triumphant concluding movement of the poem. Like Daphnis in Virgil's Fifth Eclogue, or Dido and Astrophel in Spenser's November Eclogue and Astrophel, Lycidas is portrayed in rapturous bliss in heaven.²⁶ The apotheosis of Lycidas, imaginatively depicted in the image of the setting and rising sun, suggests the relative insignificance of the affairs of time in comparison to eternity and contrasts the obscurity of earthly things in relation to the timeless brightness of heaven. Lycidas' "large recompense" thereby becomes a source of comfort "to all

that wander in the perilous flood," giving men a sense of the value of their present labours as well as the courage and zeal to respond to more of the challenges of life in the "fresh Woods, and Pastures new" (184-5, 193).

The resolution in Lycidas prefigures Milton's own increasing awareness of the necessity of becoming personally involved in the struggle for religious, personal, and political liberty in England. His native land fell far short of his ideals for a truly Christian society, but the growing success of the Puritan cause, with which he had begun to identify himself, gave him the opportunity to apply his early ideals to the specific issues at hand. The concern which he demonstrates for religious freedom in his attacks on the corrupt clergy in Lycidas, for instance, is perpetuated not only in his numerous prose pamphlets but in a number of the short poems which supplement these tracts. In these poems, Milton's previous preoccupation with the matter of the justice of God in the affairs of this world is, to a large extent, lost sight of in his attempts to fulfill his own responsibility by defending true liberty as he sees it. His optimistic hope that the "great and warlike Nation" of England would accept the kind of instruction that he as poet-priest could offer, so as to become "the soberest, wisest, and most Christian People" by the time Christ should return, is soon modified by his awareness that the "perverseness" of human "folly" is such that men would

invent for themselves new forms of bondage even if "God would . . . withdraw his just punishments from us" or restrain the power of "the devill, or any earthly enemy" (CPW, I, 616; II, 234). Milton's recognition of the unlikelihood that he would ever see in England the kind of society he envisioned did not, however, deter him from devoting his energies in the pursuit of his ideal. This is indicated not only in the great number of ecclesiastical pamphlets he produced in the 1640's and 50's, but in a number of the short poems he wrote on the subject of liberty during this period.

The value Milton places upon domestic liberty in Of Education and Areopagitica is forcefully expressed in a couple of sonnets he wrote after assessing the public reaction to his divorce tracts, particularly Tetrachordon (1645), where he firmly bases his views on the freedom of divorce upon four passages of Scripture taken from Genesis, Deuteronomy, Matthew and 1 Corinthians. In Sonnet XI (Hughes, 143), he expresses his disappointment that his work on divorce, after "Numb'ring good intellects," is now "seldom por'd on." He then goes on to satirize the ignorant and unlearned, who he is certain must have had difficulty with his erudite title, which refers to the four notes of the scale in Greek music. It is, however, not so much ignorance per se that he despises as the perverse resistance to learning his contemporaries

are displaying. In an apostrophe addressed to the "Soul of Sir John Cheke," the first professor of Greek at Cambridge, Milton laments,

Thy age, like ours, O Soul of Sir John Cheke,
Hated not Learning worse than Toad or Asp.

Their aversion to truth is even more vehemently treated in Sonnet XII (Hughes, 143), where he makes use of the animal imagery he had employed in Comus to illustrate the degraded state of men who reject reason and the truth that "would set them free":

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of Owls and Cuckoos, Asses, Apes and Dogs

The perversity of these people is such that they mistake the true freedom advocated by the Scripture for the prerogative to do evil, the only kind of "liberty" they know:

License they mean when they cry liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good.

In these two cryptic lines, Milton presents the cardinal principle of his ethical, religious, and political thought. In the next few lines, he attributes the great loss of life and property resulting from the civil war to the failure of men to discriminate between true liberty and the counterfeits which invariably tend to destroy it:

But from that mark how far they rove we see
For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood.

The contrast between the truth that sets men free and the bondage resulting from ignorance and evil (which are

closely associated in Milton), reflects the teachings of the New Testament. His assumption that the truth of the Scriptures would enlarge men's awareness of their liberties echoes Christ's statements in St. John's Gospel:

If ye continue in my word . . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [or bondservant, R.V.] of sin (John 8:31-4).

Milton's extension of this principle into the social and political spheres, however, parallels Plato's contention in The Republic that an ideal commonwealth cannot be attained unless political power is placed in the hands of the genuinely wise and virtuous.²⁷ Since only the "wise and good" really know what liberty is, it is they alone who qualify for leadership in a Christian society. This juxtaposition of learning and virtue is reinforced in another poem of this period, "On The New Forcers of Conscience Under The Long Parliament" (Hughes, 144-5), where Milton comes to the defense of "Men whose Life, Learning, Faith and pure intent/Would have been held in high esteem with Paul." His reference to Paul is of particular significance, for Paul's faith and zeal were accompanied by education and learning, which gave him more opportunities to influence the society of his day than were available to many of the other apostles; it is not surprising, therefore, that Milton finds in Paul a ready exemplar of the Christian virtues he most admires.

The combination of faith and learning, which Milton

regards as essential in Christian leadership, must, however, be accompanied by purity of motive; even the right kind of belief may be put to harmful uses. His conviction that "a man may be a heretick in the truth . . . if he beleeeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determines" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 543) indicates his perceptive awareness of the tendency for men to adhere to a particular belief for the sake of convenience or advantage. This, he recognizes, results in hypocrisy. In the poem, "On The New Forcers of Conscience Under The Long Parliament," he contrasts the "pure intent" of the Independents with the hypocrisy of a number of the Presbyterians who, having renounced the liturgy of the former prelates of the Church of England, found it economically expedient to emulate the prelates in the practice of plurality, even though they had previously denounced such activities. Milton fearlessly exposes their hypocritical behavior in these lines:

. . . you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,
And with stiff vows renounc'd his Liturgy
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality
From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorr'd. . . .

He again focuses his attention on this problem in his

History of Britain:

The most of them were such as had preach'd and cry'd downe with great show of zeal the avarice & pluralities of bishops and prelates; that one cure of soules was a full imployment for one spiritual pastor how able so ever, if not a charge rather above humane strength. Yet these conscientious men . . . were not asham'd to be seen so quicklie pluralists and nonresidents themselves, to a fearful condemnation doubtless by thir owne mouthes (CE, X, 321-2).

But Milton's exposure of the hypocrisy of the Presbyterians was motivated by an even greater concern, religious toleration. It was because the Presbyterian divines in the Long Parliament had attempted to legislate complete conformity in matters of faith and practice that Milton felt compelled to attack them. In the Areopagitica, Milton had lamented that "the freedom of learning must groan again" as it had done in the days of the Inquisition, and he had predicted at that time that it would soon be beyond all "controversie that Bishops and Presbyters are the same to us both name and thing" (CPW, II, 541-2, 539). The attempt of the Presbyterians in the Assembly to extend their secular power into the religious sphere forced Milton to react, in "On The New Forcers of Conscience," by demonstrating that "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large." For Milton, truth cannot and must not be propagated by force. A truly Christian society cannot be constructed or perpetuated by the kind of legislation which would make use of "the Civil Sword/To force our Consciences that Christ set free."

Milton's resistance to the use of force as a means of producing religious conformity remains constant throughout his life. It emerges in his Treatise of Civil Power, where he contends that "it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compell in matters of religion" (CE, VI, title page) and in his Articles of Peace, where he argues that the extirpation of "Popery and Prelacy, then of Heresy,

Schism, and prophaness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound Doctrin and the power of godliness" cannot be done effectively by "the work of the Civil sword, but of the spirituall which is the Word of God" (CE, VI, 262).

His conviction that enforced religion represents a violation of spiritual liberty permeates his poetry as well. In Sonnet XVI (Hughes, 160-1), he appeals to Cromwell to deliver England from the threat of those who seek "to bind our souls with secular chains," and in Sonnet XVII (Hughes, 161), implicitly argues that there can be no real peace in either the civil or the religious sphere unless its leaders recognize

Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
What severs each . . . which few have done.

The almost incredible violence and cruelty which can result from the violation of this principle are vividly portrayed in one of Milton's most powerful sonnets, "On The Late Massacre in Piemont" (Hughes, 167-8), where he demands that God "avenge" his "slaughter'd Saints, whose bones/Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold":

Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy Sheep and in their ancient Fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd
Mother with Infant down the Rocks

Although he has the assurance that these martyrs have gone to Heaven and trusts that their death, like that of Lycidas, will not have been in vain, his sense of outrage persists right to the end of the poem. He believes that God will

cause "their martyr'd blood and ashes" to become the seed of the true Church, but he nevertheless anticipates that God will execute divine vengeance upon those who have used force in the service of religion. Force, for Milton, can never produce a Christian society, for it violates the very liberty which Christ has brought into the world:

What will they then
But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
His consort Liberty; what, but unbuild
His living Temples, built by Faith to stand,
Thir own Faith not another's . . . (PL, XII, 524-28).

His firm stand for religious toleration and freedom in a Christian society is evident enough. He will not allow the use of force in spiritual matters, except to suppress systems such as "popery" which would deny religious liberty to others. He is, however, as his poetry of the 1640's and 50's indicates, aware that civil and political liberty at times must be procured or maintained by the use of force.

Milton's position on the use of military might in the secular sphere is slightly more complex than his stand against force in spiritual matters. Even in Areopagitica, where he expresses his optimistic hope that a truly reformed society in both church and state may be inaugurated by God's Englishmen (CPW, II, 553), in the civil sphere Milton never really expects "that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth"; that, says he, "let no man in this World expect" (CPW, II, 487). He could not fail to recognize that many of the achievements of the Puritans, particularly the

curbing of the power of the king and the abolition of prelacy, had been accomplished by force and even bloodshed. Unlike Erasmus, the great Christian humanist of the previous century, he does not maintain that "from war comes the shipwreck of all that is good."²⁸ In the Education of a Christian Prince (1516), Erasmus is particularly opposed to wars between Christian nations.²⁹ Milton, however, explicitly states in The Christian Doctrine that "there seems no reason why war should be unlawful now, any more than in the time of the Jews; nor is it anywhere forbidden in the New Testament" (CE, XVII, 411). War must not, however, "be undertaken without mature deliberation" and it should also "be waged in a spirit of godliness" (CE, XVII, 407). His standard of conduct for a Christian society, as The Christian Doctrine illustrates, is ultimately based on the Scriptures, which he feels do not forbid warfare on certain conditions. It is, nevertheless, clear from his poem "On The Lord General Fairfax At The Siege Of Colchester" (Sonnet XV, Hughes, 159-60) and "To The Lord General Cromwell" (Sonnet XVI, Hughes, 160-1) that Milton is very much aware of the limitations of warfare as a means for obtaining and preserving liberty. Though he praises Fairfax's "firm unshak'n virtue" which "ever brings/Victory home," he observes that "new rebellions raise/Thir Hydra heads," for "what can War, but endless war still breed." Milton admires valour and virtue, or more particularly, virtuous valour, but he is

nonetheless perceptive enough to recognize its shortcomings, a position which he also maintains in his dramatic depiction of the war in Heaven in the sixth book of Paradise Lost. His attitude towards the use of the sword in his sonnet on Fairfax closely resembles that of Marvell in his masterful conclusion to "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland":

But thou the Wars and Fortunes Son
March indefatigably on;
And for the last effect
Still keep thy Sword erect:
Besides the force it has to fright
The Spirits of the shady Night,
The same Arts that did gain
A Pow'r must it maintain.³⁰

Milton offers a solution to the dilemma, however, by suggesting that war will stop perpetuating itself when men undertake the "nobler task" of reforming their basic motives, which are so frequently ruled by "Avarice and Rapine." Though he praises the "faith and matchless Fortitude" of Cromwell in Sonnet XVI, he declares that there are issues which can be more effectively settled by peaceful means than by military force:

. . . peace hath her victories
No less renown'd than war, new foes arise
Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains:
Help us to save free Conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves whose Gospel is their maw.

Issues relating to faith and morality cannot be legislated by military prowess, but they nevertheless require such a measure of courage and self-discipline that "war is a mere game" by comparison (CPW, IV, 674). In this respect, Milton

agrees with Cicero's affirmation in The Offices that "that sort of courage which is seen in the management of civil affairs, is no less deserving than that which consists in the business of fighting,"³¹ and, on the individual level, with the Hebraic idea that the one who rules his own spirit is better "than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Milton's conviction that military prowess is of less importance than the moral courage, fortitude and integrity required in the less spectacular arena of daily living finds a close parallel in his attitude towards his blindness. Though he displays a sense of satisfaction at having lost his sight for the sake of "liberty's defense" (Sonnet XXII, Hughes, 170), his real triumph is in his attitude towards God. Though he has become imprisoned in the cell of his own physical blindness, he enjoys the supreme liberty of accepting God's will without any loss "Of heart or hope" and without arguing "Against heav'n's hand or will." His realization that action is of ultimately less consequence than a voluntary acceptance of God's will is further suggested by an even greater sonnet (XIX, Hughes, 168), which immediately captures the reader's attention with the powerful autobiographical lines:

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide. . . .

Such themes as the justice of God, human responsibility, and Milton's preoccupation with his own vocation as a poet-priest and as a champion of liberty--all of which had

appeared in his earlier poetry--are distilled in his highly concentrated poem. His view of God as his "great task-Master" (Sonnet VII, Hughes, 76-77) re-emerges as he considers that the "one Talent which is death to hide" is now "Lodg'd with [him] useless" in spite of his desire to please God by fulfilling his potentialities as a poet. His momentary questioning of God's justice, "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied," is soon replaced by his realization that, since everything that he has is given to him by God's grace, there is nothing that he can offer to God except voluntary submission. By bearing willingly God's "mild yoke," he experiences true freedom and discovers that God is not a "task-Master," but the omnipotent King in whose presence there is fullness of joy. The highest form of service thus becomes the contemplation of God's majesty, power, and justice. It is this kind of vision which illumines Milton as he asserts "Eternal Providence" and justifies "the ways of God to men" in Paradise Lost.

CHAPTER VI

MODELS FOR A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY IN PARADISE LOST

Milton's conviction that true liberty cannot be manifested in a society unless the fundamental power lies in the hands of the "wise and good" (Sonnet XII) is expressed on a far grander scale in Paradise Lost than in the poetry and prose written prior to it. The concern he demonstrates for a Christian society where spiritual, personal, and political freedom can flourish, reappears in Paradise Lost in an even greater variety of perspectives than in his earlier works. Although he recognizes that the kind of Christian society he would like to see established in England is a highly unlikely probability because of the "noxious humor of returning to bondage" manifested by his countrymen (The Readie and Easie Way, CE, VI, 111), his preoccupation with true liberty and ideal government is evident throughout his greatest poem. His idea of a Christian society can be inferred from the ideal societies in Heaven and in Eden, and also from the deviations from these ideal societies.

The kind of society Milton most admires is one where political power is in perfect harmony with justice, wisdom, and goodness. The pattern of this Miltonic ideal

can be found in the descriptions of Heaven throughout Paradise Lost. It might seem initially incongruous that Milton, in spite of his anti-monarchical tendencies, devotes so much of his great epic poem to portrayals of God's regal majesty. In Eikonoklastes, for instance, he attacks hereditary kingship on the grounds that kings are "commonly not . . . the wisest or the worthiest by far of whom they claime have the governing" (CPW, III, 486). Even here, however, it should be noted that he is not opposed to kingship in an absolute sense, but insists that a monarch must be superior in wisdom and worth to those over whom he reigns. This is clarified further in his first Defence of the People of England, where he affirms that there should be "no king but the one who surpasses all others in wisdom and bravery" (CPW, IV, 425). Milton's position on this point is fully compatible with Plato's declaration that "a state is . . . happiest under a true king."¹ Since Charles I was inadequate as a ruler, Milton was able to transfer his loyalty away from King Charles to God, the "sovereign of the universe and only object of reverence."²

As a Christian, Milton of course accepts the traditional view that God is without peer in majesty, power, justice, wisdom, and goodness. God's declaration in Isaiah 46:9, cited in The Christian Doctrine, Chapter II (CE, XIV, 51), "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me," finds an echo in God's words to

Adam in Paradise Lost:

. . . for none I know
Second to mee or like, equal much less (VII, 406-7).

Heaven is, for Milton, "the seat of bliss" (VI, 273) primarily because it is a realm ruled by one who is supremely "wise and good." The form of government in heaven, as Wolfe has observed, thus "accords ideally with the pattern of [Milton's] commonwealth principles."³ Since Milton's depiction of the kind of rulership exercised in Heaven is so closely tied to his idea of a Christian society, however, it deserves considerably more attention than Wolfe has given to it in a couple of paragraphs in Milton in the Puritan Revolution. Wolfe has perceptively observed that God's rule is not based on "old repute,/Consent or custom" (I, 639-40), as Satan suggests, but on "his perfection of character."⁴ Milton's position on this point is consistent with his contention in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates that the right form of government in a society must not be determined by the "tyrannie of Custom" but rather by the principle that power should be in the hands of the individual (or individuals) most "eminent" in "vertue and true worth" (CPW, III, 190).

In portraying Heaven as the model for an ideal society, Milton is confronted with the necessity of harmonizing the omnipotence of God with other attributes he also regards as essential in an ideal ruler. The omnipotence of God is, of course, never questioned by Milton. The absolute

power of God is explicitly stated at the outset of Paradise Lost, where God is shown as "the Almighty Power" who "Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Sky" his adversary, Satan, who "durst defy th' Omnipotent to Arms" (I, 44-5, 49). Even Satan, though with a trace of perversity, is forced to acknowledge that God's power cannot be successfully challenged:

. . . whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'erpow'rd such force as ours
(I, 143-5).

God's assessment of his own omnipotence is indicated by his ironical words to the Son when Satan secretly begins his rebellious plot:

Nearly it now concerns us to be sure
Of our Omnipotence/. . . lest unawares we lose
This our high place, our Sanctuary, our Hill
(V, 721-2, 731-2).

Empson, who dislikes Milton's God almost as much as Satan does, classifies this passage as "merely one of God's jokes."⁵ Though perverse in intention, Empson hits close to the truth, for God indeed has his foes "in derision," as the Son clearly recognizes (V, 736). Whether or not Milton's portrayal of God at this point pleases the reader is not the main issue; Milton's prime concern here is to illustrate the futility and absurdity of challenging God's supreme power. There is nothing in the universe that can withstand "the will . . . of all-ruling Heaven" (I, 211-12). Milton's view of God in The Christian Doctrine as "the only

Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 1:8, CE, XIV, 49) is thus reinforced in Paradise Lost from a variety of points of view.

It is of crucial importance to note, however, that Milton's portrayal of Heaven as a model for an ideal society includes far more than the concept of power. Milton has clearly indicated in his political and ecclesiastical pamphlets his resistance towards tyrannical forms of government and legislation. In his Second Defence, for instance, he makes a sharp distinction between tyranny and kingship: "As a good man differs from a bad, so much, I hold, does a king differ from a tyrant" (CPW, IV, 561). It is not surprising, therefore, that in Paradise Lost he takes measures to show that God as a ruler is not only omnipotent but also supremely just. Through the words of Abdiel to Satan, Milton acknowledges that God as the creator of all things has the right to deal arbitrarily with his creatures,

Shalt thou give Law to God/. . . who made
Thee what thou art, and form'd the Pow'rs of Heav'n
Such as he pleased, and circumscrib'd thir being?
(V, 822-25).

Still it is apparent that, throughout the poem, Milton is vitally concerned with the justice of God. This concern, so frequently demonstrated throughout his minor poetry, is immediately manifested in the opening passage of Paradise Lost, even prior to his references to God's omnipotence. His first appeal to the "Heav'nly Muse" is for support and illumination in his attempts to "assert Eternal Providence,/"

And justify the ways of God to men" as far as a poetic treatment of "this great Argument" allows (I, 23-26). The ultimate criterion of good government is not power, but justice, which Milton in The Tenure defines as "the onely true-sovran and supreme Majesty upon earth" (CPW, III, 237), though justice without power is, of course, ineffectual. In the ideal government of Heaven, power and justice are, therefore, not only vitally connected but identical.

It is significant that God's first speech in Paradise Lost is concerned primarily with the theme of justice. Many a reader has been distressed by the tone of this first heavenly speech, where God foretells the fall of mankind:

For Man will heark'n to his glozing lies,
And easily transgress the sole Command,
Sole pledge of his obedience: So will fall
Hee and his faithless Progeny: whose fault?
Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall
(III, 93-99).

Pope, for example, maintains in his "Imitations of Horace" that in passages such as these, "God the Father turns a School-Divine."⁶ Waldock sees in this speech "a perfect picture of an immaculate character on the defensive,"⁷ and even Douglas Bush, who generally admires Milton's poetic techniques, feels that Milton should not have made God speak.⁸ A defense of Milton's style in this speech is offered by Irene Samuel, who suggests that "the 'I' who

speaks" is not "a person like other persons" who use "rhetoric to persuade" but is rather "the omniscient voice of the omnipotent moral law" which "speaks simply what is."⁹ In a similar vein, Stanley Fish states that the speech is "a meditation, not an argument" which encompasses "the total picture of reality."¹⁰

That Milton should have made God speak can be defended on the grounds that He not only plays a major role in Paradise Lost but is, as far as Milton is concerned, the final and irrefutable authority in all things. Milton's exposure of both men and angels to the authoritative voice of God adds greatly to the dramatic aspects of the poem as a whole. The unappealing tone of God's speech is, however, a more difficult matter. In spite of Fish's contention that the speech is "not an argument,"¹¹ it is difficult to deny that it is argumentative in tone. Such excerpts as "whose fault?" and "whose but his own?" do, in fact, make God appear to be on the defensive, as Waldock declares.¹² This does not mean, however, that Milton's poetic craftsmanship is at fault, as Waldock concludes from this passage. God's speech is a necessary expression of the "great Argument" which unifies the entire epic, namely that the problem of evil is not incompatible with the justice of God. It is highly significant that no one in Paradise Lost questions the fact of God's justice until after he has willfully disobeyed God. It is not until Satan finds himself in Hell

that he suggests that God ruled by "old repute,/Consent or custom" and accuses God of deception because He had concealed his strength, "which tempted our attempt" (I, 639-42). In his soliloquy on Mt. Niphates, however, Satan acknowledges that he had "the same free Will and Power to stand" and that "Heav'n's free Love" had been "dealt equally to all" (IV, 66-68). Similarly, Adam, when he begins to suffer the consequences of his disobedience towards God, murmurs

. . . inexplicable
Thy Justice seems . . . (X, 754-5),

though he had, prior to his transgression, declared that

We never shall forget to love
Our maker, and obey him whose command
Single, is yet so just (V, 550-2).

Justice, of course, is never appealing to the individual who has deliberately sinned. Since Milton holds the orthodox position that "all sinned in Adam" (The Christian Doctrine, CE, XV, 183), he assumes that every "guilty reader" (a phrase suggested by Joseph Summers)¹³ will recognize himself in the harsh term "ingrate," which God uses to describe mankind in Paradise Lost (III, 97). Man, being guilty, is not in a position to appreciate the justice of God. It is, therefore, highly appropriate that God himself should speak objectively on fundamental moral issues. Though God's first heavenly speech, like the reply of the Lady to Comus, sounds harsh to the unpurged ears of mortal men, it is worth observing that the sinless Son of God, to whom the Father

is speaking, finds the speech "gracious" (III, 144).

Milton's emphasis on the justice of God harmonizes perfectly with the Renaissance view of the paramount importance of justice in a ruler. Sir Thomas Elyot, for instance, states in The Book Named the Governor (1531) that "the most excellent and incomparable virtue called justice is so necessary and expedient for the governor of a public weal, that without it none other virtue may be commendable."¹⁴ In The Faerie Queene, justice is described as the "Most sacred vertue . . . Resembling God in his imperial might" (V, Proem, 10). In his portrayal of the ideal government of Heaven, Milton reinforces God's defense of the justice of his ways with the Son's acknowledgement that the Father is "Judge/Of all things made, and judgest only right" (III, 154-5), an obvious echo of Abraham's intercessory appeal to God to spare the righteous in Sodom: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). That Milton makes use of these traditional commonplaces in his depiction of God's justice is, of course, not surprising. What is of special significance, however, is the great emphasis he places on one particular point: God's justice is primarily manifested in His consistent adherence to His "high Decree" which "ordain'd" the "freedom" of all the beings He has created (III, 126-8). Since God has made "all th' Ethereal Powers/And Spirits," as well as mankind, "just and right,/Sufficient to have stood,

though free to fall" (III, 98-100), He cannot be held accountable for the willful rebellion of any of his creatures, though He foreknew what would happen:

. . . they themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown
(III, 116-19).

God, who is supremely just, is not responsible for evil in the universe. Through Michael's address to Satan during the war in Heaven, Milton declares that Satan himself was the "Author of evil" and that misery was "uncreated till the crime/Of [his] Rebellion" (VI, 262, 268-9).

Milton's attempt to illustrate the justice of God in Book III has led critics such as Waldo to argue that "it does not come very naturally to Milton to suggest a loving God."¹⁵ If this were completely true, Milton's God would certainly fall far short of being an ideal ruler. The fact is, however, that God's speech indicates at least two vital attributes besides justice and omnipotence: goodness and wisdom. It would have been inconsistent of Milton to insist throughout his early poetry and his many pamphlets that rulership belonged to the "wise and good" (for example, Sonnet XII), and then to ignore this principle in Paradise Lost. Though God's justice is certainly emphasized in Milton's portrayal of the government of Heaven (and the entire universe), His goodness and love are also clearly indicated by the conclusion of His speech, which

affirms that "Mercy first and last shall brightest shine" (III, 134). The "unexampl'd love" demonstrated in the Son's offer to die in order to redeem mankind (III, 410) is the manifestation of the Father's "Eternal purpose" and His "soveran sentence, that Man should find grace" (III, 172, 145). The infinite love of God, as expressed in the Son, is depicted in one of Milton's most eloquent passages:

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious, in him all his Father shone
Substantially express'd, and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appear'd,
Love without end, and without measure Grace
(III, 138-41).

In the ideal realm of Heaven, the Father's justice and the Son's love and compassion are in perfect accord and harmony. The goodness of God is further portrayed in the attitude of the angels towards "Heav'n's matchless King" (IV, 41). When Lucifer first discloses his evil plot to "all his Train," Abdiel reminds him that they have received only good from God:

. . . by experience taught we know how good,
And of our good, and of our dignity
How provident he is . . . (V, 826-8).

Even after his fall, Satan is forced to admit that he had no grounds for rebelling against God, to whom he owed a "debt immense of endless gratitude" (V, 52).

Besides portraying God's omnipotence, justice, and goodness, Milton illustrates the infinite wisdom of God. In Tetrachordon, Milton declares that "the wiser should

govern the lesse wise" (CPW, II, 589). This principle is interwoven into Milton's descriptions of God as the ideal ruler. Milton accepts, without question, the orthodox position that there are no limits to God's knowledge and wisdom. This is indicated in The Christian Doctrine, where he discusses the "omniscience" and "intelligence" of God and refers to passages such as Isaiah 40:28, "there is no searching of his understanding" (CE, XIV, 55). Milton's first detailed portrayal of God in Paradise Lost expresses his conviction that God's perspective on things is not affected in any way by time or distance. "From the pure Empyrean where he sits," God sees all "His own works and their works" in one glance, and also "from his prospect high . . . past, present, future he beholds" (III, 57-9, 77-8). God's total awareness of all things is dramatically depicted by Milton in the two most crucial episodes in the poem, the plot of Satan in Heaven and the temptation scene in Eden. None of Satan's concealed activities in the remotest regions of Heaven escape "th' Eternal eye, whose sight discerns/Abstrusest thoughts" (V, 711-12), nor does Satan's disguise as a serpent hide him from the sight of God, for

what can scape the Eye
Of God All-seeing, or deceive his Heart
Omniscient, who in all things wise and just,
Hinder'd not Satan to attempt the mind
Of Man . . . (X, 5-9).

The supreme manifestation of God's wisdom, however, from

Milton's point of view, is that He knows how to bring good out of evil. In The Christian Doctrine, Milton states that it "is as unmeet as it is incredible . . . that evil should prevail over good" (CE, XIV, 29) and later affirms that "God eventually converts every evil deed into an instrument of good, contrary to the expectation of sinners, and overcomes evil with good" (CE, XV, 79-81). Milton's position on this issue is essentially the same as that of St. Augustine, who in The City of God had argued that God, "who by His providence and omnipotence distributes to every one his own portion, is able to make good use not only of the good, but also of the wicked" and that He "was certainly not ignorant of [Satan's] future malignity" but "foresaw the good which He himself would bring out of his evil."¹⁶ In Paradise Lost, Milton skillfully incorporates this idea into the central conflict in the poem, which revolves around Satan's futile attempts "out of good still to find means of evil" (I, 165) and God's manipulation of Satan's efforts into ultimately good results. It is, therefore, highly ironic that Satan

. . . serv'd but to bring forth
 Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
 On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
 Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd
 (I, 217-220).

This divine comedy is celebrated in the song of the great heavenly choir, who praise God

whose wisdom had ordain'd
 Good out of evil to create, instead
 Of Spirits malign a better Race to bring
 Into their vacant room, and thence diffuse
 His good to Worlds and Ages infinite (VII, 187-91).

When God's work of creation is completed, the angels resume their song, praising God for his great power, justice, goodness, and wisdom. Their harmonious anthem is an expression of, and testimony to, the ideal rulership of Heaven's "matchless King" (IV, 41).

In depicting Heaven as the model for an ideal society where power is in the hands of the "wise and good," Milton consistently assumes the necessity of a hierarchical form of government. In his political pamphlets, he had repeatedly affirmed that men of "vertue and true worth" are rightfully "Maisters" and that "nature gives the wisest dominion over those less wise," ideas he himself traces back to Aristotle's Politics (CPW, III, 190; IV, 425-6). Aristotle's declaration that it was "not only necessary, but expedient . . . that some should rule and others be ruled"¹⁷ was, as C.S. Lewis has shown in his excellent study of "the hierarchical conception" in his Preface to Paradise Lost, an accepted commonplace in "nearly all literature before the revolutionary period."¹⁸ It had been emphatically stressed in Elyot's Governor, for example:

Without order may be nothing stable or permanent; and it may not be called order, except it do contain in it degrees, high and base, according to the merit or estimation of the thing that is ordered.¹⁹

Spenser deals poetically with the same idea in his

description of the overthrow of the levelling giant by "the righteous Artegall," the knight of Justice, who states that it is God's will that hierarchical order be preserved:

The hills doe not the lowly dales disdain;
The dales doe not the lofty hills envy.
He maketh Kings to sit in sovereignty;
He maketh subjects to their powre obey . . .
(F.Q., V, ii, 41).²⁰

Possibly the most eloquent expression of the universality of the hierarchical principle is Ulysses' familiar speech in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre,
Observe degree, priority, and place . . .
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows! . . . (I, iii, 85-6,
109-10).²¹

In his Reason of Church-Government, Milton finds a similar parallel between the order in Heaven and the necessity of discipline in earthly affairs, stating that "the Angels themselves, in whom no disorder is fear'd . . . are distinguished and quaternioned into their celestiall Princedomes, and Satrapies, according as God himselfe hath writ his imperiall decrees through the great provinces of heav'n" (CPW, I, 752). It is not surprising, therefore, to find in Paradise Lost a hierarchical form of government in the ideal society of Heaven. Though Milton departs from the traditional categorization of angelic beings into nine ranks²² by his simpler "Thrones, Dominations, Princedomes, Virtues, Powers" (V, 601, suggesting how little regard he has for arbitrary systems not based specifically on

Scripture), he nevertheless insists that all the heavenly spirits were created by God "in thir bright degrees" and that there are distinctions "Of Hierarchies, of Orders, and Degrees" (V, 838, 590-1). The political principles of Milton's pamphlets are clearly expressed in Abdiel's challenge to Satan, who has demonstrated his perverse resistance to the universal law that

. . . he who rules is worthiest, and excels
Them whom he governs . . . (VI, 177-8).

This fundamental principle, Abdiel argues, is not only ordained by God, but corresponds to the very nature of things: "God and Nature bid the same" on this important point (VI, 176). In the ideal government of Heaven, therefore, "honor due and reverence none neglects . . . to superior Spirits . . . in Heav'n" (III, 737-8).

It is worth observing that the government of Heaven is both theocratic and hierarchical in structure. Since God is supremely "wise and good," it is fitting that He should exercise absolute rule. Though He is in complete control of all activities in Heaven, however, He does not perform all the action, but delegates much of it to others. There are "infinite descents" between God and his creatures (VIII, 410), but these beings are all arranged in order, and each is responsible to his superiors as well as to God. When the archangel, Uriel, "one of the sev'n" who stands "in God's presence, nearest to his Throne" (III, 648-9) discovers, for example, that some evil spirit has escaped from

Hell, he gives a charge to Gabriel to inform him of further developments. Gabriel, in turn, appoints some of his inferiors to stand on guard and others to search for the enemy. The "two strong and subtle Spirits," Ithuriel and Zephon, discover Satan's disguise as a toad "close at the ear of Eve" and forcibly escort him to "thir Chief," Gabriel (IV, 786, 800, 864). When armed conflict between the forces of Gabriel and Satan threatens to erupt, however, God suspends before all of them "his golden Scales" (like Zeus in Homer's Iliad), thus preventing further action at this time. This episode is one of numerous examples by which Milton illustrates his conviction that there is a place of responsibility for all of God's creatures, each of whom is accountable to his superiors, though ultimately to God, the final authority.

The concern Milton demonstrates in his early poetry and his political pamphlets for leadership by the "wise and good" is, as we have noted, evident in his portrayal of the ideal society of Heaven, where power exists in perfect harmony with goodness and wisdom, and where a hierarchical form of government is gladly accepted by all. There is, for Milton, no dissonance in the connection between hierarchy and personal liberty, his fundamental concern. Even Satan, before he contradicts himself in his address to his assembled hosts, recognizes that though the angelic beings are "not equal all," they are nonetheless

. . . yet free,
Equally free; for Orders and Degrees
Jar not with liberty, but well consist (V, 791-3).

The basis for this freedom is the fact that all obedience is voluntary. The fundamental ethic in the ideal realm of Heaven is voluntary obedience, particularly to God, but also to all superiors. Although God, "as Sovran King," sends the angels "upon his high behests . . . to enure/Our prompt obedience" as Raphael divulges to Adam (VIII, 238-40), it is not "necessitated" but "voluntary service" alone that "he requires" (V, 529-30). There is a profound paradox here, for Raphael recognizes that, while there is no happiness or joy apart from obeying God, obedience is nevertheless voluntary:

Myself and all th' Angelic Host that stand
In sight of God enthron'd, our happy state
Hold . . . while our obedience holds;
. . . freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall (V, 535-40).

The principle of voluntary service and obedience is not only attested by the angels, but by God himself, who emphatically declares that He has created "all th' Ethereal Powers/And Spirits . . . just and right" and, above all else, "free" (III, 98-101). Heaven is not a place of "servile Pomp" where the angelic hosts have no alternative but to sing "Forc't Halleluiahs" as Mammon suggests in the "great consult" in Hell (II, 257, 243; I, 798). Even Satan, in a moment of truth, acknowledges that, in Heaven, God "with his good/Upbraided none; nor was his service hard" (IV,

Sonnets XX and XXI that food and wine partaken of in moderation are a form of God's blessing, and that legitimate mirth is a necessary buffer against the stress and care encountered in a life of purposeful action. His portrayal of sex in Heaven is also an implicit rebuttal against the inflexible attitudes towards divorce and polygamy which he attacks in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.

Tetrachordon, and The Christian Doctrine. (His view of wholesome sexual expression again emerges in his portrayal of Adam and Eve's sex life in their unfallen state.) It should also be noted, as Leland Ryken has observed in The Apocalyptic Vision in Paradise Lost, that even the landscape of Heaven is varied and "contains much besides a city skyline," having such features as "Plains" (I, 104), "Trees" (V, 426), and "Mountains" (VII, 201).²³ Such variety forms an appropriate setting for the diversified activities of the angels. Of greater significance is the fact that the angels have distinctly individual personalities. The most obvious example is the difference that Adam notices between the "sociably mild" Raphael and the "solemn and sublime" Michael (XI, 234-6). A most important point is that even the unfallen angels have creaturely limitations and therefore demonstrate imperfect powers of observation or discernment. Uriel, for instance, though reputed to be the "sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heav'n (III, 691), fails to detect that the "Fair Angel" who inquires about

man's location is none other than Satan. Abdiel manifests his "undaunted heart" by challenging Satan to a duel because he is convinced that "he who in debate of Truth hath won/Should win in Arms, in both disputes alike/Victor" (VI, 113, 122-3), not recognizing that military prowess is ultimately ineffectual, and that God has appointed the Son to deal decisively with Satan's rebellion. The angels also possess the liberty to commit evil. The significance of such details is that they demonstrate that only God is perfect, and that there is, therefore, endless scope for further awareness and learning on the part of the inhabitants of Heaven. This corresponds very closely to Milton's concern for educational opportunities and freedom of expression (which involve trial and error) in a Christian society, as demonstrated in Of Education and Areopagitica. Even in the ideal society of Heaven there is no absolute perfection, except in God alone; there is, therefore, ample opportunity for self-expression and personal development in the angelic activities of Heaven. Endowed by God with free will, the angels' actions, words, and deeds are meaningful and dynamic, not mechanical or static. This would not be possible without the personal liberty that makes Heaven an ideal society from Milton's point of view.

The kind of Christian society Milton would have advocated can also be inferred from his descriptions of the Garden of Eden in Paradise Lost. Though the only human

inhabitants of Eden are Adam and Eve, there are several respects in which Eden can be regarded as a microcosm or paradigm of an ideal society. The Garden of Eden is described as having "In narrow room Nature's whole wealth" and as being "A Heaven on Earth" (IV, 207-8). Adam and Eve, though "the only two of Mankind," are representative of "the whole included Race," as even Satan recognizes (IX, 415-16). In his depictions of this ideal earthly paradise, Milton freely draws upon a wide variety of sources, as Sister Mary Corcoran demonstrates in her profusely documented study, Milton's Paradise with Reference to the Hexameral Background.²⁴ Though Milton probably borrowed more from Diodorus' description of the "Nyseian Isle" (IV, 275) than from any other source, as Hughes maintains,²⁵ the specific details of Milton's portrayal of Eden indicate a fusion of Hebraic, Classical, Medieval, and contemporary sources. The "enclosure green" bordering Eden suggests the green enclosure of tall trees which surrounds the garden of Alcinous in Homer's Odyssey,²⁶ the "garden inclosed" of the Song of Solomon (Ch. 4:12), Spenser's "Bowre of Bliss" and the "Gardin of Adonis" in The Fairie Queene (II, xii, 42-43; III, vi, 29-31).²⁷ The profuse vegetation and variety of fruits in Eden recall Dante's description of Paradise in Purgatorio (Canto XXVIII),²⁸ and geographical details in Diodorus' Library of History²⁹ and Samuel Purchas' Pilgrimes.³⁰ The "Eternal Spring" that characterizes Milton's

Paradise is reminiscent of the "continually spring" of Spenser's Garden of Adonis (F.Q., III, vi, 42), the "perpetual Spring" in Dante's description of Paradise (Purgatorio, XXVIII, l. 143), and Ovid's stirring account of the abduction of Proserpine by Pluto in the beautiful Vale of Enna, where "spring" was "the only season of the year."³¹ Milton's indirect comparison of the Garden of Eden to

that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpin gath'ring flow'rs
Herself a fairer Flow'r by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd, which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world (IV, 268-72)

illustrates his masterful skill in accommodating traditional materials for his own ends. These highly moving lines subtly and delicately foreshadow the disastrous effects throughout the world of the encounter between Eve and Satan in the flower-strewn fields of Eden.

Milton's portrayal of the Garden of Eden, considerably more lengthy and detailed than most of the traditional accounts of ideal gardens or paradises, suggests his deep appreciation of beauty. Many years prior to his writing of Paradise Lost, he had written these words to his friend, Charles Diodati:

. . . though I do not know what else God may have decreed for me, this certainly is true: He has instilled into me, if into anyone, a vehement love of the beautiful. Not so diligently is Ceres . . . said to have sought her daughter Proserpina, as I seek for this idea of the beautiful . . .³²

Milton's love of beauty is clearly evident in his detailed descriptions of the Garden of Eden, the "happy rural seat

of various view," where everything has been created "to delight the eye as well as the other vehicles of "human sense" (IV, 247, 206). There are "Trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste" (IV, 217), "Grots and Caves/Of cool recess" (IV, 257-8), and delightful sounds made by the fall of "murmuring waters," the "choir" of birds, and the "trembling leaves" (IV, 260, 264, 266). Empson's suggestion, in Some Versions of Pastoral, that Satan's determination to destroy "the innocent happiness of Eden, for the highest political motives" reflects "the Elizabethan fulness of life that Milton as a poet abandoned, and as a Puritan helped to destroy,"³³ misrepresents what Milton has attempted to convey in his depiction of Eden. The point is not that he has "abandoned" the "fulness of life" which Eden represents, but rather that mankind, because of their sin, have forfeited the kind of life which Milton regards as ideally wholesome and fulfilling. He demonstrates a Puritan awareness of the consequences of sin, but this awareness does not involve a repudiation of "the Elizabethan fulness of life" but is rather an implicit affirmation of it. Truly sensuous fulfillment is so important to Milton that he makes it a central theme in his view of an ideal earthly paradise. In Eden, there is "choice/Unlimited of manifold delights," as Adam recognizes, with only "One easy prohibition" (V, 433-5). This single "prohibition," however, is of crucial significance, for it involves the matter

of freedom of choice--the most important feature in an ideal society as far as Milton is concerned.

The beauty and plenitude of the Garden of Eden form an appropriate setting for Milton's ideal terrestrial society. There is, however, much more to Eden than idyllic surroundings; it is a place where the inhabitants have endless opportunities for investigation, self-expression and choice. Tillyard's suggestion that Milton "fails to convince us that Adam and Eve are happy, because he can find no adequate scope for their active natures,"³⁴ overlooks almost everything that makes Eden so distinctively Miltonic. To regard Adam and Eve as being "in the hopeless position of Old Age Pensioners enjoying perpetual youth,"³⁵ as Tillyard contends, is absurd. Milton's Paradise is not a static land such as Tennyson portrays in "The Lotos-Eaters," where "all things always seemed the same"³⁶ and where the inhabitants have renounced the responsibilities and corresponding stresses of their former life. It is, on the contrary, a dynamic place where freedom of choice and action enter into every area of the life of Adam and Eve, not only in the ninth book of Paradise Lost, as Tillyard holds,³⁷ but throughout the poem.

The principle of voluntary obedience that Milton stresses in his portrayal of the ideal society of Heaven is equally applicable to the Garden of Eden. In his first great speech in Heaven, God clearly states that men as well

as angels have been "form'd . . . free" by means of "the high Decree/Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd/Thir freedom" (III, 124, 126-8, cp. 98-101). Freedom, however, is meaningless unless one has the option of choosing evil as well as good. "If there were no opposition," Milton asks in The Reason of Church-Government (CPW, I, 795), "where were the triall of an unfained goodnesse and magnanimity?" In a very similar manner, God raises the same question in Paradise Lost:

Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love . . . ?
(III, 103-4).

The contempt Milton demonstrates in Areopagitica for "a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd" (CPW, II, 515) also underlies Paradise Lost, and is clearly evident in his treatment of the life of Adam and Eve in Eden. Far from being like "old age pensioners" whose actions are of little consequence, Adam and Eve are made aware, at every point, of their power of choice and its potential results. While their "happy state hold[s]" only while their "obedience holds," as Raphael informs them, they are nonetheless free to choose as they see fit; it is in their "will/To love," or not to love and serve, God (V, 536-7, 539-40). In his first words to Adam, whom He has just created, God expressly commands him not to taste "of the tree whose operation brings/Knowledge of good and ill" (VIII, 323-4), and He later sends Raphael to warn him of

Satan's plot against him. Raphael, however, is not permitted to assume "in the slightest degree the guardian role," as Roy Daniells has pointed out.³⁸ The reason for this is that Adam must take upon himself the full responsibility for his own decisions and their consequences. Though God has given his command clearly, it is up to Adam whether he will obey or not.

The principle of voluntary obedience also enters into the relationship between Adam and Eve. It should be mentioned first, however, that Adam is presented as being superior to Eve because of his "higher intellectual" endowments (IX, 483) and that he is therefore more qualified for "absolute rule" (IV, 301). Though Milton had conceded in Tetrachordon that, in "particular exceptions" a husband should "contentedly yeeld" to a wife who is superior to him "in prudence and dexterity," he prefers as a general rule, in a Christian society, the Pauline principle that wives should be subject to their husbands (Colossians 3:18), since the man is "the image and glory of God, she the glory of the man: he not for her, but she for him" (CPW, II, 589, with reference to 1 Corinthians 11). It is not, therefore, surprising to find, in Milton's ideal society in Eden, that Adam and Eve are

. . . both
 Not equal, as thir sex not equal seem'd;
 For contemplation hee and valor form'd,
 For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace,
 Hee for God only, shee for God in him
 (PL, IV, 295-99).

The idea that men were generally more fit to exercise authority than women was a widely accepted commonplace which stemmed from the classical as well as the Christian tradition. Aristotle had affirmed that, "though there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female,"³⁹ a position reinforced by the remark of Musidorus in Sidney's Arcadia that "if we will be men, the reasonable parts of our souls, is to have absolute commandment."⁴⁰ In the first part of Paradise Lost, Eve finds nothing objectionable in performing a secondary role in the hierarchical arrangement that God has ordained. She finds, in fact, Adam's preëminence a source of happiness and comfort (IV, 445-8), and expresses her satisfaction in these words to Adam:

My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains,
God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise
(IV, 635-8).

Milton's political principle that "the wiser should govern the less wise" (CPW, II, 589) is here fused with his view that spiritual and domestic harmony and freedom are most easily achieved when men who are "wise and good" properly exercise their authority in the state and in the home.

It is important to observe, however, that Adam does not assert his authority in an arbitrary or capricious manner. Even though his "manly grace/And wisdom" (IV, 490-91) qualify him as the ruler of Eden, he recognizes that

he must not violate the freedom of will that Eve also possesses. When Eve indicates that she would like to enjoy a bit of solitude by doing some work on her own, Adam attempts to dissuade her by pointing out the potential dangers involved, but he does not expressly forbid her to go, but instead states, "thy stay, not free, absents thee more" (IX, 372). After the fall has taken place, when Eve begins to upbraid Adam for not previously commanding her "absolutely not to go" (IX, 1156), he reasserts that obedience must be voluntary. He reminds her that he had amply warned her of the risks entailed in her departure from him, and that

beyond this had been force,
And force upon free Will hath here no place
(IX, 1173-4).

Adam's remarks, unfortunately, are applicable only to Eden before the fall.

In the ideal society of Eden, Milton depicts human freedom in other ways as well. One of the liberties Milton cherishes most, as his religious pamphlets indicate, is the freedom of worship. In Of Civil Power, he affirms that Christian liberty, "the fundamental privilege of the gospel . . . sets us free from the bondage of . . . ceremonies . . . circumstances, place and time in the worship of God" (CE, VI, 28). Milton nowhere displays his Puritanism more emphatically than on this point, which he regards as vital in a Christian society. His conviction that nothing

should stand between the individual soul and God is also interwoven throughout Paradise Lost. Far more important than external trappings in religious worship, for Milton, is purity of attitude and motives. His position is indicated even in the opening lines of his great poem, where he addresses the "Heav'nly Muse" with the words,

Thou O Spirit . . . dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure
(I, 6, 17-18).

He adheres to this principle in his depiction of the worship that Adam and Eve offer to God. Before retiring for the night in their "blissful Bower" (IV, 690), Adam and Eve freely express their praises to God under the open sky. No priest or ritual is required, but simply "adoration pure/ Which God likes best" (IV, 737-8). On the following morning, they resume their prayers, which are not in liturgical form, but in "unmeditated" and "various style" (V, 146-9). Prayer may be no more than "one short sigh of human breath" (XI, 147). When Adam and Eve sincerely repent after their transgression and disobedience, their sighs and prayers make a "speedier flight" than "loudest Oratory" to Heaven, where the Son of God, the true Priest, intercedes on their behalf (XI, 7-8, 20, 25). With a Calvinistic note, Milton makes it clear, however, that

. . . prayer against [God's] absolute Decree
No more avails than breath against the wind,
Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth
(XI, 311-13).

Human priests, liturgies, or ceremonies militate against

the freedom of worship Milton values so greatly.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Milton's portrayal of life in the Garden of Eden is the emphasis given to freedom of learning and expression. Tillyard's suggestion that Milton cannot find "adequate scope" for the "active natures" of Adam and Eve ⁴¹ fails to consider the obvious fact that several books are devoted to Adam's education, and substantial portions concentrate on Eve's experiences and the lessons she learns from them. Unlike "Old Age Pensioners" ⁴² who tend to resent the encroachment of new ideas, Adam and Eve (who prefers to get her information from Adam along with "Grateful digressions" and "conjugal Caresses," VIII, 55-6) are constantly acquiring new experiences and information. Milton's plea for the "liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience" in Areopagitica (CPW, II, 560) also permeates Paradise Lost. Nothing happens, however, that does not ultimately have moral and spiritual value or relevance. Everything that Adam and Eve learn, as in Of Education, is for the purpose of knowing

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 (CPW, II, 367).

This kind of knowledge, however, frequently requires the study of "sensible things" and an "orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature" (CPW, II, 368-9). This

method is frequently followed in Paradise Lost, as in Raphael's "lik'ning" of "spiritual to corporal forms" when he instructs Adam (V, 573).

Far from leading uneventful lives in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve find continual opportunities to exercise their freedom of choice as their understanding and awareness develop. Everything becomes a learning experience. Eve learns from Adam that their work of pruning trees and tending flowers has been appointed by God, not only for the practical purpose of keeping the paths and bowers clear (IX, 244-5), but also to teach them the meaning of human dignity and responsibility (IV, 618-22). When Eve suggests that their work might be more efficiently performed if they divide their labours (IX, 214), Adam points out that they have not been assigned "to irksome toil, but to delight" and that periods of relaxation are in order (IX, 235-42). An ideal society, for Milton, is characterized neither by perpetual leisure nor incessant toil. Some form of work, either of mind or body, is essential, but "mild Heav'n a time ordains" for "cheerful" hours of refreshment and delight, as he affirms in Sonnet XXI (Hughes, 169). It should also be observed that Eve, as the culinary expert in Adam's household, has ample opportunity to exercise her powers of discretion:

. . . in haste
She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
What choice to choose for delicacy best,

What order, so contriv'd as not to mix
 Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
 Taste after taste upheld with kindest change
 (V, 331-6).

She has, obviously, developed her skills by the method of trial and error.

The failure to recognize the importance Milton places upon personal development has led to critical misinterpretations of a number of episodes in Paradise Lost. In his Studies In Milton, for example, Tillyard argues that Milton attributes "to Eve and Adam feelings which though nominally felt in the state of innocence are actually not compatible with it."⁴³ He refers particularly to the account of Eve's dream in Book V, where Eve relates to Adam that she dreamed that she had been offered the forbidden fruit and "Could not but taste" (V, 86). Adam's reply that

Evil into the mind of God or Man
 May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave
 No spot or blame behind (V, 117-19)

fails to convince Tillyard or Millicent Bell, who states flatly that "we cannot believe it, knowing already the outcome of the story"; similarly, she remarks, on Eve's fascination with her beautiful reflection in the pool, that Eve demonstrates "a dainty vanity . . . which the serpent will put to use."⁴⁴ Neither Tillyard nor Bell can accept Milton's statement that Eve is "yet sinless" (IX, 659) until she actually partakes of the fruit. The fact is, however, as Stanley Eugene Fish shows, that innocence is not static as far as Milton is concerned.⁴⁵ He does not depict Eve as

perfect before the Fall; he even laments that, at her departure from Adam, she is "deceiv'd, much failing, hapless" in her assumption that she would return safely to him (IX, 403), but she is "yet sinless" until she willfully disobeys God's commandment. Milton's conviction that "the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world . . . necessary to the constituting of human vertue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 516) accounts for his contributions to the hexameral tradition, Eve's experience at the pool and her dream. These episodes are clearly intended to be educative in function and purpose. She learns "How beauty is excell'd by manly grace/And wisdom" (IV, 490-1) from the first experience, and from the second that an awareness of evil does not constitute guilt in itself but rather provides the opportunity to exercise discretion and steadfastness of mind.

Tillyard's contention that Adam also has "virtually fallen before the official temptation has begun"⁴⁶ displays a similar refusal to accept Milton on his own terms. Because Adam has divulged to Raphael that he has felt "commotion strange" in his sexual relations with Eve, Tillyard holds that Adam has in reality passed beyond innocence to experience.⁴⁷ The fact is, however, that while Adam's experiences have broadened, he is still innocent, for he has not as yet experienced sin. Though Adam confesses that he has felt passion ("here passion first I felt," VIII,

530), he indicates that these inner feelings "subject not" and that he is still in control (VIII, 606-11). He learns, however, that there is an important distinction between mere passion and love, which "hath his seat/In Reason" (VIII, 590-1). Adam's increased self-knowledge, far from corrupting him, actually makes him more aware of his own limitations and potentially more capable of resisting temptation. The "knowledge and survey of vice is . . . so necessary to the constituting of human vertue" (CPW, II, 516) that Milton sees fit to demonstrate this principle even in his ideal Paradise of Eden. It is apparent, therefore, that his view of a Christian society does not assume that a state comprised of perfect individuals is possible; it is rather one in which human beings can freely strive towards fulfilling God's will on earth by resisting temptation and evil, assisted, of course, "by the heavenly grace of faith" (Of Education, CPW, II, 367).

There is one aspect of the life of Adam and Eve in Eden that might initially appear to be opposed to Milton's usual insistence on the importance of knowledge and awareness. This is the matter of the repeated admonition Adam is given to "be lowly wise" and not to concern his "thoughts with matters hid" (VIII, 173, 167). Though he is constantly being educated in matters of good and evil, which Raphael supplements with many examples, Adam is at the same time warned against tasting of the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil. Such apparent ambiguities possibly account for Tillyard's suggestion that "Milton, stranded in his own Paradise, would very soon have eaten the apple on his own responsibility and immediately justified the act in a political pamphlet."⁴⁸ This interpretation, though witty, overlooks a crucial point. In all of his poetry and prose, Milton consistently adheres to the fundamental Protestant doctrine that all things must finally be measured by the revealed word of God. His plea for freedom of learning and expression in Of Education and Areopagitica, and his arguments for political and religious liberty are ultimately "made good also by Scripture" (The Tenure, CPW, III, 206). While he affirms that "free and lawful debate at all times by writing, conference or disputation of what opinion soever" should be permitted, he makes it clear that all issues must be "disputable by Scripture" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 13). He does not expect anyone to have a complete grasp of the truth in any field, nor does he regard complete unanimity of opinion as a likely possibility in any society, but he insists on adhering "to the Holy Scriptures alone" as the final authority (The Christian Doctrine, CE, XIV, 15). In Paradise Lost, Adam is free to range widely in his inquiries, but he is not permitted to question "matters hid"; he must "leave them to God above" (VIII, 167-8). Milton's position on this point is essentially the same as that of Calvin, who states in The Institutes that "we should not investigate

what the Lord has left hidden in secret" and "we should not neglect what he has brought into the open."⁴⁹ Adam is not told why the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in particular is out of bounds, but simply that it is a "pledge" of his obedience and faith (VIII, 325). He is not permitted to question God's command. This, for Milton, does not apply only to Adam but to all of God's created beings. The final authority in Eden, Heaven, or a Christian society, is the revealed word of God.

CHAPTER VII

DEVIATIONS FROM IDEAL SOCIETIES IN PARADISE LOST

Milton's idea of a Christian society can be inferred not only from his portrayals of Heaven and Eden, but also from his depiction of the war in Heaven, the government of Hell, and his view of human history. The conflict in Heaven, Satan's dictatorship in Hell, and political tyranny throughout the world's history indicate deviations from the type of society Milton would advocate or approve. They illustrate his religious, social, and political ideals from another point of view, showing, as it were, the other side of the same coin.

Satan's rebellion against God is treated in Paradise Lost as a willful rejection of the legitimate authority and rulership of God, who alone is completely "wise and good." The confusion and misery which result are an inevitable consequence of Satan's departure from the fundamental principle that power in the hands of the "wise and good" must not be challenged. Though, as his soliloquy on Mt. Niphates indicates, Satan realizes that God's wisdom and goodness deserved a "debt immense of endless gratitude" rather than rebellion, he makes it clear that he disdained "subjection" (IV, 52, 50). By perversely refusing to recognize the universal law

that "he who rules is worthiest, and excels/Them whom he governs" (VI, 177-8), Satan rejects "Right reason" (VI, 42). His position is, therefore, depicted as essentially untenable. The arguments he employs to rally support for his rebellion are contradictory, intrinsically absurd, or specious. For example, Satan declares that "Orders and Degrees/Jar not with liberty, but well consist" even though his rebellion is an attack on "the great Hierarchal Standard" (V, 792-3, 701). He asserts that the "Imperial Titles" he and his followers possess are an indication of their right "to govern, not to serve" (V, 801-2), even though the titles to which he refers (Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers, V, 772) necessarily imply serving as well as ruling, for hierarchy without both aspects is, of course, meaningless. Satan's "envy against the Son of God," who has been honoured by the Father, blinds him to such a degree that he utters to Abdiel the absurd claim that he and his followers were "self-begot, self-rais'd" by their "own quick'ning power" (V, 662, 860-1).

It is significant that Satan launches his rebellion against God in the name of freedom. The beneficent rule of God is perversely regarded as a "Yoke" incompatible with liberty as Satan now sees it (V, 796). He "at first" had "thought that Liberty and Heav'n/To heav'nly Souls had been all one" but he now considers that heavenly liberty is only "sloth" or "servility" (VI, 164-6, 169). Abdiel points

out, however, the absurdity of disputing "the points of liberty" with God, the Creator of all things (V, 823) and addresses him sternly with these words:

Apostate, still thou err'st, nor end wilt find
Of erring, from the path of truth remote:
Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name
Of Servitude to serve whom God ordains,
Or Nature; God and Nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels
Them whom he governs (VI, 172-8).

Abdiel's point is that the fundamental laws by which God has established the universe make Satan's position absolutely untenable. There is no true liberty apart from conformity to the will and laws of God, and these laws affirm the principle that the worthiest must rule. Spiritual, personal and political freedom are all vitally interrelated in this basic matter. From Milton's perspective, deviations from this principle are invariably suspect. The envy, pride, and ambition Satan demonstrates exemplify Milton's argument in The Tenure that "none can love freedom heartilie, but good men; the rest love not freedom but licence" (CPW, III, 190). By "erring, from the path of truth remote" (VI, 173) Satan cannot possibly find freedom, which is found only in voluntary submission to the will of God. Instead of finding liberty, Satan lapses into the bondage of his own uncontrollable passions, as Abdiel's accusation demonstrates:

This is servitude . . .
Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd
(VI, 178, 181).

Satan's pretenses to liberty exemplify Milton's declaration

in The History of Britain that "libertie hath a sharp and double edge fitt onelie to be handl'd by just and vertuous men; to bad and dissolute it becomes a mischief unwieldie in thir own hands" (CE, X, 324). Since Satan is "to [himself] enthrall'd" (PL, VI, 181), he is unfit to rule. Abdiel's reprimand is similar to that of Queen Gynaecia to her husband, King Basilius, in the Arcadia. Having discovered the king's lust for Zelmane (the disguised Pyrocles), Gynaecia shows him the wrong he has done, not only to her, but to his "countrey, when they shall finde they are commaunded by him, that can not commaund his owne undecent appetites."¹ Since Satan's followers are fully participating in his rebellion, however, they cannot see that they have sold themselves into "servitude" to one who has unwisely "rebell'd/Against his worthier" (VI, 178-80), and that they have lost their true freedom.

Milton's account of the war in Heaven is intended to illustrate the absurdity of rebelling against the ideal government of the "wise and good." A failure to recognize this has led to numerous critical misinterpretations. Dr. Johnson thought so poorly of Book VI that he assumed it was "the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased."² David Daiches flatly states that "the whole physical conflict . . . is misconceived" and halts the "true progress" of the poem.³ An even more unsympathetic approach is taken by John Peter, who in A

Critique of Paradise Lost regards the war in Heaven as "a sort of sham-fight, as pointless as it is noisy."⁴ Arnold Stein's description of the war as a kind of "epic farce" resembles that of Peter, but he does not conclude from this that it is "pointless," but rather that it conforms to Milton's intentions. Milton's purpose in Paradise Lost is explicitly indicated in his epic. He wishes to "assert Eternal Providence,/And justify the ways of God to men," but he also intends to present an "argument/Not less but more Heroic" than the themes of the classical and romance epics (I, 25-6; IX, 13-14). Homer's depiction of "the wrath/Of stern Achilles" in the Iliad, Virgil's portrayal of "the rage/Of Turnus" in the Aeneid, and the "gorgeous Knights" of such romance epics as Ariosto's Orlando Furioso or Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered are all concerned with "Wars, hitherto the only Argument/Heroic deem'd" (IX, 14-17, 36, 28-9). Some of these epics had, of course, stressed values other than military prowess and valour. In From Virgil to Milton, C.M. Bowra has shown that the Aeneid focuses on Aeneas' devotion to the will of the gods in the matter of Rome's destiny, and that Tasso's epic deals with Christian chivalry. Paradise Lost, however, he regards as predominantly theological in emphasis.⁶ Spenser's Faerie Queene can be seen as a transitional link between Jerusalem Delivered and Paradise Lost, for while it has "gorgeous Knights" and "Battles feigned" like the earlier romance epics, its emphasis is

profoundly ethical. There is, nevertheless, no tension between Spenser's use of military trappings and his ethical intentions. In Paradise Lost, however, chivalric prowess is generally treated as a matter for jest and even contempt, for Milton is concerned with "the better fortitude/Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom/Unsung" (IX, 31-3). It is in this light that the war in Heaven must be viewed. It does not halt the "true progress" of the poem as Daiches suggests,⁷ but is a necessary part of Adam's education on the meaning of true courage. The war is, to a great extent, a "sort of sham-fight" as Peter terms it, but this does not mean it is "pointless."⁸ The fighting between the good and the bad angels illustrates the ultimate futility of military warfare as a means for settling basic issues, particularly in the moral sphere. Milton's address to the Lord General Fairfax during the period of the Civil War,

For what can war but endless war still breed,
Till Truth and Right from Violence be freed
(Sonnet XV, Hughes, 159-60),

is echoed in God's remark to the Son after the first two days of continual fighting:

. . . in perpetual fight they needs must last
Endless, and no solution will be found:
War wearied hath perform'd what War can do
(VI, 693-5).

The limitations of warfare are gradually recognized by the good angels as well. For example, Abdiel assumes that it is "just,/That he who in debate of Truth hath won,/Should win in Arms" (VI, 121-3), but he soon finds that his stroke

against Satan, after an initial success, simply escalates the war. The armour of the good angels turns out to be as unwieldy as Saul's armour on David when Satan's hosts launch their gunpowder attacks:

down they fall
By thousands, Angel on Arch-Angel roll'd;
The sooner for thir Arms (VI, 593-5).

The eventual defeat of Satan's hosts is not determined by anything the righteous angels are able to do. The Son of God, after commending them as much for their fearless devotion to "his righteous Cause" as for their warfare, tells them simply to "stand only and behold/God's indignation on these Godless pour'd" (VI, 804, 810-11). The final victory over the forces of evil is determined and executed by God alone, to whom the "Kingdom and Power and Glory appertains" (VI, 815).

There is a close parallel here to Milton's ideas on the use of force in a Christian society as expressed in his Treatise of Civil Power. "The kingdom of Christ," he affirms, is "not governd by outward force; as being none of this world, whose kingdoms are maintaind all by force onely" but he goes on to add that "a Christian commonwealth may defend it self against outward force in the cause of religion as well as in any other; though Christ himself . . . would not be so defended" (CE, VI, 22). All of this, however, is placed in a larger context, namely that Christ's "spiritual kingdom" is "able without worldly force to subdue

all the powers and kingdoms of this world" (CE, VI, 22). Satan and his hosts are not compelled to worship and serve God, but when they stage an armed revolt, the righteous angels are permitted to answer force with force. The final victory, however, is in God's hands alone. More important than the military courage of the good angels is their attitude towards God and righteousness. Abdiel, for instance, is depicted far more admirably in his bold verbal defence of God while in Satan's territory than in his later military skirmish with Satan. Abdiel's faithfulness to God while "among innumerable false," during which time

His Loyalty he kept, his Love, his Zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single (V, 900-3),

does not escape the notice of God, who highly commends him for having "fought/The better fight . . . in word mightier than they in Arms" (VI, 29-32). It is apparent that Milton is far more concerned with the individual who desires to "stand approv'd in sight of God" (VI, 36) than with crusading Christian armies. The individual Christian's faith in, and loyalty to, God is a more powerful tool in the building of a Christian society than the use of corporate coercion and force. Even zealous action may be less effective than waiting upon God, as the righteous angels learn, for "they also serve who only stand and wait" (Sonnet XIX).

The war in Heaven is not only a lesson to the good angels, but to the bad as well. They learn, of course, that

resistance towards God is ultimately futile, but they also discover that neither military might nor numbers determine the rightness or justice of a cause. Milton's distrust of the destructive potential of "misguided . . . multitude[s]" in The Rennie and Easie Way (CE, VI, 149) is reflected in the words of Abdiel to Satan, that "few sometimes may know, when thousands err" (VI, 148). Though "many Myriads" have followed Satan, and though "by strength/They measure all," it does not alter the fact that God "by right of merit Reigns" (VI, 24, 820-1, 43). The justice of the principle of rulership by the "wise and good," which Satan has resisted, is not in any way dependent on numbers or on military power as far as Milton is concerned.

Further deviations from this principle are shown in Milton's portrayal of Hell, which can be viewed as a foil to Heaven. In contrast to the ideal society of Heaven, where true liberty exists because of the rule of the "wise and good," Hell is a realm controlled by a tyrant. The form of government, unlike Heaven's theocracy, is a dictatorship with some of the trappings and appearances of democracy. Satan's manipulation of his hosts by means of intimidation, subtle coercion, or guile is a sharp contrast to God's unambiguous pronouncements. Nevertheless, Milton's Satan has had an irresistible appeal for many readers. William Blake, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793), admires Milton's portrayal of Satan so greatly that he considers that Milton

"was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it."⁹ Shelley, in A Defence of Poetry (1821), regards "Milton's Devil as a moral being . . . far superior to his God" and concludes that "this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius."¹⁰ If such were Milton's intentions, it would have to be conceded that his poetry has certainly failed to justify God's ways to men in a convincing manner. The fact that Milton's depiction of Satan's "unconquerable Will . . . And courage never to submit or yield" is supplemented by remarks on Satan's "deep despair" (I, 106, 108, 126) does not satisfy Waldock, for example, who holds that "Milton's allegations clash with his demonstrations."¹¹ Fish, in his analysis of this apparent difficulty, convincingly points out that this "clash" is intentional because Milton deliberately intends to "rebuke" his readers for their sympathetic responses to Satan's eloquence.¹² There is not, therefore, a "neglect of a direct moral purpose,"¹³ as Shelley maintains, but rather an emphatic (though subtle) assertion of it in Milton's treatment of Satan.

Part of Satan's appeal, especially to the modern reader, is due to his immediate inauguration of a democratic form of government in Hell. Satan, of course, finds it to his advantage to depart from the principle of government by the "wise and good" such as had characterized Heaven. He suggests, therefore, that there is need for

"Full Counsel" to decide the best means for carrying out the most successful form of "War,/Open or understood" against Heaven (I, 660-2). This suggestion produces a flurry of unprecedented enthusiastic activity resulting in the erection of the great council-hall, Pandaemonium, where "the great consult began" (I, 798). It soon becomes apparent, however, in spite of Satan's suggestion of the need for "Full Counsel," that only the "great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim" are to be given the opportunity to express their views (I, 794). Furthermore, unlike the open forum of Heaven, where all the angels are permitted to listen in on God's plans, Satan's "thousand Demi-Gods on golden seats" meet "In close recess and secret conclave" to decide the issue (I, 795-6). A similar process takes place during the "great consult" itself. Pandaemonium is ostensibly "the high Capitol/Of Satan and his Peers," who have been "call'd/ From every Band and Squared Regiment," but when these "Peers" enter, they find Satan sitting "by merit raised . . . High on a Throne of Royal State" (I, 756-58; II, 5, 1). When it becomes evident that "the popular vote," swayed by Mammon's suggestion to adjust to life in Hell, is not moving in the direction of Satan's earlier proposal to carry out revenge against God by interfering with His new creation, Beelzebub easily persuades his "peers" to change their minds. Their unanimous vote, now in accordance with Satan's will, gives Satan the opportunity to commend the

"Synod of Gods" for their sound judgment (II, 390-1). Since they are not guided by principles, they are easily swayed by eloquent speeches and respond with equal applause to proposals that have very little in common, thus suggesting Milton's distrust of the democratic process of committing "all to the noise and shouting of a rude multitude" (The Rennie and Easie Way, CE, VI, 131). Their behavior also illustrates Milton's conviction that democracy is highly vulnerable to tyranny, a position held by Plato, who in The Republic states that despotism arises out of democracy, for the insatiable desire for popular liberty eventually produces conflicts which can only be resolved by a "single champion" who sooner or later begins to dream "that he can lord it over all mankind and heaven besides."¹⁴ Satan's hosts are under the illusion that they have decided their course of action by the means of "popular vote" (II, 313), whereas everything has been "first devis'd/By Satan" (II, 379-80). The principle of voluntary obedience, which had governed their existence in Heaven, has been replaced by a form of bondage, for by Milton's definition,

This is servitude,
To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd
Against his worthier . . . (VI, 178-80).

In his depiction of Hell, Milton clearly portrays Satan as the kind of ruler who is far more concerned with his personal ambition and glory than the well-being of his followers. Satan therefore violates a principle Milton

considers crucial for a just society. In The Tenure, he emphatically reaffirms the classical idea that a true ruler "governs to the good and profit of his People, and not for his own ends" (CPW, III, 202).¹⁵ The envy and hatred which motivated Satan before the rebellion in Heaven, when he "thought himself impair'd" (V, 665), are also evident in Hell, where his "sense of injur'd merit" is expressed in his "study of revenge" and "immortal hate" (I, 98, 107). These uncontrollable emotions are intermingled with the "master passion" of pride, thus indicating a "despotic character," as Plato demonstrates in The Republic.¹⁶ Though Satan is portrayed as having the courage and strength of character necessary for leadership, these attributes do not constitute true heroism from Milton's point of view. Satan is, as Steadman argues in Milton and the Renaissance Hero, really "false-heroic,"¹⁷ for

. . . strength from Truth divided and from Just,
 Illaudable, naught merits but dispraise
 And ignominy, yet to glory aspires
 Vain-glorious, and through infamy seeks fame
 (VI, 381-4).

The courage Satan possesses is intrinsically of a negativistic kind: it is "courage never to submit or yield" to the lawful authority of God, who is supremely "wise and good" (I, 108; Sonnet XII). Even Satan's bravest act, in which he volunteers to hazard a journey through the "gates of burning Adamant" and the "void profound/Of unessential Night" in order to bring destruction to the "happy Isle" of man (II,

436, 438-9, 410), is basically motivated by self-glory. "This enterprise," he declares, "none shall partake with me" (II, 465-6). Milton does not deny that there is an element of bravery in Satan's offer, "for neither do the Spirits damn'd/Lose all thir virtue" (II, 482-3), but he shows that it is really only a demonstration of "ambition varnisht o'er with zeal" (II, 485). Milton thus makes it apparent that the "awful reverence" Satan's followers display by extolling "him equal to the highest in Heav'n" (II, 478-9) is fundamentally sacrilegious. Milton gives to the reader further insights into the real nature of Satan's brave offer to make the hazardous journey through chaos. In Book IV, when Satan's disguise as a toad has been exposed and he is forcibly escorted to Gabriel by Ithuriel and Zephon, Gabriel disdainfully taunts Satan with these words:

So wise he judges it to fly from pain
However, and to scape his punishment (IV, 910-11).

Milton's most skillful exposure of Satan's "courage" is, however, done obliquely by means of his depiction of the Son of God's gracious offer to leave the glories of Heaven in order to die for mankind on earth. The Son's "unexempl'd love" (III, 410) and true heroism provide the necessary contrast required for a true perspective on Satan as a leader.

Hell, unlike Heaven, is a realm where manipulation, expediency, and guile are employed instead of methods based on justice and truth. As a dictator, Satan finds it

necessary to use "high words" having "semblance of worth, not substance" in order to raise the "fainting courage" and dispel the fears of his followers (I, 528-30); at other times, however, he gives sharp commands like an army officer (I, 330, 531). When seated on his "Throne of Royal State" like an oriental despot, he makes false claims concerning his position as ruler, for though he has blatantly violated the laws of Heaven by rebelling against God, he nevertheless attributes his role as leader to "the fixt Laws of Heav'n" as well as his merits "in Counsel or in Fight" (II, 1, 18, 20). Instead of assessing their situation in Hell realistically, he arouses their support by offering false hopes:

For who can yet believe, though after loss,
That all these puissant Legions, whose exile
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to re-ascend
Self-rais'd, and repossess thir native seat?
(I, 631-4)

He also employs the tactic of intimidation when he deems it expedient to do so. To prevent anyone from volunteering to share his great "enterprise" of exploring the new world of man, Satan speaks in such a way as to prevent any further discussion:

. . . They
Dreaded not more th' adventure than his voice
Forbidding . . . (II, 473-5).

Satan also habitually resorts to rationalization rather than reason. He maintains that force, not reason, has made God "supreme/Above his equals" (I, 248-9), even though it has

been clearly demonstrated that his revolution was ill-conceived. His affirmation that

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n
(I, 254-5)

is initially convincing, but closer scrutiny shows that it is only partially true. Satan has, indeed, made "a Hell of Heav'n" in both a literal and a figurative sense, but he can never make a "Heav'n of Hell," as he is later forced to admit to himself: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (IV, 75).

Specious reasoning is also displayed by Satan's followers. Moloch, "the fiercest Spirit/That fought in Heav'n," suggests that "open War" would be the most effective way "to disturb his Heav'n" (II, 44-5, 51, 102), in spite of the indisputable evidence they have been given that warfare against God is futile, as Belial points out. Belial, however, who suggests inaction, also indulges in vain speculation when he says that God may "much remit/His anger" and that "This horror will grow mild, this darkness light" (II, 210-11, 220). Eloquent though Belial is, his words are, as Milton insists, "cloth'd in reason's garb" and are motivated by a love of "ignoble ease, and peaceful sloth" (II, 226-7), a trait that Milton particularly despises. Many societies, like the nation of Israel in Samson Agonistes, have remained in "servitude" because they have preferred "Bondage with ease" to "strenuous liberty" (SA,

269-71). Mammon, who suffers from a myopia caused by the dazzle of Hell's "lustre, Gems and Gold," asks, "what can heav'n show more?" (II, 271, 273), thus displaying a complete lack of awareness of such spiritual values as goodness, holiness, and truth. Even while in Heaven, his focus had been on "Heav'n's pavement, trodd'n Gold" rather than on the "vision beatific" (I, 682-4). The comparison of the magnificence of Babylon and Egypt to the newly-constructed Pandaemonium, built of gold and other materials dug from the soil of Hell, indicates Milton's contempt for societies which, like Mammon, have placed more value on the material than on the spiritual. The failure of Satan's followers to come to grips with truth is particularly evident among those who sat "apart" and

reason'd high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,
Fixt Fate, Free will, Foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost
(II, 557-61).

Like those whom Paul castigates in one of his epistles, Satan's followers are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:7), because they have deliberately rejected God, the source of truth, in order to follow the father of lies (John 8:44). Having rebelled against the ideal rule of the "wise and good," they are doomed to serve a tyrant in a realm full of perversity and confusion.

Further deviations from the ideal society as Milton

sees it are depicted in his account of the fall of man, which "brought Death into the World, and all our woe,/With loss of Eden . . . that happy State" (I, 3-4, 29). Though Paradise Lost emphasizes particularly "Man's First Disobedience" (I, 1) as the paramount factor in the loss of the ideal terrestrial order that the Garden of Eden represents, many other sins are also suggested in Milton's portrayal of the fall. A cryptic summary of Milton's view of the fall can be found in The Christian Doctrine, Chapter XI:

. . . For what sin can be named, which was not included in this one act? It comprehended at once distrust in the divine veracity, and a proportionate credulity in the assurances of Satan; unbelief; ingratitude; disobedience; gluttony; in the man excessive uxoriousness, in the woman a want of proper regard for her husband, in both an insensibility to the welfare of their offspring, and that offspring the whole human race; parricide, theft, invasion of the rights of others, sacrilege, deceit, presumption in aspiring to divine attributes, fraud in the means employed to attain the object, pride, and arrogance (CE, XV, 181-3).

This analysis is, however, prefaced by Milton's assertion that the "sin which is common to all men" consists of "casting off their obedience to God" (CE, XV, 181). Nevertheless, their disobedience is basically the expression of two things: unbelief and pride. In both The Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost, Milton stresses the unbelief and pride which accompany disobedience to God. This is particularly evident in the account of the temptation of Eve in Paradise Lost, but it relates to Adam as well.

Prior to the fall, life in the Garden of Eden is

characterized by a very definite sense of order. In Milton's ideal terrestrial paradise, the woman is subservient to the man, but both are subject to God: "Hee for God only, shee for God in him" (IV, 299). Satan attempts, successfully, to invert this hierarchical order of things, so that Adam's concern is for Eve only, and neither looks to God. The Serpent's first tactic is to instil into Eve an exaggerated sense of her own worth. The first words of his "fraudulent temptation" include such phrases as "sovrän Mistress," "sole Wonder," "Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair" and "A Goddess among Gods" (IX, 531-3, 538, 547). As the temptation progresses, she is addressed as "Sovran of Creatures, universal Dame" and even as "Queen of this Universe" (IX, 612, 684). Satan's next tactic is to cast doubt on the justice and wisdom of God's command and to make it appear that God is depriving her and Adam of the "happier life" which the "knowledge of Good and Evil" could offer them (IX, 697). Accepting the Serpent's ability to speak as evidence of the knowledge and wisdom latent in the forbidden fruit, Eve willfully disobeys God's command ("such prohibitions bind not" IX, 760) by eating the fruit. The immediate effects correspond precisely to the pattern of Satan's temptation. The Serpent's flattery is now taken fully to heart (previously she had been aware that he was "overpraising" IX, 615) and she even regards herself as a deity: "nor was God-head from her thought" (IX, 790). God, whose word

she had doubted and disobeyed, now seems "High and remote" and she even wonders whether He has noticed her act (IX, 812). Her newly acquired sense of self-importance makes the idea of subservience to Adam seem distasteful. She now wants to be

more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior: for inferior who is free? (IX, 823-5)

Though pride is not as significant a factor in Adam's disobedience as in Eve's, Adam nevertheless entertains the possibility that the fruit might give to them, as it apparently had given to the Serpent

Higher degree of Life, inducement strong
To us, as likely tasting to attain
Proportional ascent, which cannot be
But to be Gods, or Angels Demi-gods (IX, 934-7).

Unbelief, however, is a highly significant factor in Adam's fall. Even though Milton adheres to the Scriptural position that "Adam was not deceived" (I Timothy 2:14) when he inserts that "he scrupl'd not to eat/Against his better knowledge, not deceiv'd" (IX, 997-8), Adam nevertheless questions whether God really means what He says. He cannot "think that God, Creator wise/Though threat'ning, will in earnest so destroy/Us his prime Creatures" (IX, 938-40), thereby demonstrating, as Milton phrases it in The Christian Doctrine, "distrust in the divine veracity" (CE, XV, 181). His unbelief, however, is essentially an act of will, for he does not want to believe God at this point. God, who had previously seemed "infinitely good" (IV, 414), is now of

considerably less importance to him than Eve, whom he now regards as "Holy, divine, good" as well as "amiable" and "sweet" (IX, 899). The "Bond of Nature" draws him much more forcefully than his sense of obligation to God; he is, therefore, "fondly overcome with Female charm," eats of the forbidden fruit, and "complete[s] . . . the mortal Sin/Original" (IX, 956, 999, 1003-4). Their ideal life in Paradise has come to an end.

Milton's account of the fall has offended the sensibilities of a number of critics, of whom Waldock and Empson are possibly the best examples. Waldock considers that Milton has been extremely unskillful in making the poem ask "from us, at one and the same time, two incompatible responses" by requiring us to believe that Adam did wrong and simultaneously requiring us to feel that he did right.¹⁸ Empson holds that Adam did "the most sublime thing available," though he suspects that Milton "would perhaps have said that Adam's failure to think of [an alternative plan] proves his lack of trust in God."¹⁹ This would, in fact, be Milton's position, for God is first in Milton's hierarchical system. Waldock's contention that Adam demonstrates "true love"²⁰ has validity only from a human point of view; Eve, for example, was "much won that he his Love/Had so ennobl'd" by his resolution to share her guilt and punishment (IX, 991-2). The true perspective is indicated in the Son of God's harsh reprimand to Adam when He passes judgment

on them for their disobedience:

Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey
Before his voice, or was shee made thy guide,
Superior, or but equal, that to her
Thou didst resign thy Manhood, and the Place
Wherein God set thee above her . . . (X, 145-9).

True love and, in turn, social harmony, as far as Milton is concerned, are not compatible with the reversal of God's order for an ideal society. Eve, by placing herself first, Adam next, and God last, and Adam, by obeying Eve rather than God (though his motivation was basically a concern for himself rather than Eve), deprived themselves not only of their love for God but of their love for each other, as Milton points out, for, after their fall

Love was not in thir looks, either to God
Or to each other, but apparent guilt,
And shame, and perturbation, and despair,
Anger, and obstinacy, and hate, and guile (X, 111-14).

The two most vital ingredients for an harmonious Christian society, as suggested by Milton's account of mankind's lapse from the felicity of Eden, are undeviating devotion and obedience to God first of all, and next, a proper regard for one's fellow man and oneself.

The standard by which these principles are established is, for Milton, the revealed will of God. The counterpart to God's clear command to Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost is the word of God as expressed in the Scriptures. As Milton affirms in The Christian Doctrine, his creed and his hope of salvation are not based on custom or party spirit, but on "the authority of Scripture" (CE, XV,

7). Milton's position is essentially that of the translators of the King James Version of the Bible, which David Novarr describes in his introduction to Seventeenth-Century English Prose:

The translators wholly believed that they were opening up the word of God about the way of life and of salvation, and they worked at a time when the good life and life eternal were immediate and pressing realities . . . when the Bible was The Book, not merely a single archetypal structure or one of several definitive myths.²¹

Novarr also shows that, early in the seventeenth century, it was commonly felt that worldly knowledge (scientia) was limited and had to be supplemented by the wisdom offered by the knowledge of both this world and the next (sapientia).²² These terms are interwoven into Milton's account of the temptation of Eve, who after eating the forbidden fruit, praises the tree for its "sapience" (IX, 797); Milton, however, subtly describes the tree, a few lines later, as having "sciential sap" (IX, 837), thus suggesting that Eve's newly acquired knowledge was of a limited kind. In Adam's words a little later, it was really only the knowledge of "Good lost, and Evil got" (IX, 1072), a sordid contrast to their previous state of being "lowly wise" (VIII, 173). Milton would have agreed with T.S. Eliot's view in "The Idea of A Christian Society" that "Christian morals" are ultimately "based on fixed beliefs."²³ While Milton pleads for liberty of discussion and expression in such works as the Areopagitica, he nevertheless makes it clear that the Scriptures

must be regarded as the final authority. The ideal society of Eden was lost when Adam and Eve questioned the authority, wisdom, and goodness of God by partaking of the forbidden fruit, thus demonstrating their unbelief, pride, and disobedience, which, in turn, unleashed the forces of evil throughout human society.

The long-range effects of the fall are traced throughout Books XI and XII of Paradise Lost. These final books have aroused more unfavourable criticism of Milton's techniques than any other portion of the poem, with the possible exception of the account of the war in Heaven. Even C.S. Lewis, whose stimulating Preface to Paradise Lost has aroused enthusiasm for Milton in many modern readers, holds that the last two books of Paradise Lost demonstrate a "grave structural flaw" because

Such an untransmuted lump of futurity, coming in a position so momentous for the structural effect of the whole work, is inartistic.²⁴

Another Milton apologist, Dr. Rajan, has, in his Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader, confessed that for him the last two books are "bleak and barren."²⁵ As early as the eighteenth century, Addison had expressed mingled feelings towards these books. While he affirms that the "two last Books can by no means be looked upon as unequal Parts of this divine Poem," he states elsewhere that "if Milton's Poem flags any where, it is in this Narration, where in some places the Author has been so attentive to his

Divinity, that he has neglected his poetry."²⁶

It can, of course, be argued that Milton as an epic poet was confronted by an extraordinarily great problem. The basic characteristics of the epic form had been established by tradition, which required, in one form or another, a portrayal of history. In the sixth book of the Aeneid, for example, Virgil places Aeneas temporarily in the underworld, where his father Anchises gives him a prophecy of the future greatness of Rome, the city which Aeneas' descendants were to build as the centre of an empire.²⁷ Similarly, in Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, Godfrey is granted by the archangel Michael a vision of the future glory of the Crusaders over the Pagans.²⁸ In The Faerie Queene, Britomart is permitted to view, by means of a "charmed looking glas," the famous British race which would stem from her union with Artegall.²⁹ Unlike his predecessors, however, Milton is not simply depicting the fortunes of a single tribe or nation, but the history of Adam's "whole included race" (IX, 416). His problem is complicated even further because Adam is neither a military nor national leader in the conventional epic manner. Nevertheless, Milton successfully presents Adam and Eve in such a way as to show the relevance of their actions to all mankind. The significance of the central act in Paradise Lost--the eating of the fruit which God had forbidden--could hardly have been illustrated in a more effective manner than the

one Milton actually adopts by portraying the reverberating effects of Adam's disobedience upon human societies throughout history.

The great amount of historical material in the last two books must, however, be accounted for. Milton's depiction of the future resembles that of Virgil and Spenser in such particulars as the use of proper names and character descriptions, but it differs considerably in its length and in its position in the epic. Virgil's rendition of the future of Rome takes up a mere few hundred lines and is placed near the middle of his epic. Spenser's portrayals of history occur in several places in The Faerie Queene but are never more than a canto in length. In Paradise Lost, however, two entire books are devoted to Milton's outline of history, and they come at the end. One apparent reason for this is that Milton is very interested in history because of the perspective it offers on various human societies, a trait also demonstrated in his History of Britain and Paradise Regained. From these perspectives, various aspects of Milton's idea of a Christian society can be inferred, for the religious, social, and political ideas of the earlier portions of Paradise Lost are applied, in the last two books, to the sphere of ordinary human life. Milton moves, therefore, from the ideal societies of Heaven and the Garden of Eden to a survey of human societies in the postlapsarian world so familiar to us.

Far from being an "untransmuted lump of futurity" as C.S. Lewis contends,³⁰ the last two books of Paradise Lost show a great deal of manipulation of historical materials on Milton's part. His concentration on Biblical characters, episodes, and prophecies, though largely necessitated by his epic theme of the fall of man, also indicates a view of human societies from a Christian perspective. This point has so impressed H.R. McCallum that he has suggested that we must be aware of the Christian view of history which Milton accepts before we can detect the unified structure and dramatic form of the last two books.³¹ By and large, Milton does, in fact, accept the traditional Christian view of history which had been most ably formulated by St. Augustine in The City of God.³² This view expresses the idea that the history of the world consists of six ages corresponding to the six days of creation, and that the seventh "day" of history commences with the second advent of Christ. An examination of Books XI and XII of Paradise Lost makes it apparent, however, that Milton has not evenly distributed his material according to the neat divisions suggested by the six ages of the hexameral tradition. For example, his skill in telescoping or contracting periods of history for his own poetic purposes can be seen in a comparison of the first age (the antediluvian period, from Adam to Noah) to the sixth (the Church age). The slender Biblical treatment of the period between Adam's fall

and the Flood gave Milton the opportunity to make full use of his imaginative powers; it is not, therefore, surprising to find in his account of the deliverance of Noah and his family some of the finest poetry in all of Paradise Lost.

(Milton demonstrates similar powers of expansion in his accounts of the creation of the world in Book VII and the Fall in Book IX.) The Church age, in which Milton's readers find themselves, is too familiar to require detailed treatment, so Milton has artistically condensed it. The most important thing to notice in Milton's portrayal of history, however, is his expansion of issues relating to the successes or failures of the human societies which he has selected for his survey.

The bleakness and barrenness³³ which critics such as Rajan have found in the final books are difficult to deny, for portions of Milton's outline of history are "manifestly gloomy"³⁴ and "pessimistic"³⁵ as Fixler and Tillyard have observed. This poetic "bleakness" can be justified to a degree, for it corresponds appropriately to the "blood, toil, tears, and sweat" commonly experienced in the arena of human life as we know it, and indicates that Milton's view of history is tempered by realism. It also gives us evidence, even beyond his arguments, that Milton did not consider that a truly Christian society was likely to emerge prior to the second coming of Christ. His emphasis is largely on the failures of societies throughout

history to achieve or perpetuate the spiritual, social, and political liberties he values so highly. Along with his portrayals of these failures, however, are numerous suggestions as to how these liberties can be achieved and maintained. The last two books have, therefore, a dual function, for they indicate his religious and political ideals as well as what he regards as deviations from these ideals.

The political and ethical principle that leadership should be exercised by the "wise and good," which Milton stresses in his sonnets, prose writings, and in his depiction of the ideal order of Heaven and Eden, is also apparent in Books XI and XII of Paradise Lost. Milton has not presented history as "an untransmuted lump" as C.S. Lewis maintains,³⁶ but has selected for detailed treatment such men as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, individuals who are mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as champions of faith, as Barbara Lewalski has observed.³⁷ It is interesting to note that some of the first men who are described in detail are not, strictly speaking, political figures at all. Unlike Nimrod, whose ambition prompts him "to tyrannize" over his fellow men (XII, 39), Enoch and Noah are depicted as having no political influence whatsoever. Enoch is described as "the only righteous in a World perverse" (XI, 701) and Noah as the "one Man found so perfect and so just" (XI, 876). Milton clearly implies, however, that both of these men, because of their zeal for

righteousness, their obedience to God, and their wisdom, were the true leaders of their day. Enoch was, for instance, of "middle Age . . . eminent/In wise deport" and demonstrated a true knowledge of "Right and Wrong . . . Justice . . . Religion, Truth and Peace,/And Judgment from above" (IX, 665-8). Noah, similarly, "testifi'd against [the] ways" of his wicked contemporaries and "to them preach'd/Conversion and Repentance" (IX, 720, 723-4). Neither of these men, though preeminently qualified for leadership, resorted to forceful means to promote the cause of righteousness. The principles of religious liberty which Milton advocates in Of Civil Power are thus reasserted. Nevertheless, because the society of Enoch's and Noah's day refused to submit to the wise counsel of these spiritual and natural leaders, it continued to degenerate until it was destroyed by the Flood.

The principle of leadership by the "wise and good" also permeates Milton's outline of the history of the Hebrew race, a "Nation from one faithful man to spring" (XII, 113). Moving from the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, Milton describes the foundation of the theocratic commonwealth of Israel under such spiritual as well as political leaders as Moses and Joshua. It is important to note, however, that Milton does not advocate this as an ideal form of government. The "Laws and Rites" observed in the commonwealth of Israel, though given by God, are intended to foreshadow the eventual appearance of

"the Woman's Seed" (XII, 244-5, 327). That Milton would not regard the Jewish community as a model for a Christian society is thus implied, a position consistent with his argument in The Reason of Church-Government that the political aspects of the "Judaick law . . . no Christian nation ever thought it selfe oblig'd in conscience . . . to take pattern by . . . (CPW, I, 764). It also fits into his view in Eikonoklastes that, because Christ's laws are basically spiritual, not civil, God has left "all Nations to thir own particular Laws and way of Government" (CPW, III, 587). Milton is not particularly concerned with specific polities, even Biblical ones, but he consistently adheres to the fundamental principle that the "wise and good" should be the spiritual and political leaders in society.

Another significant characteristic of Milton's view of history is the recurring pattern of liberty and bondage. Basically, human societies prosper if they observe two precepts: fear of God and self-discipline. These criteria are essential for the acquisition and preservation of liberty, whereas bondage is the inevitable result of any deviation from these precepts. In The Christian Doctrine, Milton affirms that "the observation of the divine commandments is the source of prosperity to nations. . . . It renders them flourishing, wealthy, and victorious," an idea he bases on such Scriptures as Deuteronomy 15:4-6 (CE, XVII, 413). The significance of discipline is stressed in

The Reason of Church-Government:

He that hath read with judgement, of Nations and Commonwealths, of Cities and Camps of peace and warre . . . will readily agree that the flourishing and decaying of all civill societies . . . are mov'd to and fro as upon the axle of discipline (CPW, I, 751).

When his pleas for religious, personal, and political liberty are compared with this statement, it becomes evident that he is basically concerned with self-discipline. This statement is, in fact, shortly followed by his affirmation that "discipline is . . . the very visible shape and image of virtue" (CPW, I, 751). Since "vertue that wavers is not vertue" (CPW, I, 795), it is apparent that it is not enforced discipline, but self-discipline that Milton admires and advocates. Devotion to God and self-discipline are both stressed in a verse from Titus 2:12, which Milton cites in

The Christian Doctrine:

. . . teaching us that denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (CE, XVII, 213).

In the last two books of Paradise Lost, deviations from these two principles are generally interconnected. Disobedience to God inevitably entails a failure of self-discipline and self-control, as Michael points out to Adam by reminding him of his and Eve's disobedience and "ungovern'd appetite" (XI, 517). Similarly, the pursuit of pleasure and the "Arts that polish Life" in the antediluvian age is denounced by Michael because the people of that particular society are "unmindful of thir Maker" (XI, 610-11). The failure to

remain loyal to God and to exercise self-discipline produces selfishness and ambition, which in turn lead to social and political bondage:

Therefore since hee permits
Within himself unworthy Powers to reign
Over free Reason, God in Judgment just
Subjects him from without to violent Lords,
Who oft as undeservedly enthrall
His outward freedom . . . (XII, 90-5).

This commonplace idea is a fusion of classical and Christian ideas. Plato in his Republic had shown the connection between despotism and lustful appetites, which he regarded as "farthest removed from philosophy and reason, that is to say, from subordination to law."³⁸ The Christian point of view had been clearly expressed in such works as The City of God, where Augustine affirms that "the man whose will is wicked is the slave of his own lust" and that "the prime cause of slavery is sin, which brings man under the dominion of his fellow--that which does not happen save by the judgment of God."³⁹ Similarly, in his outline of British history in Merlin's prophecy in The Faerie Queene, Spenser shows that

. . . th' heavens have decreed, to displace
The Britons, for their sinnes dew punishment,
And to the Saxons over-give their government
(III, iii, 41).

Milton is realistic enough to recognize, however, that there are exceptions to this general rule, for circumstances do not invariably bring weal to the righteous and woe to the wicked; at times the reverse seems to hold true.

This is indicated near the conclusion of his History of Britain:

And as the long suffering of God permits bad men to enjoy prosperous daies with the good, so his severity oft times exempts not good men from thir share in evil times with the bad (CE, X, 316).

This idea is even more emphatically stressed in Milton's survey of human societies in Book XII of Paradise Lost:

. . . so shall the World go on,
To good malignant, to bad men benign,
Under her own weight groaning . . . (537-9).

This gloomy outlook, which corresponds to the general bleakness of the poetry itself, suggests that Milton does not consider the emergence of a truly Christian society as a likely possibility until the second advent of Christ. His survey of the religious, social, and political scene throughout human history indicates his belief that the Fall of man in Eden will be reenacted continually in the lives of individuals and nations.⁴⁰ Michael specifically states to Adam, in fact, that since his "original lapse, true Liberty/Is lost" (XII, 83-4). There will always be on earth, along with the saints, those "who neglect and scorn" the Christian Gospel and the clearly revealed will of God (PL, III, 199). In spite of this, however, Milton would consider the attempt to achieve a Christian society a worthy and profitable endeavour. Like his contemporary, Richard Baxter, who in A Holy Commonwealth (1659) declares that "it is a great mistake to expect perfection of so excellent a thing as holy order here on earth,"⁴¹ Milton

does not expect an ideal holy commonwealth until "the day/
 Appear of respiration to the just" (XII, 539-40). Many
 years earlier, he had expressed a similar view in Areopagi-
 tica by stating that "this is not the liberty which wee can
 hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Common-
 wealth, that let no man in this World expect" (CPW, II,
 487). Nevertheless, the Areopagitica was one of many pam-
 phlets he contributed to the cause of liberty as he saw it.
 His position in Paradise Lost is essentially the same, for
 though he regards a Christian society modelled on his
 ideals as an unlikely possibility, this does not prevent him
 from suggesting some of the means for achieving these ideals.
 Such admonitions as "to obey is best,/And love with fear
 the only God" (PL, XII, 561-2), indicate Milton's funda-
 mental ethic. He also shows that dependence upon God,
 meekness, and true moral heroism can vitally influence and
 even transform, to a great degree, the actual social,
 religious, and political scene, for God is

Merciful over all his works, with good
 Still overcoming evil, and by small
 Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
 Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
 By simply meek . . . (XII, 565-9).

Fixler is undoubtedly right when he states that
 while "Milton did not really hope to transform the actual
 political situation into the pattern of his ideal . . . he
 insisted on the validity of measuring the actual by the
 ideal," but he greatly overemphasizes the "crucial" shift

in Milton's concern with "the Kingdom within" from his previous optimistic hopes for an external "regnum Christi."⁴² While Michael tells Adam that by means of such virtues as true knowledge, faith, patience, temperance and love, he will "possess/A Paradise within . . . happier far" than the Paradise of Eden (XII, 582-7), it must be understood that Eden has "felt the wound" of Adam and Eve's transgression (IX, 782), and is no longer the ideal place it had been prior to the Fall. The "Paradise within" is contrasted with the physical features of a fallen Eden, whereas before man's disobedience the external Garden of Eden and the inner "Paradise" blended together perfectly. When man lost his "Paradise within," his total environment was also adversely affected. From man's point of view, either as an individual or as a member of his society, it would have been better "to have known/Good by itself, and Evil not at all" (XI, 88-9). Fixler's suggestion that Milton has replaced his hopes for an external Christian kingdom with "the Kingdom within"⁴³ is only partially true. Milton certainly insists on the importance of the "Paradise within" which can be achieved by means of the basic Christian virtues, but these are not stressed only for their own sake, for Milton also believes that these virtues can accomplish "great things" (XII, 567) in the external world. An outward Paradise, as Milton's great epic shows, is not possible without the "Paradise within," whether in Heaven, Eden, or

the world as it now is. A truly Christian society is, at present, unlikely to emerge because of the evil in men's hearts, but it is nonetheless a goal towards which every Christian can and should aspire. The essence of such a society is not its intricate political structure, however, but the liberties and privileges it offers to the "wise and good." The apocalyptic notes in the last book of Paradise Lost give further evidence of Milton's desire to see the inner and outward Paradises reunited, for when the Son of God comes "to reward/His faithful, and receive them into bliss,"

. . . the Earth
 Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days
 (XII, 461-5).

Meanwhile, however, Milton expects each believer, by means of "Justice and Temperance, Truth and Faith" (XI, 807), to work towards the establishing of a Christian society in "the wilderness of this world"⁴⁴ so that God's will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY IN MILTON'S FINAL POETRY

The appearance of Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes, published together in 1671, contributed very little in the way of new ideas to the canon of Milton's works. Most of the concepts expressed in these final poems had been stated in Paradise Lost or in Milton's earlier poetry and pamphlets. Furthermore, it has generally been felt that these poems lack the grandeur and dynamism of Paradise Lost. Milton's nephew, Edward Phillips, for example, records in his Life of Milton that Paradise Regained was "generally censured to be much inferior to the other [i.e., Paradise Lost], though he could not hear with patience any such thing when related to him."¹ Dr. Johnson disparages Samson Agonistes for its failure to attract "the attention which a well-connected plan produces," though he concedes that it has many "striking lines."² Nevertheless, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes are useful for their treatment of issues which Milton has not expanded fully in his earlier work, and they illuminate further his idea of a Christian society. The paramount importance of obedience to God, which Milton illustrates in Paradise Lost by showing how the "loss of Eden" was brought about by "Man's First

Disobedience" (PL, I, 1, 4), is reasserted in Paradise Regained by the example of one who has "Recover'd Paradise to all mankind" by means of his "firm obedience fully tried" (PR, I, 3-4). The nature of true heroism, briefly touched upon in Milton's characterization of such figures as Abdiel in Heaven, and Enoch, Noah, and Abraham on earth (Adam having failed in this regard), is explored in much greater depth in his depiction of the Son in Paradise Regained and Samson in Samson Agonistes. The significance of the idea that "They also serve who only stand and wait" (Sonnet XIX, Hughes, 168), illustrated both in Milton's attitude towards his own physical blindness and in his portrayal of the righteous angels in Heaven, is dealt with far more fully in his final poetry than in his earlier work, and indicates his deepening conviction that the most important feature of a Christian society is not honourable action so much as an unflinching faith in God.

Milton's idea of the kind of religious and political power that should characterize a Christian society can be inferred from his careful analysis of the essential features of the kingdom of God in Paradise Regained. Milton's views on the true nature of the kingdom of God are expressed in such works as Of Reformation, where he argues that Christ's "Scepter" is "unoperative" except in "spirituall things," as indicated by Christ's statement to Pilate that his "Kingdome was not of this world" (CPW, I, 576). Similarly,

he shows in Of Civil Power that Christ's kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world, but is "a divine and spiritual kingdom . . . not governd by outward force" (CE, VI, 22). In Paradise Regained, he explores these ideas further in the three temptations of Christ. His great interest in this subject is suggested by his arrangement and treatment of the temptations as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. Instead of following the order of the three temptations laid out by St. Matthew, as Giles Fletcher had done in his poetic account of Christ's temptation in Christs Victorie and Triumph (1610),³ which Northrop Frye terms "Milton's most obvious source,"⁴ Milton follows the pattern in the fourth chapter of St. Luke's gospel, where the temptation of the kingdoms is placed after that of the bread and before the episode on the pinnacle of the temple. Even more noteworthy than the order of the temptations in Paradise Regained is the astonishing scope he gives to the temptation of the kingdoms in comparison to the other two temptations. The first and third temptations are treated with brevity, but the temptation of the kingdoms includes most of Books II, III, and IV, and is clearly central to the entire epic. It is obvious, therefore, that the true nature of Christ's kingdom is of great concern to Milton.

The central dilemma in Paradise Regained is suggested in the Son's soliloquy even before the first temptation, and outlines clearly the basic issues involved:

. . . victorious deeds
 Flam'd in my heart, heroic acts; one while
 To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
 Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
 Brute violence and proud Tyrannic pow'r,
 Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd:
 Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first
 By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
 And make persuasion do the work of fear;
 At least to try, and teach the erring Soul
 Not wilfully misdoing, but unaware
 Misled: the stubborn only to subdue . . . (I, 215-26).

The Son, having searched the Scriptures to discover "what
 was writ/Concerning the Messiah," finds that his

way must lie
 Through many a hard assay even to the death,
 Ere I the promis'd Kingdom can attain,
 Or work Redemption for mankind, whose sins'
 Full weight must be transferr'd upon my head
 (I, 260-1, 263-7).

All of the temptations that follow, particularly the many-faceted temptation of the kingdoms, are attempts by Satan to encourage the Son to demonstrate his divinity by taking matters into his own hands instead of relying on God to establish his kingdom on earth in due time. The means by which God will establish the Son's kingdom are not fully known, except by God alone, nor is the time clearly predicted. Nevertheless, the Son is content with the assurance that

. . . when my season comes to sit
 On David's Throne, it shall be like a tree
 Spreading and overshadowing all the Earth,
 Or as a stone that shall to pieces dash
 All Monarchies besides throughout the world,
 And of my Kingdom there shall be no end
 (IV, 146-51).

In these words addressed to Satan, the Son asserts that

"Means there shall be to this, but what the means,/Is not for thee to know, nor me to tell (IV, 152-3). Meanwhile, however, the "Kingdoms of the world" have been "giv'n" to Satan, or more exactly, by him "usurp't" (IV, 182-3).

These passages are highly significant, for they show that Milton does not expect the external kingdom of God to be established on earth until the time of the last judgment, an idea also suggested in the final book of Paradise Lost, where he sees the world remaining "To good malignant, to bad men benign . . . till the day/Appear of respiration to the just,/And vengeance to the wicked" (XII, 538-41). Milton's eschatological views are even more explicitly expressed in the thirty-third chapter of the first book of The Christian Doctrine, where he affirms that coincident . . . with the time of this last judgment . . . will take place that glorious reign of Christ on earth with his saints, so often promised in Scripture (CE, XVI, 359). He here distinguishes between the "kingdom of glory" inaugurated by Christ's second advent and "His kingdom of grace . . . which is also called the kingdom of heaven" which "began with his first advent" (CE, XVI, 359). The focus of Paradise Regained, to use these terms from The Christian Doctrine, is on the "kingdom of grace," not on the "kingdom of glory," but it is Satan's desire to obliterate this vital distinction by tempting the Son to exercise prematurely the prerogatives associated with the latter kingdom. Milton's position on this point is very close to

that of Calvin, who argues in The Institutes that

Since, then, it is a Jewish vanity to seek and enclose Christ's Kingdom within the elements of the world, let us rather ponder that what Scripture clearly teaches is a spiritual fruit, which we gather from Christ's grace.⁵

Nevertheless, in spite of his conviction that the kingdom of Christ in this present age is basically of a spiritual nature, and his belief that "Christ's spiritual Kingdom and the civil jurisdiction are things completely distinct," Calvin also maintains that the "two governments are not antithetical," for "civil government has its appointed end, so long as we live among men, to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church . . . and to promote general peace and tranquility."⁶ A comparison of Calvin's ideas with Milton's on these issues brings out some important similarities and differences, and sheds additional light on Paradise Regained.

Both Calvin and Milton maintain that Christ's present "kingdom" on earth is primarily spiritual in nature. They also concur on the point that it is a mistake to attempt to set up Christ's kingdom by worldly means. Nevertheless, they both consider that a society ought to promote Christian truth and standards as much as it possibly can. It is on the means of achieving this aim that a basic difference emerges. Calvin's concern with "the outward worship of God . . . , sound doctrine . . . and the position of the church" (Institutes, 1487) motivated him to establish in

Geneva a kind of Christian society in miniature. Deviations from "sound doctrine" were dealt with harshly. When it was discovered that Servetus had unorthodox views on the Trinity, he was turned over to the civil powers and burned at the stake. (If Milton had lived in Calvin's Geneva, he would likely have suffered a similar fate for his views on the Trinity as expressed in The Christian Doctrine.) Milton's desire for a Christian society is as fervent as Calvin's, but he holds that it is "more humane, more heavenly, first/By winning words to conquer willing hearts,/ And make persuasion do the work of fear" (PR, I, 221-3), a point consistent with his earlier recognition that, because no "church can judge definitively the sense of scripture to another man's conscience . . . , it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compell in matters of Religion" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 12, and title page).

Other characteristics of the present kingdom of God or the "kingdom of grace" are illustrated in Paradise Regained and offer insights into Milton's ideas on the essential features of a Christian society. These vital characteristics are indicated throughout the poem by means of two basic techniques. First, and possibly the most important, is Milton's portrayal of the character and behavior of the Son, whose "deeds" are declared to be "Above Heroic, though in secret done" (I, 14-15). Second, Satan's comments on religious and political issues provide a foil

to Milton's ideas on these matters. Closely associated with this technique is the manner in which the Son replies to Satan's temptations. The Son's remarks on spiritual and social issues are presented by Milton as irrefutable and final, and indicate the standards a society must follow if it is to be truly Christian. These techniques are, however, frequently interfused.

The virtues the Son demonstrates contrast sharply with the lust for power and glory which Milton attacks with such vehemence in the temptation of the kingdoms. The various phases of this temptation are basically similar in nature, for each phase is directly related to Milton's conviction that true leadership is entirely free from selfish motives and is absolutely incompatible with a lust for personal aggrandizement, power, or fame. The Son's invulnerability to all temptations of this kind demonstrates not only his fortitude but his temperance. His knowledge is indicated by his ability to survey the entire human scene, and his wisdom is manifested in his adept exposure of the inadequacies and inconsistencies of Satan's arguments. These classical virtues, also stressed throughout Milton's previous works, are all connected to the theme of the paramount importance of obedience and submission to God's will.

The attitude of the Son towards each phase of the temptation of the kingdoms can be regarded as an example

to be followed in a Christian society. The first part of this temptation opens with an encounter between Jesus and Satan, who is disguised "As one in City, or Court, or Palace bred" (II, 300). Satan points out to him how incongruous it is for the Son of God to be so destitute and hungry, and asks him if he has "not right to all Created things" (II, 324). Since he is the "Lord" of "Nature," he deserves not only the basic necessities of life, but also has a right to the sensuous trappings normally associated with kingship (II, 335, 332). Satan therefore prepares for him "A Table richly spread, in regal mode" (*italics mine*), with the fairest young ladies and youths as attendants (II, 340, 350-60). Like Comus, who argues that "If all the world/Should in a pet of temperance feed on Pulse . . . Th' all-giver would be unthank't" (Comus, 720-1, 723), Satan also refers to Daniel and his three friends who refused to partake of the king's meats. Satan admits that Daniel did right because the king's food had been "offer'd first/To idols" (PR, II, 328-9), but he insists that what he places before Jesus has not been defiled in any way and should not be regarded as "Fruits forbidden" like "the crude Apple that diverted Eve" (II, 369, 349). By refusing Satan's offer, Jesus demonstrates temperance, as Milton specifically indicates (II, 378, 408). This temperance is unique, however, for it does not simply imply moderation. Jesus will not partake of anything that Satan places before him. The

key to this facet of the temptation of the kingdoms is Jesus' curt reply to Satan's question as to whether he would eat "if Food were now before thee set":

Thereafter as I like
The giver, answer'd Jesus (II, 320-2).

Like the apple in Eden or Nebuchadnezzar's food in Babylon, the source of the food is suspect. Implicit in this particular temptation is Milton's conviction that it is not acceptable for a Christian to acquire even the most basic necessities of life by faulty methods. The Israelites and Elijah, whom Satan cites as examples of those who partook of proffered food in the wilderness, received their sustenance from God, not from Satan. The end can never justify the means in any area of life, as far as Milton is concerned.

Milton's focus broadens in the next phase in the temptation of the kingdoms. The basic motifs are very similar to the previous phase, but the temptation moves from the sphere of physical necessities to the area of luxury and wealth. It is worth observing that Milton does not dwell on the enjoyment of riches for their own sake. Like Spenser's Mammon in The Faerie Queene, who shows Sir Guyon the relationship between riches and "renowme, and principality,/Honour, estate, and all this worldes good" (F.Q., II, vii, 8), Satan points out to Jesus that wealth provides the means to "Authority . . . Honor, Friends, Conquest, and Realms" (PR, II, 418, 422). Satan thus

offers the Son the practical means to "greatness," showing that such intrinsically admirable qualities as "Virtue, Valor, Wisdom sit in want" apart from the power afforded by riches (II, 418, 431).

Satan's pragmatic argument is refuted by the Son in terms which express some of Milton's most ardent convictions on the function of government and the qualifications for leadership in society. Jesus at first points out that wealth without virtue, wisdom, and true valour is "impotent/ To gain dominion or to keep it gain'd" (II, 433-4), and that both sacred and secular history prove that men of "lowest poverty" have been able to attain positions of social and political influence by means of these virtues (II, 438-446). Jesus also observes that riches have frequently proven to be detrimental to their owners, and are "apt/To slacken Virtue and abate her edge" (II, 454-5). He then expresses his views on true kingship. A genuine ruler must first be aware of the great responsibilities entailed in regal authority, for "on his shoulders each man's burden lies" (II, 462); he knows that a crown, though "Golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns" which brings "dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights" (II, 459-60). Reasserting the Aristotelian principle upheld in The Tenure, that a true king "governs to the good and profit of his People, and not for his own ends" (CPW, III, 202),⁷ Milton has Jesus declare:

. . . therein stands the office of a King,
His Honor, Virtue, Merit and chief Praise,
That for the Public all this weight he bears
(II, 463-5).

Furthermore, true kingship requires self-control in every sphere of life, a quality that Milton has already depicted obliquely in his characterization of Satan in Paradise Lost. Unlike Satan, who, as Abdiel observes, is "not free" but to himself "enthrall'd" (PL, VI, 181), a true king is, in Jesus' words, "he who reigns within himself, and rules/ Passions, Desires, and Fears" (PR, II, 466-7). This standard is not only one that a ruler must observe, but is one "which every wise and virtuous man attains" (PR, II, 468), thus illustrating Milton's belief that true ethical goals are basically the same for everyone in a society. One of the most distinguishing features of an individual preëminently qualified to rule is, for Milton, a complete lack of personal ambition. This characteristic is evidenced by Jesus, who with "aversion" rejects "Riches and realms" and then tells Satan that it is "Greater and nobler" and "Far more magnanimous" to refuse a kingdom than "to assume" it (II, 457-8, 482-3). This brings to mind Plato's observation in The Republic that "good men are unwilling to rule, either for money's sake or for honour" and must be forced "under threat of penalty" to rule, for the "heaviest penalty . . . is to be ruled by someone inferior" to themselves.⁸ Jesus goes even a step further than Plato's "good men," however, for he allows Satan to continue his usurped rule

over mankind until God puts an end to it.

It is of vital importance to note that Milton moves beyond the classical ideals of government in Paradise Regained, as he has done in his earlier works. Having said much about the necessary qualifications for true leadership, Milton's Jesus makes it clear that the primary function of government is

. . . to guide Nations in the way of truth
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more Kingly; this attracts the Soul,
Governs the inner man, the nobler part;
That other o'er the body only reigns (II, 473-77).

It is apparent that Milton is concerned not only with good government, but with the right kind of government in a Christian society. The classical ideals are of great value and are, for the most part, compatible with the ethical and political goals of a Christian society. These ideals, however, must be supplemented with the transcendent truths of Christianity, which take into account man's spiritual as well as his physical well-being. This requires a knowledge of God and of "saving Doctrine" (II, 474), the ultimate guidelines in a Christian society. No ruler is adequate without this fundamental knowledge, and without it he cannot be truly "wise and good."

The next phase in the temptation of the kingdoms focuses on man's perpetual desire for glory and fame. It is closely related thematically to the previous phase, for the desire for wealth is frequently stimulated by a lust

for fame and glory. Nevertheless, Milton's concern with the problem of man's search for fame and glory is so powerful that he treats it separately in Paradise Regained.

Satan wonders why Jesus is "Affecting private life," thus depriving "All Earth her wonder at thy acts" (III, 22, 24). The temptation is a subtle one, for fame and glory are manifestations and proofs of influence. Satan implies, therefore, that Jesus' life will be wasted if he does not exert his influence for good while on this earth. The most effective means for achieving fame, glory, and influence are, Satan argues, by kingship: "Reign then; what canst thou better do the while?" (III, 180).

The Son's reply to Satan's temptation makes it clear that Milton regards man's desire for fame and glory as not merely contemptible but sacrilegious. It is with a strong Christian bias, therefore, that these lines are inserted:

But why should man seek glory? who of his own
Hath nothing, and to whom nothing belongs
But condemnation, ignominy, and shame?
Who for so many benefits receiv'd
Turn'd recreant to God, ingrate and false,
And so of all true good himself despoil'd,
Yet, sacrilegious, to himself would take
That which to God alone of right belongs
(III, 134-41).

This passage makes it appear as if the Puritan in Milton has completely overcome the humanist, for he emphatically stresses the depravity of man. Is there, then, any room whatever for fame and glory in a Christian society? A clue

to Milton's position is offered in the lines which immediately follow:

Yet so much bounty is in God, such grace,
That who advance his glory, not thir own,
Them he himself to glory will advance (III, 142-4).

The Son cites not only Job but Socrates as examples of men who have become, by means of their patience and devotion to truth, "Equal in fame to proudest Conquerors" (III, 99). In contrast to Job and Socrates are "men not worthy of fame" who

. . . count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide, to overrun
Large countries, and in field great Battles win
Great cities by assault (III, 70-74).

Milton calls such men "Worthies" (III, 74) and leaves them nameless. True fame is not achieved by force and conquest, but by

. . . deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance . . . (III, 91-2).

Since "glory . . . to God alone of right belongs" (III, 141), it is presumptuous, and therefore sinful, for man to seek fame and glory for himself. A selfish desire for glory reflects the behavior of Satan, who "Insatiable of glory had lost all" (III, 148), as Jesus points out.

Milton thus makes a fine distinction between the lust for fame and the renown by which the truly wise and virtuous are ultimately rewarded, a distinction indicated in some of his earlier works. In Lycidas, fame is described, almost paradoxically, as "the spur that the clear

spirit doth raise" and as "that last infirmity of Noble mind" (70-71, Hughes 122). The apparent ambiguity is resolved by Phoebus, who declares that "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil . . . Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed" (78, 84). The point is that earthly fame is not to be sought for its own sake, for one's chief concern should be the enhancement of the glory of God. Nevertheless, one who lives in such a way as to bring honour to God will ultimately be rewarded with fame. In Of Education, Milton stresses two goals: to be both "dear to God" and "famous to all ages" (CPW, II, 385). These goals are not incompatible, provided that the correct order is not reversed. Paradise Regained makes it clear that "to be famous to all ages" is in itself an unacceptable goal in a Christian society, but the desire to be "dear to God" is honourable and good, and leads to true fame.

The temptation of fame and glory merges into another attempt by Satan to make Jesus assume the prerogatives of kingship. The focus in this instance is the power which regal authority entails. By showing him all the great kingdoms of the world, Satan tries to make Jesus aware of the advantages of "regal Arts" in performing "all things that to greatest actions lead" (III, 248, 239). This temptation is intended to appeal to Jesus' devotion to truth, righteousness, and justice, for early in his life he had desired

To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
 Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
 Brute violence and proud Tyrannic pow'r,
 Till truth were freed, and equity restor'd
 (I, 217-20).

Satan admonishes him, therefore, to assume kingship in order to overthrow the corrupt empires of the world. These empires, Satan argues, cannot be replaced by the kingdom of God without the use of force:

. . . unless thou
 Endeavor, as thy Father David did
 Thou never shalt obtain . . . thy Kingdom
 (III, 351-4).

(Satan's distortion of the Scriptures should be observed on this point. David was a warrior-king throughout his reign, but he did not obtain his kingdom by force. He refused to "stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed" [I Samuel 26:9], and waited for God to deal with Saul.) Jesus' rejection of Satan's offer of regal power confirms his earlier resolve to "conquer willing hearts" by "winning words" and "persuasion" instead of force (I, 222-3). The spiritual nature of Jesus' kingdom is clearly intended by Milton to be the pattern for a Christian society. His kingdom, until the time of his second advent, is "divine and spiritual"; it cannot, therefore, be introduced or maintained "by outward force" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 22). Milton's stand in Paradise Regained is essentially the same as his position in his religious and political pamphlets on this crucial point: it is not permissible to resort to violent means in the propagation of the gospel of

Christ.

What Milton regards as fundamental knowledge in a Christian society can be inferred from his account of the Son's rejection of Satan's most attractive temptation, classical learning and culture. Satan places before Jesus "Athens, the eye of Greece, Mother of Arts/And Eloquence," symbolizing in particular "contemplation and profound dispute" (IV, 240-1, 214). The connection of this temptation to the previous ones is indicated by Satan's challenge to Jesus:

. . . as thy Empire must extend,
So let extend thy mind o'er all the world,
In knowledge . . . (IV, 222-4).

It is important to observe that Jesus does not dispute the classical and Renaissance principle that wisdom and knowledge are necessary requirements for good leadership. The knowledge of "What makes a Nation happy, and keeps it so,/ What ruins Kingdoms, and lays Cities flat . . . best form[s] a King" (IV, 362-4), as Jesus himself declares. The issue under discussion in Paradise Regained is not whether learning is of value in a society, but rather what constitutes essential knowledge in the present "kingdom of grace" (The Christian Doctrine, CE, XVI, 359), the sphere in which a Christian society must operate.

Concerning classical philosophy and learning, Jesus harshly states:

. . . these are false, or little else but dreams,
Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm
(IV, 291-2).

In contrast are the truths of Scripture, of which he declares:

. . . he who receives
Light from above, from the fountain of light,
No other doctrine needs, though granted true
(IV, 288-90).

Critics such as Tillyard have been "astounded" at the manner in which Milton appears to go "out of his way to hurt the dearest and oldest inhabitants of his mind."⁹ Bush, reacting in a similar way, confesses that "it is painful indeed to watch Milton turn and rend some main roots of his being."¹⁰ Even Woodhouse, who is less distressed than Tillyard or Bush with Milton's purpose, asserts that "Christ's rejection of Athens is complete."¹¹ Is there, then, a repudiation of all classical learning in Paradise Regained? Has Milton retracted from his earlier conviction that "the man who knows nothing of the liberal arts seems to be cut off from all access to the happy life"? (Pro-lusions, VII, Hughes, 623).¹² Is it possible to reconcile Milton's resistance towards the Presbyterians' "tyranny over learning" in the Areopagitica (CPW, II, 539) with Jesus' apparent denunciation of classical knowledge? Some of these questions can be answered by a careful examination of Paradise Regained itself. Jesus' remarks must be seen in the context of the entire poem. Satan's purpose in offering the temptation in the first place, a point frequently overlooked by critics, is to arouse in Jesus a desire to be "famous . . . By wisdom" (IV, 221-2). This

temptation, therefore, is closely associated with Satan's earlier enticements of fame and glory. Secondly, it should be observed that Jesus himself demonstrates such a thorough knowledge of the classics that he lists and evaluates most of the major schools of Greek thought. He makes it very clear that Satan does not have a monopoly on secular learning:

Think not but that I know these things; or think
I know them not . . . (IV, 286-7).

He categorically affirms, however, that "true wisdom" is not to be found in human learning but in the revealed word of God. The Hebrew prophets were "divinely taught;" their writings offer, therefore, "better teaching" on the "solid rules of Civil Government" and politics (what "makes a Nation happy, and keeps it so") than "all the Oratory of Greece and Rome" (IV, 357-362). All essential information relating to the spiritual and political weal of a Christian society can be found in the Scriptures.

Milton's firm stand on this issue is not restricted to the last book of Paradise Regained; it permeates all his work. Even as early a poem as his ode, On the Morning of Christ's Nativity, shows the silencing of the "deceiving" Oracles of the classical and pagan world by the truth of the Christian revelation (173-5, Hughes, 48). Of Education indicates Milton's belief that the "grounds of law, and legall justice" were "deliver'd first, and with best warrant by Moses," though Greek and Roman works have their place

(CPW, II, 398). The Reason of Church-Government anticipates Jesus' remarks on the superiority of Hebrew hymns, psalms, and songs to their pagan counterparts (PR, IV, 335-42), for in this pamphlet Milton maintains that the "frequent songs throughout the law and prophets . . . may be easily made appear over all the kinds of Lyrick poesy, to be incomparable" (CPW, I, 816).

Milton's conviction that the Scriptures alone are of ultimate significance and authority in a Christian society does not make him unique. Most of his contemporaries, Anglicans as well as Puritans, thought similarly. Lancelot Andrewes, in The Morall Law Expounded, asserts that the Christian religion is the true light, but "as for the Heathen religion, a great part of their stories is fabulous; and part true."¹³ John Donne, in Sermon LXV, comparing the wisdom of men such as Plato with the Scriptures, states that "the best men are but Problematicall, Onely the Holy Ghost is Dogmaticall."¹⁴ William Prynne, in Histrio-Mastix, declares that only in the "Scripture it selfe" is there "no superfluity nor defect."¹⁵ Narrow-minded though he is in his condemnation of "May-games, amorous Pastoralls, lascivious effeminate Musicke, excessive laughter" and particularly stage-plays, which he states are "not sufferable in any well-ordered Christian Republike," Prynne nevertheless concedes that those inventions of Infidels, and Pagans, which may further Gods glory, or the good of men: as Musicke, Poetrie,

Husbandry, Navigation, Architecture, Letters, Writing, and the like: are lawful unto Christians; because they issue from those common gifts, which God himselfe implanted in them.¹⁶

Stage-plays, however, must be avoided by Christians "if for no other reason . . . that the Heathen Gentiles were the Authors, fomentors, and frequenters of them."¹⁷

Prynne's eclectic attitude towards heathen learning, though ambiguous, is an attempt to distinguish between the wisdom given to the pagans by God, and their own sinful inventions which Christians must shun. The view of all these men towards heathen learning is basically similar. True knowledge in a Christian society is derived from the Scriptures, by which pagan wisdom must be sifted. Paradise Regained is, therefore, a reassertion of Milton's priorities. His focus, particularly in Book IV, is on the "true wisdom" which recognizes that man is "Degraded by himself, on grace depending" (IV, 312). (This recalls Raphael's admonition to Adam to "be lowly wise" for "apt the Mind or Fancy is to rove/Uncheckt, and of her roving is no end." PL, VIII, 173, 188-9). The source of "true wisdom" is the word of God. The spirit of Book IV resembles that of Herbert's "The Pearl":

I Know the wayes of Learning . . .
Both th' old discoveries, and the new-found seas,
The stock and surplus, cause and historie:
All these stand open, or I have the keyes:
Yet I love thee . . .
Yet through these labyrinths, not my groveling wit,
But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,
Did both conduct and teach me, how by it,¹⁸
To climbe to thee.

The temptations in Paradise Regained ultimately stress "the better fortitude/Of Patience" that Adam fails to achieve in Paradise Lost (IX, 31-2). This is true not only in the temptation of the kingdoms, where Jesus resists the enticements of wealth, power, and fame, but of the first and last temptations as well. The first temptation, in which Satan requests Jesus to make bread out of stones, is an attempt to make his faith in God waver. "Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust?" is Jesus' reply (I, 355). The final temptation, in which Satan places him on the pinnacle of the temple, illustrates his firm faith in God in a crisis situation. Satan himself is forced to acknowledge that he has found Jesus to be

Proof against all temptation as a rock
Of Adamant . . . (IV, 533-4).

Though he has proven himself to be supremely qualified to rule, his willingness to forego the prerogatives of kingship persists to the end of the poem, where it is stated that "hee unobserv'd/Home to his Mother's house private return'd" (IV, 638-9). This quiet ending has great dramatic significance. Though he has been offered all the kingdoms of the world, he returns home alone as if nothing has happened. His "firm obedience" to God, which Milton considers to be "above Heroic, though in secret done" (I, 4, 15), is the ideal pattern for behavior in a Christian society.

The essential characteristics of true heroism, so

clearly manifested by Jesus in Paradise Regained, receive further attention in Samson Agonistes. Though Samson is a character from the book of Judges in the Old Testament, his transformation in Milton's dramatic poem is so great that he can be regarded as a kind of Christian hero. (A partial precedent for this had been established in the book of Hebrews, where Samson is no longer depicted as a super-human prankster but as a champion of faith who "out of weakness [was] made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Ch. 11:32, 34). Milton's Samson falls far short of the standard of heroism set forth by Jesus in Paradise Regained, but his human weaknesses make it possible for us to identify with him far more easily than with the austere, impeccable Son of God. Samson's triumphs and failures, his cruel treatment by the Philistines, and his tendency to question the justice of God, find a close parallel in the life of the Christian in a spiritually hostile world.

The fact that Samson Agonistes was published with Paradise Regained in 1671 indicates that Milton probably intended the poems to be regarded as sequels. The traditional view of Samson Agonistes has been most clearly expressed in the nineteenth-century biography of Milton, Masson's Life. Masson sees in Samson Agonistes "a metaphor of the tragedy of [Milton's] own life" and "a representation of the Puritan and Republican Milton in his secret

antagonism to all the powers and all the fashions of the Restoration;" he concludes, therefore, that Samson Agonistes is "beyond all doubt . . . a post-Restoration poem" written between 1660 and 1670.¹⁹ Masson's view has been challenged by scholars who regard Samson Agonistes as a much earlier poem. Allan H. Gilbert, in "Is Samson Agonistes Unfinished?", argues that "the tragedy is essentially an early work" full of stylistic imperfections such as unnecessary repetition and faulty character portrayal; Harapha and Dalila, for example, are "comic" characters not in keeping with the Argument.²⁰ William R. Parker, in "The Date of Samson Agonistes," admits that Milton nowhere mentions "anything about the date of composition of his dramatic poem," but he nevertheless concludes that the poem was probably completed around 1652-3 because Samson's lament on his blindness has "the ring of raw experience."²¹ This conclusion might have been more convincing if Parker had not finally resorted to "the autobiographical fallacy" he attributes to the traditional view; in his Biography, however, Parker rests his case for early composition mainly on stylistic grounds.²² While there is no direct external evidence that Samson Agonistes was completed shortly prior to its publication, it seems probable that it is Milton's final poem. The completion of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained signalled the fulfillment of Milton's aspirations in The Reason of Church-Government to write poems in

that Epick form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso are a diffuse, and the book of Job a brief model . . . (CPW, I, 813).

His "diffuse" epic is, of course, Paradise Lost, and his "brief model" is Paradise Regained, as Barbara Lewalski has shown in her comprehensive study, Milton's Brief Epic.²³ His ambition to produce a tragedy that would be "doctrinal and exemplary to a Nation," like "those Dramatick constitutions, wherein Sophocles and Euripides reign" (CPW, I, 815-6), is realized in Samson Agonistes. The fact that he regards tragedy to be "the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other Poems," as he maintains in the proem to Samson Agonistes (Hughes, 549), makes it seem probable that this work was completed after his epic poems, and can therefore be regarded as the final poetic expression of his fundamental religious and political views.

The basic themes in Samson Agonistes also indicate that it was written after the epic poems. The "better fortitude/Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (PL, IX, 31-2), which Milton depicts by means of the war in Heaven and his outline of human history in Paradise Lost, and in his account of the temptation of Jesus in Paradise Regained, receives further attention in Samson Agonistes. Milton seems to have felt the need to expound on this theme in a context more familiar to us as human beings. We tend, like Eve, to regard Heaven as "High and remote" (PL, IX, 812), and we find the hero of Paradise Regained too impervious to temptation to be really

human in spite of Milton's attempts to present Jesus as "mere man" (IV, 535). We crave a hero who must endure the "dust and heat" of life as we know it (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 515). Samson is such a "hero." Though in strength "All mortals [he] excell'd" (SA, 522-3), Samson displays typically human tendencies to yield to temptation, to lapse into periods of acute depression, and to question the justice of God. Milton has, nevertheless, chosen this kind of hero to demonstrate the paramount importance of complete dependence on the inscrutable will of God. This, for Milton, is the most significant lesson for the Christian in this world of confusion and evil, and it is given its most profound expression in his final poem.

In Samson Agonistes there are two central issues which shed further light on Milton's idea of a Christian society. One of these relates to the reasons for Israel's subservience to the Philistines; the other, explored more fully, relates to the situation and character of Samson. The failure of Israel as a theocratic society is specifically mentioned in various places throughout the poem, even though the "primary focus" is "not national," as Woodhouse points out.²⁴ The basic reason for Israel's political subservience to the Philistines is a moral one. The men of Israel have been "brought to servitude . . . by thir vices" (269). Milton would have expected his "fit audience" (PL, VII, 31) to recall the Biblical account of the cause of

Philistian domination at this period of Israel's history:

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years (Judges 13:1).

Having lost their "inward" liberty because of "thir vices," the Israelites are justly deprived of "thir outward liberty" according to the pattern of liberty and bondage Milton outlines in his view of human history in the final books of Paradise Lost (XII, 909-101; SA, 269).

The nation of Israel is also in bondage to her enemies because of her cowardice and sloth. Like Belial, who in Hell "Counsell'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloth" (PL, II, 227), the men of Israel love "Bondage with ease" more than "strenuous liberty" (SA, 271). Their cowardice is exemplified by their willingness to "yield" Samson "To the uncircumcis'd a welcome prey" instead of exerting themselves "to prevent/The harass of thir Land" (259-60, 256-7). They also demonstrate the "noxious humor of returning to bondage" that Milton scorns in The Radies and Easie Way (CE, VI, 111) and depicts in Eve's irresponsible behavior in Eden. Their wickedness, sloth, and cowardice render them incapable of seeing opportunities to redeem their liberty. This is especially evident in their failure to recognize Samson's leadership qualities. Like the societies of Enoch's or Noah's day portrayed in Book XI of Paradise Lost, the nation of Israel resists the counsel of the "wise and good." Samson's checkered career makes him less than

perfect as a leader, but he nevertheless had been initially

. . . a person rais'd
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n
To free my Country; if their servile minds
Me their Deliverer sent would not receive,
But to thir Masters gave me up for nought,
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve
(1211-16).

Another reason for Israel's subjection to the Philistines is disunity. Their sins and vices have weakened their faith in God. Their faith had not only made the Hebrew tribes distinctly different from their neighbours but it had also given them a common purpose and goal. Their loss of faith opened the door to petty rivalries and factions, which hastened their disintegration as a nation. They failed, therefore, to avail themselves of the opportunity to retrieve their liberty by giving unified support to a leader whom God had appointed. With reference to one of his more spectacular encounters with the Philistines, Samson asserts that

Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole Tribe,
They had by this possess'd the Towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom now they serve (SA, 265-7).

The disunity that the tribes of Israel demonstrate in Samson Agonistes makes it impossible for their nation to function as a truly theocratic society. Their feeble attempts to worship the true God and to observe His laws in their political, social, and communal life are constantly disrupted by the unsympathetic Dagon-worshippers who possess the real political power in the land. It is highly probable

that Milton recalls here the defeat of the Puritans in England because of the petty differences which caused them to fragment into various rival groups. In any case, it is evident that he regards divisions arising out of such vices as envy, pride, and ambition as the main barriers to the formation of a Christian society. The "Towers of Gath" (SA, 266), which symbolize the "worldly strong" (PL, XII, 568), can never be conquered as long as Christians allow themselves to be subject to their vices. Milton's lament in Paradise Lost is applicable not only to the disunified tribes of Israel in Samson Agonistes but to Christians as well:

. . . men only disagree
Of Creatures rational, though under hope
Of heavenly Grace; and God proclaiming peace,
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife . . .
(PL, II, 497-500).

Though Milton exposes the deficiencies of the nation of Israel, his focus is primarily directed towards the character of Samson. The strengths and weaknesses of this divinely appointed "Deliverer" (273-4) in the theocratic commonwealth of Israel indicate some of Milton's basic beliefs on the nature of true leadership in a Christian society. It is worth observing, however, that Samson's weaknesses are more apparent than his strengths. The simple Biblical account of Samson's decision to tell Dalila about the source of his strength is greatly expanded by Milton, who finds in this single incident the key to some of Samson's

basic flaws. These flaws are specifically mentioned by Samson, who continually reproaches himself for having "divulg'd the secret gift of God/To a deceitful Woman" (201-2). Like the transgression of Adam and Eve, Samson's sin is both simple and complex. It shows, first of all, a disrespect for spiritual matters. Samson is aware that his "high gift of strength" was from God, and he knows that he should have kept his divine secret "Under the Seal of silence" (47-49). In betraying his secret he also has demonstrated an appalling lack of wisdom: "O impotence of mind, in body strong!" (52). Milton at this point reasserts his habitual theme, the paramount importance of wisdom in a ruler and the superiority of wisdom to brute force:

But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom? Vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command (53-7).

Instead of displaying wisdom, Samson has demonstrated incredible foolishness and gross irresponsibility, as he himself admits:

I . . . like a foolish Pilot have shipwreck't
My Vessel trusted to me from above (197-9).

The imagery here is particularly appropriate, for it suggests not only that Samson has made shipwreck of his own life, but that he also has brought Israel's ship of state to ruin by failing to take seriously his responsibility as a spiritual, military, and political leader.

Samson also acknowledges that he has failed to display temperance in his dealings with Dalila. Even though he has assiduously avoided "that turbulent liquor" of strong drink, his "temperance" was "not complete/Against another object more enticing" (552, 558-9). His lament indicates Milton's conviction that a spiritual and political leader must exercise self-control in every area of his life:

What boots it at one gate to make defense,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquish't? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonor'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My Nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd . . . ?
(560-5)

Like Adam, whose "effeminate slackness" makes him "resign" his "Manhood" (PL, XI, 634; X, 148), Samson has demonstrated "foul effeminacy" by yielding to Dalila's "female usurpation" (410, 1060). The direct results of his moral blindness and servitude are physical blindness and enslavement, but he regards his bondage to the charms of Dalila as the greater of these evils:

These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base
As was my former servitude, ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this
(415-18).

His failure to display temperance in one vital area has brought reproach not only to himself but to the theocratic nation whom he represents: "O blot to Honor and Religion!" (411-12).

Another weakness Milton depicts in Samson is pride.

This is not a problem in Samson's early life, however. He recalls that he had been, at one time, "great in hopes/With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts," and had been "Full of" the "divine instinct" of God's power and direction in his life (523-5). Like those whom God has "chosen of peculiar grace/Elect above the rest" (PL, III, 183-4), Samson feels that he has been singled out as "a person separate to God,/Design'd for great exploits" (31-2). The fact that his early "exploits" are largely of a military nature does not detract from their significance, for God has raised him up for the special purpose of delivering the theocratic nation of Israel against the Philistines, who have "subjected" the Hebrews with "the force of conquest;" he has been endowed "with strength sufficient and command from Heav'n/To free [his] Country" (1205-6, 1212-3). This is consistent with Milton's conviction that "a Christian commonwealth may defend it self against outward force in the cause of religion as well as in any other" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 22). Samson acknowledges that his early exploits had been performed by means of divine power. It was God, he declares, who "had done/Singly by me . . . those great acts" (243-4). Concerning this period, he states, "I . . . Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds" (247). He admits, however, that he later became proud of his strength and began to crave the admiration of others. Like the degenerate antediluvian beings whom Michael describes as doing "acts

of prowess eminent/And great exploits, but of true virtue void," Samson also began to enjoy "Fame in the World" (PL, XI, 789-90, 793):

. . . famous now and blaz'd,
Fearless of danger, like a petty God
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded . . .
Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell
(528-30, 532)..

His love of glory and fame contrasts sharply with the attitude of Jesus in Paradise Regained:

But why should man seek glory? who of his own
Hath nothing, and to whom nothing belongs
But condemnation, ignominy, and shame? (III, 134-6).

Samson's ignominious fall illustrates the stark truth of these lines. Because of his lack of humility, self-control, and wisdom, Samson has temporarily disqualified himself as the leader God has ordained for the theocratic nation of Israel.

If Samson Agonistes had been a Classical play, it might well have explored Samson's tragic flaws and concluded with his fall. Milton's dramatic poem is, however, essentially Christian, and more particularly Puritan, in spirit. Though the faults of Israel as a nation and Samson as a leader are clearly indicated throughout the drama, the underlying emphasis is on the mysterious ways of Providence and the ultimate justice of God. There is, astonishingly, almost no progression or action whatsoever in the poem. This has been observed by Dr. Johnson, whose disparaging remarks on Samson Agonistes in The Rambler, No. 139, have

become a landmark in Milton criticism:

. . . the poem . . . has a beginning and an end which Aristotle himself could not have disapproved; but it must be allowed to want a middle, since nothing passes between the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Samson. The whole drama, if its superfluities were cut off, would scarcely fill a single act; yet this is the tragedy which ignorance has admired, and bigotry applauded.²⁵

Dr. Johnson reasserts his view even more emphatically in The Lives of the English Poets:

. . . it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten or retard the catastrophe.²⁶

Attempts have been made, of course, to prove that there is significant development throughout the drama.

Arnold Stein, in Heroic Knowledge, sees Samson as a saint who acquires "victory over himself through patience." John Steadman, in "'Faithful Champion': The Theological Basis of Milton's Hero of Faith," regards the central episodes of the poem as trials which serve "to manifest the strength of his faith and patience, the progressive recovery of his virtue."²⁸ These assessments are partially true, but they are misleading in view of what actually occurs in the poem. Part of the difficulty in analyzing this complex drama is due to the remarks of the Danite Chorus, which do not necessarily reflect either Samson's or Milton's views. The Danites, Samson's "friends and equals" (SA, The Argument), perform a role in some ways analogous to Job's three "comfortors" when they see Samson "As one past hope, abandon'd,/"

And by himself given over" (120-1). At other times they express the reactions of the reader, as when they conclude from all appearances that

Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike, both come to evil end (703-4).

The poem opens with a soliloquy in which Samson attempts to reconcile the earlier triumphs of his life with his present abject condition. The divine promise that he would "Israel from Philistian yoke deliver" seems impossible of fulfillment now that he is "Eyeless in Gaza" (39-41). Although he admits that his plight has come from his "own default," he nevertheless finds it difficult not to "quarrel with the will/Of highest dispensation" (45, 60-1). When he complains that the gift of wisdom should have been granted to him along with his supernatural strength, the Chorus has to remind him not to "tax . . . divine disposal" (209-10). He appears to be making spiritual progress in his dialogue with Manoa, but a closer scrutiny of the text shows that this is not the case. Manoa, on beholding his son's miserable condition, wonders why God should subject someone He has previously chosen "To worthiest deeds" to such "foul indignities" (369-71). Samson staunchly replies that he himself is to blame:

Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole Author I, sole cause . . . (373-6).

As soon as Manoa departs, however, he questions the justice

of God in terms almost identical to those used by his father. He cannot understand why God should have "led [him] on to mightiest deeds" only to "cast [him] off as never known" to his "cruel enemies" (638, 641-2). His dialogue with his father also brings out his faulty assumption that he might possibly atone for his folly either by enduring his punishment or by taking his own life:

. . . let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity . . . (488-91).

Manoah points out the folly of this kind of reasoning, and shows Samson that God is "best pleas'd with humble and filial submission," repentance, and contrition (511, 502). Whether he lives or dies must be left to "high disposal" (506).

Samson's encounters with Dalila and Harapha also fail to demonstrate Stein's idea that Samson achieves "victory over himself through patience."²⁹ On the contrary, they illustrate how much difficulty Samson has in exercising "the better fortitude,/Of Patience" (PL, IX, 31-2). Though Samson has confessed to Manoah that he is himself entirely responsible for his plight ("Sole Author I, sole cause"), he relentlessly treats Dalila as if she alone were to blame. He calls her a "Traitress," "Hyaena," and "sorceress" to her face, and a "manifest Serpent" after she leaves (725, 748, 819, 997). He admits that he "led the way" to his ruin but he refuses to forgive her except

"at distance" lest he "tear [her] joint by joint" (823, 993-4). He fares little better with Harapha. The taunts of this giant Philistine evoke from Samson persistent threats of physical force. Samson's challenge to Harapha to "decide whose god is God" by the "trial of mortal fight" (1175-6) is a violation of Milton's conviction that "force neither instructs in religion nor begets repentance or amendment of life" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 37). He seems to feel that the reproach he has brought upon God and Israel can be obliterated by means of a physical victory over this impertinent Dagon-worshipper. He can only with great difficulty restrain himself from leaping upon Harapha and dashing his "down/To the hazard of [his] brains and shatter'd sides" (1240-1). His fury is much more apparent than "the strength of his faith and patience"³⁰ in his confrontations with Dalila and Harapha. His longing for death is again expressed after Harapha's departure. There has been almost no perceptible progress towards self-mastery or patience throughout these central episodes. Dr. Johnson is right when he states that "the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten or retard the catastrophe."³¹ This makes Samson Agonistes unique as drama, but it in no way proves that the poem is inferior as a work of art. The "intermediate parts" of the poem are not intended to affect the outcome. The point Milton is attempting to make is that God's intervention into earthly affairs does not depend

ultimately on human endeavors.

The lengthy Chorus which comes immediately prior to the entrance of the Philistine Officer finally brings us to the central argument of Samson Agonistes. It is here that Milton's view of the dilemma of Christians in the world can be seen most clearly. The first part of the Chorus expresses the desire of God's saints to "quell the mighty of the Earth, th' oppressor, / The brute and boist'rous force of violent men" and establish a society dominated by "The righteous and all such as honor Truth" (1272-3, 1276). How just, appropriate, and "comely it is . . . When God into the hands of thir deliverer / Puts invincible might!" (1268, 1270-1). How encouraging it is when "just men long opprest" rise up with "Heroic magnitude of mind" and "celestial vigor," and render useless the "Armories and Magazines" of this wicked world! (1269, 1279-81). Milton here indicates the feelings of the Hebrews, of the seventeenth-century Puritans, and of Christians everywhere. This optimistic attitude is, however, put into the more realistic context of the lines which immediately follow:

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
Making them each his own Deliverer,
And Victor over all
That Tyranny or fortune can inflict (1287-91).

Samson has not yet learned the meaning of "the better fortitude / Of Patience" (PL, IX, 31-2), for he is too distressed with his predicament to believe that God is really

in control. The materialistic Dagon-worshippers appear to have the ascendancy in religious, social, and political affairs:

This Idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,
 Laboring thy mind
 More than the working day thy hands (1297-99).

It is not until he begins "to feel/Some rousing motions" (1381-2), symbolizing divine grace, that his spirit is revived. These "motions" restore to him the sense of God's presence which he had lost, and though he cannot really comprehend their significance, they prepare him for the greatest victory of his life. It is not until he puts his trust completely in God, as he does in his final hour, that he demonstrates again the true heroism which had characterized his early exploits in the cause of righteousness:

. . . Samson hath quit himself
 Like Samson, and heroically hath finish'd
 A life Heroic . . . (1709-11).

Milton shows in this dramatic poem that Christians, like Samson, tend to allow their faith in God to be influenced too much by outward circumstances. God, in his inscrutable will, may permit the "brute and boisterous force of violent men" (1273) to persecute and humiliate the saints for a time, but this does not mean that He has forgotten them. Like the phoenix in the final Semichorus, which "Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most/When most unactive deem'd" (1704-5), the saints will ultimately triumph in God's appointed time. Meanwhile, however, Christians

must recognize, like Jesus in Paradise Regained, that the present kingdom of God is essentially spiritual in nature, and that the most effective way to promote a Christian society is by maintaining an unwavering faith in God. This faith, in turn, is expressed by an assurance that

All is best, though we oft doubt
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close (1745-48).

CONCLUSION

In his prose and poetry, Milton has a basically unified idea of a Christian society. Two predominating concerns are evident. The first is his interest in spiritual, domestic, and political liberty; the second is his conviction that these forms of liberty are most fully realized in a Christian society ruled by the "wise and good." His shifting ecclesiastical and political views must be seen in relation to these two fundamental principles as well as to the circumstances of his day. His shift from episcopacy to presbyterianism and, finally, to complete independency in religion, takes place during the ascendancy of the Puritans over the Royalists, but it is accompanied by his increasing awareness that religious freedom is more easily attained by independency than by episcopacy. A similar pattern can be detected in his changing political affiliations. Finding that his ecclesiastical views are opposed to the church policies of King Charles I, Milton becomes an advocate of the Presbyterian-dominated Parliament rather than of the monarchy. Later, he expresses his disillusionment with Parliament and gives his support to Cromwell. Such shifts as these, though influenced by circumstances, also consistently demonstrate his desire to

see a government led by the "wise and good." The means by which the "wise and good" may be identified, however, is not completely clear. For instance, in The Readie and Easie Way Milton declares that men are "to be chosen into the Grand Councel, according as thir worth and merit shall be taken notice of by the people" (CE, VI, 145), but he does not fully specify how these qualities can be recognized. He is aware, of course, that genuine merit cannot always be readily distinguished from hypocrisy, "the only evil that walks/Invisible, except to God alone" (PL, III, 683-4). Nevertheless, a few guidelines are suggested in his works. Presumably the "wise and good" are those who have demonstrated their spiritual and intellectual qualities by expressing their views openly (as set forth in Areopagitica) and by honourable action. They may also be distinguished by their concern for the public weal, by their lack of personal ambition, and by their self-control, as Milton demonstrates in Paradise Regained. Above everything else, they display an awareness of the true meaning of liberty and seek to bring glory and honour to God.

Both the flexibility and the fundamental consistency of Milton's ideas on spiritual, domestic, and political liberty in a Christian society are conditioned by two determining factors: his attitude towards tradition and his reverence for the Scriptures. He rejects prelacy with ease because it is the offspring of tradition rather than

of Scripture. Since the Scriptures alone are authoritative, human traditions have no binding power "in matters of religion" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, title-page). This opens the door to freedom of conscience, but it also determines the extent to which religious toleration may be permitted in a Christian society. In Areopagitica, therefore, he argues that it is "more Christian that many be tolerated, rather than all compel'd"; he will not allow "tolerated Popery," however, for it goes beyond the bounds of Scripture and also denies freedom of conscience to others (CPW, II, 565). His views on domestic and political liberty are similarly conditioned by his attitude towards Scripture and tradition. Disregarding tradition or custom, which "count'nances Error," Milton affirms that the Scriptures permit the freedom of divorce in a Christian society on certain conditions. The "priviledge . . . of Learning" and freedom of expression must also be encouraged, but "no law can possibly permit . . . that . . . which is impious or evil absolutely either against faith or maners" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 532, 565). The final standard in "faith or maners" is Scripture, not tradition. This is also the case in the political sphere. He bases his case for the freedom of men "to choose whatever form of government they prefer" on the grounds that it is not only compatible with "plain reason" but is permitted in Scripture; the "tyrannie of Custom" is of little value in determining political life in a Christian society

(A Defence, CPW, IV, 392; The Tenure, CPW, III, 206, 191).

Milton's idea of a Christian society is characterized by a consistent aristocratic bias. Throughout his prose and poetry it is apparent that his aspirations are directed towards a society dominated in every sphere by the "wise and good." He is far less interested in the masses than in those who are preëminently qualified for leadership. In the Second Defence, for example, he shows that Cromwell alone is qualified to take the "palm of sovereignty" because of his "unrivalled ability and virtue"¹; he cannot resist mentioning, however, that Cromwell "is sprung of renowned and illustrious stock" (CPW, IV, 666, 671, cp. Hughes, 832, 834). In The Tenure, he affirms that people have the right as "free born men" to change their form of government, but he makes it clear that men of "vertue and true worth" must be in control (CPW, III, 190, 192, 206). Milton has nothing but contempt for the "inconstant, irrational, and Image-doting rabble . . . begott'n to servility" (Eikonoklastes, CPW, III, 601).

His aristocratic bias appears also in his ideas of domestic liberty. In Of Education, his concern, like that of many other Renaissance humanists, is directed primarily towards educating "noble and gentle youth" (CPW, II, 406). Though he pleads for a broadening of educational opportunities in some of his later pamphlets, he does not intend the common people to use education as a means for "soaring

above the meannes where they were born" (Hirelings, CE, VI, VI, 80). His plea for freedom of expression in Areopagitica is not meant to give the rabble endless opportunities to utter sweet nothings, but to enlarge the influence of the wise and good, whose "opinion . . . is but knowledge in the making" (CPW, II, 554). His writings on divorce are also intended for the wise and virtuous who recognize the value of freedom; they are not written for "the draffe of men" who mistake liberty for license (DDD, CPW, II, 224-5). The same principle persists in his poetry. In Comus, for instance, the attendant Spirit explains that his "errand" concerns only the "true Servants" of Virtue "favor'd of high Jove" (9, 10, 15, 78). In Paradise Lost, Milton addresses his poetry to a "fit audience . . . though few," and directs his focus throughout the epic towards those "chosen of peculiar grace/Elect above the rest" (VII, 31; III, 183-4). In Paradise Regained, Jesus responds to Satan's offer of fame and glory by describing the common people as "a herd confus'd,/A miscellaneous rabble" incapable of genuine perception (III, 49-50). In Samson Agonistes, a sharp distinction is made between "the common rout" who "perish as the summer fly" and those whom God has "solemnly elected,/With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd/To some great work" (674-80). His aristocratic bias, therefore, clearly influences the theological, social, and political views expressed in his prose, and it also determines

the content of most of his poetry.

It should be observed, however, that Milton's idea of a Christian society dominated by the "wise and good" is tempered by realism. Even in Areopagitica, where he expresses his hopes for "some new and great period in [God's] Church" characterized by the leadership of "English-men," he recognizes that no earthly society can be free from problems (CPW, II, 553). It is unreasonable to "hope that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth . . . that let no man in this World expect" (487). Since the fall, "good and evil . . . in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably" (514). It is humanly impossible "to sever the wheat from the tares"; nevertheless, it is not only possible, but absolutely necessary that freedom of expression be permitted so that "complaints" may be "freely heard, deeply consider'd, and speedily re-form'd" (564, 487).

Milton also recognizes, realistically, that even the "wise and good" cannot arrive at a complete understanding of the truth in any sphere. He believes that Truth will ultimately triumph, for she is "strong next to the Almighty," but he concedes that she cannot be fully perceived by any human being (562-3). He regards the Scriptures as the final authority in the religious, domestic, and political spheres, but he clearly recognizes that no person is capable of correctly interpreting holy writ at

all times. Since spiritual and intellectual limitations are shared by all, it is the responsibility of everyone to demonstrate tolerance towards his fellow man. The cause of truth is advanced by liberty, not by repression or coercion, for "liberty . . . is the nurse of all great wits" (559). Force produces only external conformity and hypocrisy; it can never promote true or "inward" religion (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 22).

Milton's belief in the dynamic nature of truth (depicted in Areopagitica as "a streaming fountain") and his realistic awareness of human limitations account for his unsympathetic attitude towards utopian schemes or fixed forms of government. Since "truth . . . among mortal men is alwaies in her progress" (Tenure, CPW, III, 256), no particular form of government is likely to be permanently suitable for any nation. Utopias, therefore, tend to be impractical and ineffectual. They can "never be drawn into use" and "will not mend our condition" (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 526). Men must have "the power to choose whatever form of government they prefer" (Defence, CPW, IV, 392). Fixed polities, as in Utopian systems, have no place in a Christian society in particular, for they turn "all vertue into prescription, servitude, and necessitie, to the great impairing and frustrating of Christian libertie" (Readie and Easie Way, CE, VI, 133). Milton's own changing political affiliations illustrate his conviction that the form of

government should be accommodated to changing circumstances. His belief that religious, domestic, and political liberty are most fully realized in a society dominated by the "wise and good" remains with him, however, and vitally influences his greatest poetry.

Although he is fully aware of the "perverseness of [man's] folly" and his "noxious humor of returning to bondage" (DDD, II, 234; Readie, CE; VI, 111), Milton continues to pursue his idea of a Christian society in Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes. In Paradise Lost he depicts ideal societies in Heaven and Eden characterized by complete liberty and the rule of the "wise and good." Deviations from his ideal are shown in the war in Heaven and in the fall of man. The source of spiritual, domestic, and political bondage is traced to Satan's willful resistance to God, who personifies wisdom and goodness. The absurdity of rebelling against God's ideal rule is portrayed in the almost farcical war in Heaven. The bondage and misery which result from disobeying God are depicted in the fallen state of Satan and his followers in Hell, in the dissension between Adam and Eve after the fall, and in the tyranny that has persisted in human societies throughout history. Although he recognizes that "true Liberty/Is lost . . . Since [man's] original lapse" (PL, XII, 83-4), he affirms that "Paradise" can be "Regained" to a great extent if men will allow God's will to "be done on earth

as it is in Heaven."

The kind of behavior Milton advocates is clearly indicated in Paradise Regained. A Christian society can never emerge as long as men strive for physical gratification, personal glory and fame, or for political and social domination over their fellow men. The proper attitude towards these issues is depicted in the founder of Christianity. Jesus resists every temptation because he is aware of the incomparable superiority of the spiritual to the temporal. Like Jesus, Christians must perceive that the kingdom of God is not of this world and that earthly "principalities and powers" are opposed to the "kingdom of grace." A true perspective reveals that "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18). Paradoxically, it is only as men recognize the value of the eternal that the temporal assumes real significance. For Milton, "the best part of our liberty . . . is our religion" (Readie, CE, VI, 116) because domestic and political liberty are also contingent upon it. Only men who perceive and apply this principle are truly "wise and good," and only they are qualified to rule in a Christian society.

A question still remains, however. Is it possible for Christians to influence the earthly scene in a meaningful and effective manner? This issue is dealt with briefly in the final book of Paradise Lost and explored more fully

in Samson Agonistes. In Michael's words to Adam, Milton affirms that it is possible to accomplish "great things" and to "[subvert] worldly strong" by obeying and depending on God (PL, XII, 560-70). In Samson Agonistes, Milton goes a step further. God's ways are inscrutable. Though the nation of Israel is punished for her sins and for her failure to recognize Samson as a leader chosen by God, it is also true that "just men" are often "long opprest" as well (1268). It is certainly "comely" and "reviving . . . when God . . . puts invincible might" into the hands of Christian leaders (1268-71), but Milton realistically sees that "patience is more oft the exercise/Of Saints"(1287-8). True Christian heroism is less frequently manifested in daring exploits than in patiently waiting on God or enduring the reproach of God's enemies. Christians must promote the cause of spiritual, domestic, and political liberty as best they can in order to make a society as Christian as possible, but they must not conclude that God has forsaken them if their attempts appear to be unavailing. Samson Agonistes illustrates Milton's conviction that though the will of God may be inscrutable, it is certainly going to triumph in the end.

Milton's idea of a Christian society is characterized by a strong sense of personal conviction. T.S. Eliot has stated that "good prose cannot be written by a people without convictions."² This idea can be applied very

profitably to Milton's work, not only to his prose but to his poetry. Though unlike Eliot, Milton did not write a specific article on "The Idea of a Christian Society," his concern for such a society is apparent in most of his prose and poetry, and is expressed from many more points of view. Milton draws his ideas from an almost incredible variety of sources, yet they become peculiarly his own. For example, the basic idea that "virtue . . . alone is free" (Comus, 1019), though almost a universal commonplace, is fervently applied by Milton to his personal views on liberty in every sphere. The idea that fundamental authority should be placed in the hands of the "wise and good" permeates the Christian humanism derived from the Scriptures and the Greek and Roman classics. Nevertheless, in Milton's work it receives cosmic significance when, by means of his poetry, Milton extends it to the ideal societies of Heaven and Eden before the fall. The extreme folly of repudiating it is portrayed in the war in Heaven, in the futile activities of the fallen angels in Hell, and in the endless human misery ("all our woe") unleashed by Adam and Eve. Milton accepts no man's word as final. He is greatly influenced by the Augustinian and Calvinistic idea of the sovereignty of God, but he emphatically rejects the Calvinistic view of predestination as he asserts his staunch belief in the freedom of man's will. The freedom of conscience is such an important matter that he declares "it is not lawfull for any power

on earth to compell in matters of religion" (Of Civil Power, CE, VI, title-page). Even if every theologian in Christendom had denied the right to divorce, Milton would still have defended it as a basic domestic freedom. As much as he admires Plato's desire to combine political power with wisdom and justice, he curtly dismisses Plato's "licencing of books" when it conflicts with his belief in the freedom of expression (Areopagitica, CPW, II, 526). The Scriptures alone have final authority. Even here, however, Milton's personal convictions distinctly emerge as he exercises his right to interpret the Scriptures for himself. This kind of personal conviction is conveyed in almost all of his prose and poetry. At times his firm beliefs are expressed in a didactic or argumentative tone, but when they are fused with his poetic imagination, his poetry becomes inimitably powerful and compelling. This is especially true of his religious and social beliefs. When he portrays his idea of a Christian society in his greatest poetry, though he frequently deals with "what oft was thought," it is "ne'er so well express'd."

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

¹Dr. Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, Vol. I, ed. L. Archer-Hind, London: Dent, 93.

²George F. Sensabaugh, That Grand Whig, Milton, Stanford: University Press, 1952, 3.

³David Masson, The Life of John Milton, Vols. 1-6, Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1859-1880, Vol. I, v-vi; Vol. V. 649.

⁴William Riley Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1940, 1, 25, 39.

⁵A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Milton, Puritanism and Liberty," U.T.Q., Vol. 4 (1934-5), 497, 512.

⁶Don M. Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution, London: Cohen and West, 1941, 64, 343; see also Wolfe's article, "Milton's Conception of the Ruler," SP, Vol. 33 (1936), 267.

⁷Arthur E. Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma 1641 - 1660, Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1942, 281.

⁸Michael Fixler, Milton and the Kingdoms of God, London: Faber and Faber, 1964, 220.

⁹Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution, 343.

¹⁰Barker, Introd., xiii.

¹¹All references to Milton's poetry are from Merritt Hughes' Complete Poems and Major Prose, New York: Odyssey Press, 1957. These selections are on p. 47, lines 141-2 and p. 82, lines 19-20.

¹²Fixler, 220.

¹³The Readie and Easie Way to establish a free Commonwealth, in The Works of John Milton, ed.

F.A. Patterson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1932, VI, pp. 111, 149. This Columbia Edition will be cited hereafter as CE for all of Milton's prose works not in the Complete Prose Works of John Milton, eds. Don M. Wolfe et al, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953--, which will hereafter be cited as CPW.

¹⁴Sir Walter Raleigh, Milton, London: Edward Arnold, 1913 [1900], 56-7, 88, 124.

¹⁵Barker, Introduction to Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, XIV.

¹⁶Mack, J.F., "The Evolution of Milton's Political Thinking," SR, Vol. 30 (1922), 194.

¹⁷Ernest Sirluck, "Milton's Political Thought: The First Cycle," MP, Vol. 61 (1964), 209-24.

¹⁸William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, 196, 543.

¹⁹Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, "Milton: Political Beliefs and Polemical Methods, 1659-60," PMLA, Vol. 74 (1959), 194-98.

²⁰Fixler, 92-93.

²¹CPW, II, 526.

CHAPTER II

¹History of Britain, CE, X, 317.

²See The Readie and Easie Way, CE, VI, 141.

³Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 124.

⁴Lancelot Andrewes, The Morall Law Expounded, London: Printed for Michael Sparke, Robert Milbourne, Richard Cotes, and Andrew Crooke, 1642, 27. Milton's familiarity with Lancelot Andrewes' work is suggested by his Third Elegy, written in Andrewes' memory, and by specific references to his views on prelacy in the fifth chapter of the first book of The Reason of Church-Government.

⁵John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, in The Library of Christian Classics, London: S.C.M. Press, 1961, Book IV, Ch. XX, 1495.

- ⁶Richard Hooker, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, 3rd ed., Ed. John Keble, Oxford: University Press, 1845, Vol. II, book V, 13.
- ⁷Calvin, Institutes, 255, 931.
- ⁸Fixler, 109.
- ⁹A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Milton, Puritanism and Liberty," UTQ, Vol. 4 (1934-5), 484-5.
- ¹⁰Henry Robinson, Liberty of Conscience (1643-4), facsimile edition in William Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, III, Part II, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1934 [117].
- ¹¹Of True Religion, CE, VI, 166.
- ¹²William Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty, III, Part II, [67].
- ¹³Richard Baxter, The Saints Everlasting Rest, London: Printed by Rob. White, 1650, Dedication.
- ¹⁴Roger Williams, The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution (1644), in Samuel L. Caldwell, ed., The Complete Writings of Roger Williams, III, New York: Russell and Russell, 1963, 3.
- ¹⁵Barker, 89, 123.
- ¹⁶Cited in Barker, 89.
- ¹⁷CPW, I, 822.
- ¹⁸See footnote 37, CPW, I, 582.
- ¹⁹Church of England, Certain Sermons or Homilies. Appointed to be read in Churches in the time of Queen Elizabeth, London: Printed for Bettesworth, Birt, Rivington, Astley, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1726 [1562], see especially Book I, Ch. X and Book II, Ch. 21.
- ²⁰Lancelot Andrewes, Ninety-Six Sermons, ed. J.P.W., Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841, Sermons 1 and 2, pp. 1-32.
- ²¹John Donne, LXXX Sermons, London: Printed for Richard Royston and Richard Marriot, 1640, Sermon LXV, 656.
- ²²Thomas Fuller, The Holy State, printed by R.D. for John Williams, 1648 [first edition 1642], 334-37.

²³Joseph Hall, Episcopacie by Divine Right, Asserted by Jos. Hall, Bishop of Exon., London: Printed for R.B. for Nathaniel Butter, at the Pide Bull, 1640, 27.

²⁴Barker, 22-23.

²⁵S.C. Lomas, ed., The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, London: Methuen, 1904, 417.

²⁶Ibid., 402.

²⁷John Selden, The Historie of Tithes, [London], 1618.

²⁸Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962, 22.

CHAPTER III

¹Aristotle, Politics, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Vol. X, in The Works of Aristotle, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, VII, 14, 1333 d.

²Roger Ascham, The Scholemaster (1570), ed. William Aldis Wright, Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1904, reprinted in 1970, 171.

³Richard Mulcaster, Positions (1581), ed. Robert Hebert Quick, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888, reprinted in University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich., 1961, iii.

⁴Letter from Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh, in The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959, 407.

⁵Henry Peacham, The Compleat Gentleman (1634 [1622]), ed. G.S. Gordon, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906, Subtitle.

⁶T.S. Eliot, "The Idea of a Christian Society," in T.S. Eliot, Christianity and Culture, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949 [1940], 33.

⁷Ben Jonson, Timber: or Discoveries Made Upon Men and Matter, LXXX, in The Works of Ben Jonson, eds. W. Gifford and F. Cunningham, London: Bickers and Son, Henry Sotheran and Co., 1875, 164.

⁸ Sir Francis Bacon, The New Atlantis, in Ideal Commonwealths, ed. Henry Morley, New York: Colonial Press, 1901, 118, 137.

⁹ Desiderius Erasmus, The Education of a Christian Prince (1516), trans. Lester K. Born, New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1965, 199.

¹⁰ CPW, II, 367, cp. Education of a Christian Prince, 158.

¹¹ Cited in D.F.S. Thomson and H.C. Porter, eds., Erasmus and Cambridge, Toronto: Univ. Press, 1963, 53.

¹² Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, in W.T.H. Jackson, ed., Essential Works of Erasmus, New York: Bantam, 1965, 406.

¹³ Donald Lemen Clark, John Milton at St. Paul's School, New York: Columbia University Press, 213.

¹⁴ Clark, 121. The works by T.W. Baldwin are William Shakspeare's Petty School, Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1943, and William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke, Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1944.

¹⁵ Ibid., 121, 250.

¹⁶ See Erasmus, Colloquies in Essential Works, 86-91; Sir Thomas More, Utopia, in Henry Morley, ed. Ideal Commonwealths, 40. 75, 90; Juan Luis Vives, L'Institution de Femme Chrestienne, trans. Pierre de Changy; Richard Mulcaster, Positions, 166.

¹⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, The Defence of Poesie, in The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Albert Feuillerat, Cambridge: University Press, 1962 [1912], 11.

¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹ See especially The Republic of Plato, ed. Francis MacDonald Cornford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, 69-72, cp. Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, New York: Odyssey Press, 1957, 731, footnote 132.

²⁰ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, trans. W.D. Ross, in Richard McKeon, ed., Introduction to Aristotle, New York: Random House, 1947, 298, 338.

²¹CPW, II, 515. In his editorial note (footnote 102), Ernest Sirluck describes the textual variants of "warfaring" which have at times appeared as "wayfaring," and demonstrates the suitability of "warfaring" in the context of Milton's argument. Hughes, in Complete Poems, p. 728, footnote 102, has argued on similar grounds for "warfaring" and adds remarks which illustrate the tradition of the Christian soldier in works by Lactantius and Erasmus.

²²Jeremy Taylor, A Discourse of The Liberty of Propheying, London: Printed for R. Royston, at the Angel in Ivie-lane, 1647, 246 and sub-title.

²³Ernest Sirluck in "Areopagitica: Limits of Toleration," CPW, II, 179.

²⁴Taylor, Liberty of Propheying, 250-53, 266.

²⁵Hilaire Belloc, Milton, London: Cassell and Co., 1935, 35, 287.

²⁶Arthur Barker, "Christian Liberty in Milton's Divorce Pamphlets," MLR, Vol. 35 (1940), 155-6.

²⁷Sirluck in "The Divorce Tracts and Areopagitica," CPW, II, 146.

²⁸Calvin, Institutes, IV, xix, 1484.

²⁹B. Rajan, Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader, London: Chatto and Windus, 1962 [1947], 66.

CHAPTER IV

¹Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, Introduction, xiv.

²CPW, I, 420. Ruth Mohl, in her notes to Milton's Commonplace Book, shows that this idea was probably derived from Book I of Sir Thomas Smith's The Commonwealth of England and the Maner of Governement Thereof (1621, first edition 1583), though Milton includes no source. See footnote 2, page 420 and footnote 10, page 440.

³Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (1651), London: J. M. Dent, 1937, 87, 141.

⁴Ibid., 116.

⁵Church of England, Certain Sermons or Homilies, Ch. X, esp. 60-67.

⁶James I, The Basilicon Doron, Edinburgh and London: Scottish Text Society, Blackwood and Sons, 1944 [1599], 25, 55, 69.

⁷Ibid., 77-79; 14.

⁸Thomas Fuller, The Holy State, Printed by R.D. for John Williams, 1648 [1642], 2nd Ed. Enlarged, 334-336.

⁹C.V. Wedgwood, The King's War, London: Collins, 1958, 18.

¹⁰William Shakespeare, King Richard the Second, ed. Peter Ure, in The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, London: Methuen, 1961, 96.

¹¹W.D. Ross translates this portion of Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII, Ch. 10, x, as "a man is not a king unless he is sufficient to himself and excels his subjects . . . such a man . . . will not look to his own interests but to those of his subjects," in Richard McKeon, ed., Introduction to Aristotle, New York: Random House, 1947, 486.

¹²Benjamin Jowett translates this excerpt from Politics, Book IV, 10, as "No freeman, if he can escape from it, will endure such a government," in W.D. Ross, ed., The Works of Aristotle, Vol. X, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, 1295a.

¹³The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. Lily B. Campbell, Cambridge: University Press, 1938, sub-title. Cp. A Mirour for Magistrates, London: Felix Kyngston, 1610.

¹⁴Ibid., 7, 24.

¹⁵Thomas Beard, The Theatre of God's Judgments, London: S.I. and M.H., 4th ed. 1648 [first ed. 1598], title-page and p. 9.

¹⁶A useful guide to these works is E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, London: Chatto and Windus, 1964. The political climate of this period is carefully analyzed by J.W. Allen in A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, London: Methuen and New York: Barnes and Noble, University Paperbacks, 1964 [1928].

- ¹⁷William Perkins, A Discourse of Conscience, ed. Thomas F. Merrill, Nieuwcoop, Netherlands: De Graaf, 1966 [first published 1596], 37-38.
- ¹⁸Church of England, Certain Sermons or Homilies, 62.
- ¹⁹Martin Luther, Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed (1523), trans. J.J. Schindel, in Luther's Works, Vol. 45, The Christian in Society, ed. Walther I. Brandt, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962, 93-94.
- ²⁰Ibid., 57, 62-63.
- ²¹Calvin, Institutes, Book III, XIX, 15, p. 847.
- ²²Calvin, Institutes, Book IV, XX, 31, p. 1518.
- ²³Ibid., 1518 and CPW, III, 246.
- ²⁴Ibid., 1519.
- ²⁵J.F. Mack, "The Evolution of Milton's Political Thinking," SR, Vol. 30 (1922), 193; William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, 543.
- ²⁶Erasmus, The Education of a Christian Prince, especially pages 153-155, 198-205.
- ²⁷Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book Named the Governor (1531), ed. S.E. Lehmborg, London: Dent, 1962, see especially pages 95 and 96 in the second book.
- ²⁸Education of a Christian Prince, 198.
- ²⁹Don M. Wolfe, "Milton's Conception of the Ruler," SP, Vol. 33 (1936), 267.
- ³⁰Plato, Laws, Book IV, trans. R.G. Bury, London: William Heinemann, 1921, I, 293, in The Loeb Classical Library, eds. E. Capps, T.E. Page, W.H.D. Rouse.
- ³¹Aristotle, Politics, 1287a22 (III, 16); Nicomachean Ethics, trans. W.D. Ross, ed. Richard McKeon, New York: Random House, 1947, Book VIII, XI, 487.
- ³²Merritt Y. Hughes, "Milton as a Revolutionary," in Ten Perspectives on Milton, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, 268-9.

³³John Lilburne, in Englands Birth-Right Justified (1645), in William Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 1638-1647, Volume III, Facsimiles, Part II, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1934, [259]; John Lilburne, The Free-man's Freedom Vindicated (1646), in A.S.P. Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1938, 317.

³⁴Richard Baxter, A Holy Commonwealth, London: Printed for Thomas Underhill and Francis Tyton . . . Fleetstreet, 1959 (facsimile), Thesis 83, p. 90.

³⁵Richard Rainolde, A Booke Called the Foundation of Rhetorike, London: J. Kingston, 1563, Epistle Dedicatory (S.T.C. 20604, University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich.)

³⁶Andrew Marvell, The Poems and letters of Andrew Marvell, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927, Vol. I, 71-73, esp. stanzas LII and LVII.

³⁷James Harrington, Oceana (1656), in Henry Morley, ed., Ideal Commonwealths, New York: Colonial Press, 1901, 185, 205.

³⁸Gerrard Winstanley, The Law of Freedom in a Platform (1652), in George H. Sabine, ed., The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, New York: Russell and Russell, 1965, 520.

³⁹Harrington, Oceana, 197-205.

⁴⁰Baxter, A Holy Commonwealth, Theses 190 and 65, 208 and 79.

⁴¹Fixler, Milton and the Kingdoms of God, 196, 213.

CHAPTER V

¹H.W. Garrod, ed., Keats' Poetical Works, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966, 219-20; Geoffrey Keynes, ed., The Poetical Works of Rupert Brooke, London: Faber and Faber, 30-32.

²Lives of the English Poets, Vol. 1, Dent, 98.

³C. Day Lewis, trans., The Eclogues of Virgil, London: Jonathan Cape, 1963, 23.

⁴ Arthur Barker, "The Pattern of Milton's Nativity Ode," UTQ, X (1941), 178. On p. 174, Barker observes that Milton has portrayed, in stanzas XII to XV, the influence of the angelic symphony and the music of the spheres on "the harmony of men."

⁵ Ben Jonson, Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue, in C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, eds., Ben Jonson, Vol. VII, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941, 491.

⁶ The Republic of Plato, Cornford, 137-8.

⁷ Ben Jonson, in Herford and Simpson, VII, 483.

⁸ The Poems of Thomas Carew, ed. Rhodes Dunlap, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949, 305.

⁹ Richard is variously described as a "toad" (I, ii, 147), a "rooting hog" (I, iii, 228), a "bottled spider" (I, iii, 243), and a "bloody dog" (V, v, 2), in John Dover Wilson, ed., The Works of Shakespeare, Vol. 19, Cambridge: University Press, 1954. In King Lear, animal imagery pervades the entire play. Some ready examples are those which refer to Goneril and Regan as "pelican daughters" (III, iv, 75) and "monsters" (III, vii, 101), in The Arden Shakespeare, Vol. 17, London: Methuen, 1952.

¹⁰ Evidence of Spenser's influence on Milton appears, for example, in Areopagitica, where Milton praises "our sage and serious Poet Spencer," whom he esteems a "better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas" for "describing true temperance under the person of Guion" (CPW, II, 516).

¹¹ Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, Cambridge: University Press, 1927, 320.

¹² F.R. Leavis, Revaluation, New York: Norton, 1963 [1947], 48.

¹³ John Fletcher, The Faithful Shepherdess, Act V, Scene 1, in Arnold Glover and A.R. Waller, eds., Beaumont and Fletcher, Cambridge: University Press, 1906, 436.

¹⁴ Ibid., 436.

¹⁵ This point was illustrated in a lecture on these two sonnets by Dr. Roy Daniells at the University of British Columbia in 1961.

¹⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, The Defence of Poesie, in Feuillerat, Vol. 3, 1963, 45, 6.

¹⁷This is suggested by James H. Hanford's masterful essay on Lycidas in relation to the pastoral tradition, "The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's Lycidas," in Milton's Lycidas, ed. C.A. Patrides, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, 27-55. This article was originally published in PMLA, XXV (1910), 403-447.

¹⁸Lives of the English Poets, 96.

¹⁹E.M.W. Tillyard, Milton, London: Chatto and Windus, 1949, 80.

²⁰David Daiches, Milton, London: Hutchinson University Library, 1966 [1957], 76.

²¹The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, eds. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt, London: Oxford University Press, 1959 [1912], 457.

²²Hanford, in Patrides' Milton's Lycidas, 44.

²³Hughes, ed., John Milton, 123, footnotes for lines 126-217. In Paradiso, XXVII, for example, St. Peter denounces abusive popes:

Rapacious wolves in shepherd's garb behold
In every pasture! Lord, why does Thou blink
Such slaughter of the lambs within Thy fold?
(55-57)

This excerpt is from the translation by Dorothy L. Sayers in The Comedy of Dante Alighieri, New York: Basic Books, 1962, 292.

²⁴This idea was suggested, in a graduate seminar at the University of Alberta, by Professor Jean MacIntyre, 1969.

²⁵John Reesing, Milton's Poetic Art, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968, 32, 49.

²⁶The Eclogues of Virgil, 28, 29; Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, 462, 550.

²⁷The Republic of Plato, 139, 143, 178-9.

²⁸The Education of a Christian Prince, 249.

²⁹Ibid., 253.

³⁰H.M. Margoliouth, ed., The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, Vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927, 90.

³¹Cicero, The Offices, ed. John Warrington, London: Dent, 1966, I, xxii, 35.

CHAPTER VI

- ¹The Republic of Plato, Cornford, 303 (IX, 576).
- ²Roy Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque, Toronto: University Press, 1963, 148.
- ³Don M. Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution, 1963 [1941], 343.
- ⁴Ibid., 343.
- ⁵William Empson, Milton's God, London: Chatto and Windus, 1965 [1961], 96.
- ⁶See "Imitations of Horace", Epistle II, i, 99-102, in The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt, London: Methuen, 1965, 639.
- ⁷A.J.A. Waldock, Paradise Lost and its Critics, Cambridge: University Press, 1962 [1947], 102.
- ⁸Douglas Bush, Paradise Lost in Our Time, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1945, 40-43.
- ⁹Irene Samuel, "The Dialogue in Heaven: A Reconsideration of Paradise Lost, III, 1-417," PMLA (1957), 603.
- ¹⁰Stanley Eugene Fish, Surprised by Sin: the Reader in Paradise Lost, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967, 66.
- ¹¹Ibid., 66.
- ¹²Waldock, 102.
- ¹³Joseph H. Summers, The Muse's Method, London: Chatto and Windus, 1962, 30.
- ¹⁴The Book Named the Governor, 159.
- ¹⁵Waldock, 103.
- ¹⁶St. Augustine, The City of God, trans. M. Dods, in

Basic Writings of St. Augustine, Vol. 2, ed. Whitney J. Oates, New York: Random House, 1948, 273, 159.

¹⁷Aristotle, Politics, 1254a, 5.

¹⁸C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960 [1942], 73.

¹⁹Elyot, The Governor, 3-4.

²⁰The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, 284.

²¹Troilus and Cressida, ed. John Dover Wilson in The Works of Shakespeare, Vol. 34, Cambridge: University Press, 1957, 20-1.

²²Ralph A. Haug, in his comments on "The Reason of Church-Government" (CPW, I, 752, footnote 13) lists these according to the three hierarchies (each three-fold) portrayed by Dante in "Paradiso," XXVIII, 98-126: (1) Seraphim, cherubim, thrones; (2) dominations, virtues, powers; (3) principalities, archangels, angels. Laurence Binyon, in his translation, Dante's Paradiso, London: Macmillan, 1943, 325, notes that Dante's system is based on that of St. Dionysius [the Pseudo-Dionysius].

²³Leland Ryken, The Apocalyptic Vision in Paradise Lost, Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970, 125.

²⁴Sister Mary Irma Corcoran, Milton's Paradise with Reference to the Hexameral Background, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945, 17-40.

²⁵Hughes, Complete Poems and Major Prose, 280, footnote to lines 132-35.

²⁶The Odyssey of Homer, trans. Alexander Pope, ed. Maynard Mack, London: Methuen, 1967, 242. See especially VII, 142-146:

Close to the gates a spacious Garden lies.
From storms defended, and inclement skies:
Four acres was th' allotted space of ground,
Fenc't with a green enclosure all around.
Tall thriving trees confess'd the fruitful mold . . .

²⁷The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, 135, 174-5.

²⁸Dante's Purgatorio, trans. Laurence Binyon, London: Macmillan, 1938, 335. See especially line 143, in Canto XXVIII, "Here blooms perpetual Spring, all fruits abound."

²⁹Diodorus Siculus, The Library, trans. C.H. Oldfather, London: William Heinemann, 1935, especially Book III, 67-9, in Vol. II, 313. A short excerpt from Diodorus' lengthy description of the island on which the city of Nysa is located reads thus:

The land of the island is rich, is traversed at intervals by pleasant meadows and watered by abundant streams from springs, and possesses every kind of fruit-bearing tree and the wild vine in abundance

One of the most interesting points made by Diodorus is that nothing is "devised by art" but is made "by the light touch of Nature" (313). This distinction also characterizes the Garden of Adonis as opposed to the Bower of Bliss in The Faerie Queene (III, vi, 29, 44, cp. II, xii, 61), as C.S. Lewis points out in The Allegory of Love, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958 [1936], 324-6. Similarly, Milton's Paradise has features which are "grotesque and wild" (IV, 136), for it is representative of "Nature's whole wealth" (IV, 207).

³⁰Samuel Purchas, Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes (1613), Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905, VII, vii, p. 55. Purchas here describes "a very pleasant and goodly Countrey" with "many Thickets of Trees of Sundry sorts . . . a great Champaigne field . . . sowed every moneth of the yeare, with all kind of Seeds." There are similar descriptions of other remote lands in Purchas' work.

³¹Ovid, The Metamorphoses, trans. Horace Gregory, New York: The Viking Press, 1958, Book V, p. 151.

³²My attention was drawn to this point by a footnote in Hughes, 284, on lines 269-72. This quotation is from Letter 8, To Charles Diodati, 1637, in CPW, I, 325-6.

³³William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, London: Chatto and Windus, 1968 [1935], 190-1.

³⁴E.M.W. Tillyard, Milton, London: Chatto and Windus, 1949 [1930], 282.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 282.

³⁶Alfred Lord Tennyson, "The Lotos-Eaters," in Victorian Poetry and Prose, eds. Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959, 25, 24.

- ³⁷Tillyard, Milton, 283.
- ³⁸Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque, 103.
- ³⁹Aristotle, Politics, 1259b, 12.
- ⁴⁰Sir Philip Sidney, The Countess of Pembrokes Arcadia (1590), ed. Albert Feuillerat, Cambridge: University Press, 1965, Vol. I, 77.
- ⁴¹Tillyard, 282.
- ⁴²Ibid., 282.
- ⁴³Tillyard, Studies in Milton, London: Chatto and Windus, 1951, 11.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., 11, cp. Millicent Bell, "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," PMLA, LXVIII (1953), 871.
- ⁴⁵Stanley Eugene Fish, Surprised by Sin, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967, 226.
- ⁴⁶Tillyard, Studies in Milton, 13.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., 12.
- ⁴⁸Tillyard, Milton, 282.
- ⁴⁹John Calvin, Institutes, Vol. II, III, xxi, 4, p. 925.

CHAPTER VII

- ¹Sidney, Arcadia, Vol. II, 94.
- ²Lives of the English Poets, Vol. I, 109.
- ³Daiches, Milton, 198.
- ⁴John Peter, A Critique of Paradise Lost, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, 78.
- ⁵Arnold Stein, Answerable Style, Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1953, 18, 22, 24.
- ⁶C.M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, London: Macmillan, 1945, 33ff., 139ff., 196.

- ⁷Daiches, 198.
- ⁸Peter, 78.
- ⁹William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, 150.
- ¹⁰Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Defence of Poetry, in Shelley: Selected Poetry, Prose, and Letters, ed. A.S.B. Glover, London: The Nonesuch Press, 1951, 1044.
- ¹¹A.J.A. Waldock, Paradise Lost and its Critics, Cambridge: University Press, 1962 [1947], 78.
- ¹²Fish, Surprised by Sin, 8-9.
- ¹³Shelley, A Defence of Poetry, 1044.
- ¹⁴The Republic of Plato, Cornford, 288, 291, 298 (VIII, 562, 565; IX, 572).
- ¹⁵Cp. The Republic of Plato, 28-9 (I, 346-7), and especially Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII, XI, p. 487.
- ¹⁶The Republic of Plato, 298 (IX, 572).
- ¹⁷John M. Steadman, Milton and the Renaissance Hero, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, 171.
- ¹⁸Waldock, 56.
- ¹⁹Empson, Milton's God, 189.
- ²⁰Waldock, 52.
- ²¹David Novarr, ed., Seventeenth-Century English Prose, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, Introduction, 12.
- ²²*Ibid.*, 9.
- ²³T.S. Eliot, "The Idea of a Christian Society," in Christianity and Culture, 72.
- ²⁴C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, 129.
- ²⁵B. Rajan, Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader, 79.
- ²⁶Joseph Addison, The Spectator, No. 363 and 369, in Donald F. Bond, ed., The Spectator, Vol. III, Oxford:

Clarendon Press, 1965, 365-6, 386. Addison was particularly displeased with Milton's shift from vision in Book XI to narration in Book XII, stating that it was "as if an History Painter should put in Colours one half of his Subject, and write down the remaining part of it" (Spectator No. 369, p. 386).

²⁷The Aeneid of Virgil, trans. C. Day Lewis, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956, especially lines 755-890, pp. 152-5.

²⁸Torquato Tasso, Jerusalem Delivered (1575), trans. Edward Fairfax (1600), ed. John Charles Nelson, New York: Capricorn, 1967, especially Book XVIII, xcii-xcvi, pp. 377-8.

²⁹The Poetical Works of Spenser, especially Book III, iii, 24-49, pp. 155-158.

³⁰Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, 129.

³¹H.R. McCallum, "Milton and Sacred History: Books XI and XII of Paradise Lost," in Millar Maclure and F.W. Watt, eds., Essays in English Literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age, Toronto: University Press, 1964, 150.

³²This has been demonstrated by C.A. Patrides, in Milton and the Christian Tradition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, 229. The most relevant references in St. Augustine are in The City of God, trans. M. Dods, ed. Whitney J. Oates, Basic Writings of St. Augustine, 663. These periods include the ages from Adam to the flood, the flood to Abraham, Abraham to David, David to the captivity, the captivity to the Nativity of Christ, the church age, and the divine sabbath.

³³Rajan, 79.

³⁴Michael Fixler, Milton and the Kingdoms of God, 233.

³⁵Tillyard, Milton, 287.

³⁶C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, 129.

³⁷Barbara K. Lewalski, "Structure and Symbolism in Michael's Prophecy," PQ, XLII (1963), 28.

³⁸The Republic of Plato, Cornford, 314 (IX, 587).

³⁹Augustine, The City of God, M. Dods, 491-2.

⁴⁰This idea emerged in a discussion with Dr. James Forrest in a graduate seminar on Milton at the University of Alberta in the spring of 1969.

⁴¹Richard Baxter, A Holy Commonwealth, 497.

⁴²Fixler, 173, 108-9.

⁴³Ibid., 108-9.

⁴⁴John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners and The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. Roger Sharrock, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, 146.

CHAPTER VIII

¹Edward Phillips, The Life of Milton, 1025-1037, in Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, 1036.

²Lives of the English Poets, Vol. I, 111.

³Giles Fletcher, Christs Victorie and Triumph in Heaven, and Earth, over, and after death (1610), in Frederick S. Boas, ed., Giles and Phineas Fletcher, Poetical Works, Vol. 1, Cambridge: University Press, 1908, reprinted 1970. See especially Christs Victorie On Earth, 40-56.

⁴Northrop Frye, "The Typology of Paradise Regained," 301-21 in Milton's Epic Poetry, ed. C.A. Patrides, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967, 306. This article first appeared in MP, LIII (1956), 227-38.

⁵John Calvin, Institutes, Vol. II, Book IV, XX, 1, p. 1486.

⁶Ibid., 1486-7.

⁷See also Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Book VIII, XI, p. 487.

⁸The Republic of Plato, Cornford, 29 (I, 346).

⁹Tillyard, Milton, 309.

¹⁰Douglas Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, Toronto: University Press, 1939, 125.

¹¹A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Theme and Pattern in Paradise Regained," UTQ, XXV (July, 1956), 177.

¹²The translation of this passage in CPW, I, 291 is less explicit: "every approach to the happy life seems barred to the man who has no part in learning."

¹³Lancelot Andrewes, The Morall Law Expounded, 41, 52.

¹⁴John Donne, LXXX Sermons, 658.

¹⁵William Prynne, Histrion-Mastix, The Players Scourge, or Actors Tragaedie, London: Printed by E.A. and W.I. for Michael Sparke, and are to be sold at the blue Bible, in Greene Arbour, in Little Old Bayly, 1633, Introduction: To the Christian Reader. (Microfilm, S.T.C. 20464, reproduced from the copy in the Henry E. Huntington Library).

¹⁶Ibid., To the Christian Reader, and p. 18.

¹⁷Ibid., 18.

¹⁸The Works of George Herbert, ed. F.E. Hutchinson, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, 88-9. This poem was first published in The Temple, Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations, 1633. "The Pearl" is based on the parable of the merchant who sold everything he had to buy "one pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:45-6). It is illuminating to compare Paradise Regained and "The Pearl" with John Bunyan's treatment of spiritual priorities. Christian "put his fingers in his Ears, and ran on crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life: so he looked not behind him." See Sharrock, ed., Grace Abounding and Pilgrim's Progress, 148.

¹⁹Masson, Life of Milton, Vol. VI, 662-4.

²⁰Allan H. Gilbert, "Is Samson Agonistes Unfinished?", PQ, XXVIII (1949), 100-3.

²¹William R. Parker, "The Date of Samson Agonistes," PQ, XXVIII (1949), 145, 159, 164.

²²Ibid., 149. Milton: A Biography, Vol. II, 906-12.

²³Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic, Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1966, 1-104.

²⁴A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Tragic Effect in Samson Agonistes," UTQ, XXVIII (1958-59), 208.

²⁵Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, 8th ed., London: Printed for W. Bowyer, W. Strahan, J. and F. Rivington, J. Hinton et al, 1771, Vol. III, No. 139, p. 182.

²⁶Lives of the English Poets, Vol. I, 111.

²⁷Arnold Stein, Heroic Knowledge, Hamden, Conn.: Anchor Books, 1965 [1957], 197.

²⁸John M. Steadman, "'Faithful Champion': The Theological Basis of Milton's Hero of Faith," in Arthur E. Barker, ed., Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965, 467. This article first appeared in Anglia, LXXVIII (1959), 12-28.

²⁹Stein, Heroic Knowledge, 197.

³⁰Steadman, "Faithful Champion," 467.

³¹Lives of the English Poets, Vol. I, 111.

CONCLUSION

¹Hughes, 834. The translation here is more explicit than in CPW, IV, 671, where Cromwell is praised for his "unexcelled virtue."

²Eliot, "The Idea of a Christian Society," 15.

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