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MILTON AND SOCINIANISM

A THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in the Graduate
School of the University of Richmond.

by

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INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth century was a period of enormous scholarship and erudition. In the wake of the Reformation and the Humanist movements great interest was awakened in the field of Biblical scholarship. Many of the scholars, laymen, and divines began to devote much of their time and energy to the new Biblical exegesis. The doctrine which was receiving much attention during this period suggested that one might assure that the strongholds of the reformed religion were sufficiently fortified through improved translation and qualified Biblical exegesis.

This was the era which produced John Milton's methodical and learned tractate of Christian doctrine. Milton, in his truthful profession of originality in the composition of the Christian Doctrine, stated: "I adhere to the Holy Scriptures alone--I follow no other heresy or sect,...." Numerous parallels have been discovered by Milton scholars which point to the fact that many of Milton's so-called heresies were, in fact, commonplaces of his time. It has also been observed that many of the "heresies" were traceable through his use of contemporary sources, such as certain criticisms of scripture by Biblical scholars. Milton

was undeniably influenced by this plethora of theological writings; but we shall discover that the Socinian system provides much more than superficial similarities.

An attempt will be made in this brief study to compare and comment upon some of the interesting similarities and parallel doctrines which appear in both the Racovian Catechism and Milton's Christian Doctrine.

Probably the most striking similarities occur in the rational approach to scriptural criticism. Interesting similarities occur also in the treatment of such subjects as: the Trinity, Sacraments, Mortalism, Materialism, Sufficiency of Scriptures, and Toleration. Although the observation has been forwarded that the Socinian output provides a fertile field for comparison, an extensive collation has not as yet appeared to satisfy the need. This study is not offered as a complete and exhaustive treatment of the subject. It remains for a thoroughly competent Milton scholar to explore the various aspects of this subject and to bring into proper perspective the converging streams of influence which culminated in the production of Milton's Christian Doctrine.

Milton scholars have devoted a great deal of time and energy in pointing out Arian doctrines as expressed in Milton's prose and poetry. Upon examination of this scholarship in relation to the Christian Doctrine and Paradise

Lost, it will become apparent that the tenets of Arianism actually bear little resemblance to Milton's theological doctrines. In connection with our examination of this question, we shall also consider the doctrines in Paradise Lost and determine if they are consistent with those expressed in the Christian Doctrine. Finally we shall determine the validity of the Christian Doctrine as the basis for a study of Milton's theological convictions.

A brief historical sketch outlining the Socinian movement in Poland, its influence in England, and the circumstances surrounding the publication of the Racovian Catechism is also included before an attempt is made to study Milton in connection with Socinian doctrines.

Socinianism may be described as a product of the Humanist and Reformation movements in Europe. Its debt to the scholastic philosophy of Duns Scotus should not, however, be overlooked. The Scotistic philosophy presents numerous ideas and conceptions which appear, carried to their logical conclusions, in the Socinian beliefs. Perhaps the most important single influence which actually shaped the entire Socinian theology was the Bible itself. Its widening circulation in the vernacular left it particularly susceptible to individual interpretation. The foundation of Socinianism is laid upon the Bible. This does not seem to be an unusual or extraordinary fact to us today, but prior to the vernacular

translations of the Bible an individual's religious convictions and beliefs were usually dictated to him by the church. The Socinians further allied themselves with the medieval theologians in their emphasis upon right reason in place of the authority of the church, and in their rational approach to Scripture without the necessity of an appeal to faith.

CHAPTER I

MILTON'S ARIANISM

In any study of Milton's anti-Trinitarian beliefs, care must be taken that the discovery of certain similarities does not lead the student to an unqualified acceptance of a theological system as the primary source of Milton's concepts. Numerous parallels and similarities have been pointed out in several different systems, but this simply indicates that Milton was well-read and a conscientious scholar. Denis Saurat (in Milton, Man and Thinker) suggests that Milton was greatly influenced by the Zohar and the Kabbalah; Martin Larson (in P.M.L.A., Dec. 1926) finds "striking similarities" between Milton's theological doctrines and those of Michael Servetus; and Marjorie Nicholson (in Philological Quarterly, Jan. 1927) has emphasized the parallels discovered between More's Conjectura Cabbalistica and Milton's concepts. We may conclude that Milton's departure from the orthodox conceptions of the Trinity in his Christian Doctrine is generally recognized and accepted by Milton scholars. The confusion arises in the unfortunate attempts to explain Milton's concepts in terms of the Arian doctrines.

The indiscriminate use of the term Arianism in criticism of Milton's Christian Doctrine has served to confound and complicate Milton's meaning. Herbert Grierson, in his study of Milton and Wordsworth stated, "Even Milton's Arianism, which is fully developed in the De Doctrina, is not so clearly adumbrated in the poem as has been stated by more than one Milton critic."¹ This is a typical example of the unqualified acceptance of the term Arianism applied to the concepts in Milton's Christian Doctrine. Don Wolfe indirectly asserts the same opinion and applies the term himself. He states, "Nor is it likely that many devout Independents would have looked with favor on Milton's anti-Trinitarian beliefs, which they would have called Arian or Socinian tenets, stoutly maintained in the Christian Doctrine."² Maurice Kelley seems to realize that there is at least one fundamental difference in the beliefs of Arius and Milton, but Kelley continues to label Milton's beliefs Arian. "Paradise Lost, like the De Doctrina, is an Arian document."³ Kelley has made a great contribution in establishing the heterodoxy of Paradise Lost and the value of

1. Herbert Grierson, Milton and Wordsworth (New York: Macmillan Company), p. 98.

2. Don Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1914), p. 61.

3. Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 120.

the Christian Doctrine as a gloss upon the poem. Kelley, in attempting to disprove the assertions of Milton scholars who denied the Arianism of Paradise Lost, failed to recognize and make the important distinction in terms before
4
attempting a refutation.

We notice that Milton scholars have employed the term Arian loosely and indiscriminately when exactness and lucidity are of utmost importance. Before attempting a further examination of Milton's anti-Trinitarian doctrines, we should summarize the basic tenets of Arianism and determine wherein the differences exist between these tenets and the beliefs held by Milton.

Arianism is a heresy which received its name from its famous representative, Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria. Arius was said to have been born about 265 A.D., and to
5
have died at Constantinople in 336 A.D. The fundamental tenet of Arianism was that the Son of God was not born of the Father, but, created out of nothing and of a substance different from the Father's. The Arians offer a secondary, subordinate, created idea of the divinity of Christ. Further, the Arians contended that the Son was not eternal, but necessarily had a beginning in his generation by God.

4. Ibid., p. 119.

5. Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1908), Vol. I, "Arianism," p. 284.

The possession of a free will by Christ must also be questioned since the Son's will is not by nature that of God's own will, although supposedly in agreement. Arius in his Thalia states

that God made the Son the origin of creation, being Himself unoriginate, and adopted Him to be His Son; who, on the other hand, has no property of divinity in His own Hypostasis, not being equal, nor consubstantial with Him; that God is invisible, not only to the creatures created through the Son, but to the Son Himself; that there is a Trinity but not with an equal glory, the Hypostases being incommunicable with each other, one infinitely more glorious than the Son, as existing unoriginate; that by God's will the Son became Wisdom, Power, the Spirit, the Truth, the Word, the Glory and the Image of God; that the Father as being Almighty, is able to give existence to a being equal to the Son, though not superior to Him.⁶

These tenets of Arianism must be readily recognized as quite different from the beliefs of Milton and the Socinians. Milton's concept of Creation ex Deo provides an obvious and fundamental difference. Milton states that, "God imparted to the Son as much as he pleased of the divine substance itself..."⁷ This is directly contrary to the concept of creation ex nihilo expounded by the Arians. The Socinians concurred with Milton in that "the Scriptures explicitly declare that whatever of a divine nature Christ

6. Cardinal John H. Newman, The Arians of the Fourth Century (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), pp. 215-216.

7. Columbia Edition of the Works of John Milton (New York: Columbia University Press), Vol. XIV, p. 193. (Hereafter C.E.)

possesses, he had received as a gift from the Father."⁸
 Numerous differences become apparent in the most superficial comparison of the Arian heresy with the ideas of Milton. A logical extension of the Arians' concept of a creation ex nihilo would render Milton's ideas of creation and the death of man quite implausible. It is important to recognize these incongruities in any discussion of Milton's theology.

Milton's doctrine of a creation ex Deo led him to the interesting conclusion that "if all things are not only from God but of God, no created thing can be finally annihilated."⁹ The Arian doctrine of the creation of the Son precludes any such deduction. According to the Arians the Son is not eternal, nor is any created thing necessarily free from the processes of annihilation, materially or spiritually. Another difference which arises in a consideration of the creation of Christ lies in the question of the essential holiness of the Son. The Arians maintained that the Son was a creature advanced after creation to the exalted place as Son of God. Milton would not be able to accept the inference which this position implied, namely, that the Son underwent a period of probation before God

8. Racovian Catechism, translated by Thomas Rees (London: 1818), p. xxix. (Hereafter R.C.)

9. C.E., XIV, 27.

found Him worthy and adopted Him as the Son. The concept of a moral probation is strictly contrary to the orthodox beliefs and to those held by Milton and the Socinians. It is well to keep these important differences in mind for a clearer understanding of Milton's "Arian" concepts. Our aim will be to examine Milton's doctrines in connection with the Socinian system to determine whether only superficial parallels exist or whether both are consistently similar in exegesis and doctrine.

As stated earlier, Milton critics are in general agreement concerning the unorthodoxy of the Christian Doctrine. The anti-Trinitarianism of Paradise Lost, however, is not so generally accepted by Milton scholars. It is understandable that several eighteenth-century scholars might interpret Paradise Lost as an orthodox Christian document, since they did not have access to the straightforward explanation of his doctrines in the Christian Doctrine. However, it is much more difficult to explain recent efforts to deny the unorthodoxy of Paradise Lost. The claims for the orthodoxy of Paradise Lost rest primarily upon this passage:

Because thou hast, though Thron'd in highest bliss
Equal to God, and equally enjoying
God-like fruition, quitted all to save
A world from utter loss, (C.E., II, 88.)

Here, it is maintained, Milton's concept of the Son in relation to the Father is directly contrary to that

expressed in the Christian Doctrine. Further, this passage, asserting the equality of the Son, cannot be reconciled with Milton's anti-Trinitarian professions in the Christian Doctrine. The answer to this criticism, which ignores the consistent anti-Trinitarian tenor of Paradise Lost, is that Milton employed a similar passage in his Christian Doctrine to refute the claims for a unity of essence in the Godhead.

Christ, therefore, having received all these things from the Father, and "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," Philipp. ii 5. namely, because he had obtained them by gift, not by robbery. For if this passage implies his co-equality with the Father, it rather refutes than proves his unity of essence; since equality cannot exist but between two or more essences. (C.E., XIV, 343.)

Milton's Socinian concept of the Trinity is not as explicitly stated in Paradise Lost as in the Christian Doctrine, but there is certainly no conflict between them. We might examine several parallel passages to support this contention.

Then next they sang of all Creation first,
 Begotten Son, Divine Similitude,
 In whose conspicuous count'nance, without cloud
 made visible, th' Almighty Father shines,
 (C.E., II, 91.)

For when the Son is said to be the first born of every creature, and the beginning of the creation of God nothing can be more evident than that God of his own will created, or generated, or produced the Son before all things, endued with the divine nature, (C.E., XIV, 193.)

Here again we see Milton's Socinian concept of the Son as a created being who is not self-existent, a being who was begotten

and therefore cannot be the first cause but only the effect.

This passage concerning the generation of the Son in Book V of Paradise Lost has caused some confusion among students of Milton:

Hear my Decree, which unrevok't shall stand.
This day I have begot whom I declare
My onely Son, and on this holy Hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
At my right hand; (C.E., II, 165.)

Denis Saurat (in Milton, Man and Thinker) explains that Milton actually abandoned the theology of his Christian Doctrine and had the Son begotten on that particular day for the dramatic purposes of his poem. Milton, however, may not have abandoned the theology of his Christian Doctrine, since this passage concerning the generation of the Son could pertain to a metaphorical generation. Further in this same book of Paradise Lost, Christ is represented as having created the very angels before whom he was proclaimed King. Milton explains this concept quite clearly in his Christian Doctrine:

Further, it will be apparent from the second Psalm, that God had begotten the Son, that is, has made him a King: v. 6. "yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion;" (C.E., XIV, 185.)

Another passage in Milton's poem which illustrates the Socinian doctrine that the Son and Holy Spirit are not eternal is found in Book VIII of Paradise Lost:

What thinkst thou then of mee, and this my State,
 Seem I to thee sufficiently possest
 Of happiness, or not, who am alone
 From all Eternitie, for none I know
 Second to mee or like, equal much less.
 (C.E., II, 250.)

This primary tenet of the Socinian system is emphasized
 in the Racovian Catechism:

The essence of God is one, not in kind but in number.
 Wherefore it cannot, in any way, contain a plurality
 of persons, since a person is nothing else than an
 individual intelligent essence. (R.C., 3, 1, 33.)

In Milton's Christian Doctrine, the same doctrine is echoed:

Whence it is evident that the essence of God, being in
 itself most simple, can admit no compound quality.
 (C.E., XIV, 41.)

Milton's concept of the Holy Spirit as expressed in
Paradise Lost also illustrates the influence of the So-
 cinians:

Be sure they will, said th' Angel; but from Heav'n
 Hee to his own a Comforter will send,
 The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
 His Spirit within them, and the Law of Faith
 Working through love, upon thir hearts shall write,
 To guide them in all truth, and also arme
 With spiritual Armour, (C.E., III, 396.)

The Spirit of God, promis'd alike and giv'n
 To all Beleevers; (C.E., III, 397.)

This is the Socinian concept of the Holy Spirit as the prom-
 ise of God, sent to guide and inspire all believers. A
 more complete explanation of Milton's treatment of the
 Holy Spirit will follow in our examination of the invoca-
 tions in Paradise Lost.

The confusion prevalent concerning the identification of Milton's Muse, Urania, may be somewhat clarified by an examination of the well-formulated doctrines of the Socinians. Several conflicting opinions have appeared concerning the identification of Urania: Martin Larson (in The Modernity of Milton) mistakenly identifies Urania as the general spirit of God and identical with God; Denis Saurat (in Milton, Man and Thinker) suggests that Urania is the Third Sefhira, Intelligence of the Kabbalah; Maurice Kelley is not willing to admit the identification of Urania as the Holy Spirit, since Milton forbids invocation of the Holy Spirit in his Christian Doctrine. Kelley will not accept this identification even in the face of evidence that:

(1) Milton's wife so identifies the Muse, (2) The epithet dove-like is a reminiscence of Luke iii. 22, and is therefore a reference to the Third Person, (3) Milton, in the Reason of Church Government, states that great poetry can be achieved only "through devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge." ¹⁰

Kelley does not consider the fact that Milton, in forbidding invocation to the Holy Spirit, was answering those theologians who claimed that an invocation to the Holy Spirit

10. Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument, p. 110.

implied a divine nature and co-equality of the Holy Spirit with God. In this sense the Holy Spirit is not to be invoked; however, in Paradise Lost Milton invokes the Holy Spirit, not as God, the Holy Spirit, co-equal and co-essential, but consistent with his Socinian concept as the Spirit sent by God as inspiration.

The Socinians considered the Holy Spirit, not as a person of the Godhead, but as the Spirit of God and as the chief instrument of God for the guidance and inspiration of man. The gift of the Holy Spirit "is a divine inspiration of that kind whereby our minds are filled with a more enlarged knowledge of divine things."¹¹ Milton's similar treatment of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of inspiration is apparent in his invocations in Paradise Lost:

And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
 Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
 Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
 Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
 Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
 And mad'st it pregnant; (C.E., II, 9.)

Hail holy light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
 Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam
 May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,
 And never but in unapproached light
 Dwelt from Eternitie, dwelt then in thee,
 Bright effluence of bright essence increate.¹²

11. R.C., pp. 286-287.

12. Maurice Kelley (in This Great Argument) suggested that this was meant to be an invocation to light in the physical sense, and does not concern Arian or Trinitarian views of the Son. Also cf. C.E., XIV, 361.

Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,
 Whose Fountain who shall tell? before the Sun,
 Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice
 Of God, as with a Mantle didst invest
 The rising world of waters dark and deep,
 Won from the void and formless infinite.
 (C.E., II, 77-78.)

The meaning, not the Name I call: for thou
 Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
 Of old Olympus dwell'st, but Heav'nlie borne,
 Before the Hills appeared, or Fountain flow'd,
 (C.E., II, 211.)

There should remain little doubt that this is Milton's
 Socinian concept of the Spirit described in the Christian
Doctrine:

Further, the Spirit signifies the person itself of the
 Holy Spirit, or its symbol. John i, 32, 33. "like a dove."
 (C.E., XIV, 369.)

... sometimes the power and virtue of the Father, and
 particularly that divine breath or influence by which
 every thing is created and nourished. In this sense
 many both of the ancient and modern interpreters
 understand the passage in Gen. i. 2. "the Spirit
 of God moved upon the face of the waters." (C.E.,
 XIV, 359.)

Sometimes it means that impulse or voice of God by
 which the prophets were inspired. (C.E., XIV, 361.)

Sometimes it means that light of truth ... (C.E.,
 XIV, 361.)

Repeatedly, we are struck by the peculiarly Socinian concept
 of the Holy Spirit expressed in Milton's prose and poetry.
 We shall be better able to recognize the remarkably con-
 sistent similarity in exegesis and doctrine after a more
 complete comparison of texts in Chapter IV.

It might be well at this point to justify our reliance upon Milton's Christian Doctrine as the true and unequivocal expression of his theological beliefs. As an example of the opposite approach to a study of Milton's theological doctrines we have Martin Larson (in The Modernity of Milton) who deserts the straightforward statements set forth in the Christian Doctrine and states: "but there (in the Christian Doctrine) Milton was the explicit and suspected theologian, who was compelled to be wary, who did little more than suppress, who wished to teach only the doctrines essential to salvation, and who, most important of all, was dealing with post-gospel theology. It was in Paradise Lost that Milton was freed from utilitarian aims and the pressure of hostile criticism; there could his imaginative metaphysical conceptions find untrammelled play; and it is chiefly there that we must seek his conception of the Deity." ¹³ This opinion may conform to Larson's arguments for a pre-gospel and post-gospel interpretation of Milton's doctrines, but such an approach ignores Milton's own profession in his Christian Doctrine:

I deemed it therefore safest and most advisable to compile for myself, by my own labor and study, some original treatise which should be always at hand, derived solely from the word of God itself, and

13. Martin Larson, The Modernity of Milton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), pp. 119-120.

executed with all possible fidelity, seeing that I could have no wish to practise any imposition on myself in such a matter. (C.E., XIV, p. 9)

Arthur Sewell (in A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine) joins Larson in depreciating the sincerity and truthfulness of Milton's religious beliefs expressed in the Christian Doctrine. Sewell concludes that one must rely predominantly upon Milton's poetry for a true understanding of his religious professions. In attempting to justify these conclusions, Sewell argues that the differences of doctrine which appear in Paradise Lost represent what Milton really believed after his uncertain probings in the Christian Doctrine. It has also been suggested that Milton may have intentionally modified his views in the composition of Paradise Lost. To these and other suggestions of a similar nature, we might answer that Milton was indeed careful in his poetic treatment of theological questions to avoid openly controversial statements, but it should be emphasized that Milton did not modify his views, for there is actually no conflict in theological doctrines between Paradise Lost and the Christian Doctrine. With this in mind, it seems a fruitless and circuitous line of pursuit to examine and compare doctrinal assertions in Milton's Christian Doctrine and Paradise Lost as stages in the development of his theological system. Milton simply had no need in his poetic composition for the many specific points of doctrinal

dispute expressed, explained, and defended in his Christian Doctrine. Such involved concepts as the generation of the Son and the creation of the world out of the substance of God, the nature or essence of the Trinity, the death of man and of Christ in the whole person, or extended arguments concerning the abrogation of the Mosaic Law had no real purpose or place in the development of his epic. Milton did not intend Paradise Lost to be a scholarly, methodical, development of his theological concepts; he wrote as a poet concerned with the dramatic development of his story. We must conclude, therefore, that although no conflict exists between Paradise Lost and the Christian Doctrine, the latter provides a much clearer picture of Milton's theological position. Before attempting to establish the Socinian influence apparent in the Miltonic system, we should become acquainted with the background of Socinianism and its effect upon the England of Milton's time.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SOCINIANISM

The actual founders of Socinianism are the uncle and nephew, Lelio and Fausto Sozzini, both natives of the little town of Siena. The name of the Socinian movement is derived from their name.

The uncle, Lelio Sozzini, was born in 1525 at the town of Siena. Lelio, called the "Patriarch of Socinianism," was described as a lawyer by profession, a Humanist by inclination, and a student of the classics and Theology. Lelio, quite early, became dissatisfied with the existing orthodox doctrines. He determined to discover for himself the validity of the doctrinal assertions supported by the church, and attempted, as did Milton, to develop a satisfactory system to meet the apparent shortcomings of the existing one. Lelio began to express some of his theological views to certain of his close friends, being careful to keep these views from reaching the authorities. He began to suspect that his precautions were not sufficient to avoid detection, and in 1547 he decided to leave his native town of Siena. Lelio spent the remainder of his life travelling about, discussing religious questions and studying. He became acquainted with some of the leading

Protestant theologians, including such famous personages as Melancthon and Calvin. Lelio corresponded fairly regularly with them concerning matters of religion.

Lelio would present his own theological opinions in the form of questions which he wished to have answered by the theologians. We find, however, from Calvin's own correspondence that Calvin himself was entertaining serious doubts as to the sincerity and earnestness, not to mention the orthodoxy, of Lelio's religious position.

Lelio seems all along to have already satisfied himself upon the religious questions which he presented in his letters to Calvin. He can hardly be blamed for his circumspection, since the sad example of Protestant tolerance had already been exhibited in the burning of Servetus. Lelio died in Zurich without ever having published his doctrinal opinions.¹ He was naturally quite reserved in his correspondence and left little in published form, so that it is not easy to determine his exact theological opinions. We do know that Lelio attempted by diligent study and inquiry to reconstruct a satisfactory explanation of certain theological doctrines. He relied primarily upon the rational method in conjunction with an objective rendition of Scriptural proofs. This use of reason in

1. Thomas Lindsay, A History of the Reformation (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1914), pp. 470-471.

individual interpretation was an approach too often neglected by his predecessors. Lelio was not fit by nature or temperament to become an aggressive and influential theologian, for his methods of cautious inquiry combined with his natural discretion were not likely to produce an active proponent of heretical doctrine.

The necessary strength of conviction and aggressive nature were to appear later in the person of Lelio's nephew, Fausto Sozzini. Upon the death of Lelio, Fausto returned from Lyons to take possession of his uncle's manuscripts and books.² Through the study and assimilation of Lelio's manuscripts, and the influence which his uncle had spread, the way was open for Fausto to embark upon a religious pilgrimage and gain followers for the enlightened Socinian beliefs.

Fausto Sozzini, born at Siena in 1539, was the dynamic nephew to Lelio. Fausto was also a lawyer by training and a student of theology. At an early age Fausto had accepted the beliefs of his distinguished uncle and resolved to pursue a life devoted to their promulgation and explanation. Fausto's earnest and conscientious adherence to the beliefs of his uncle led him to forsake an unusually promising career and life in his own country for that of an itinerant preacher.

2. Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), p. 247.

In his travels, Fausto eventually arrived in Poland and quite naturally made his way to Rakow. Rakow, at one time the Polish capital, was the principal seat of the Italian Humanists and a center of cultural achievement. Rakow, the stronghold of Unitarianism, was built in 1569 by a nobleman who was sympathetic to the interests of the Unitarians. The nobleman had erected a church and college for the use of the people; the collegiate establishment developed rapidly and came to be organized on a wide scale. It maintained a superior reputation and soon was filled with scholars and students from many parts of the continent. Besides the college, the printing establishment soon gained international renown, and a reputation equal to that of the college because of the great number of publications which issued from it, and the genius and talent displayed by the authors.

Fausto arrived at Rakow during the flourishing period of Polish Unitarianism. The Unitarians took the name of the Polish Brethren and from this society what is known as the Socinian theology spread throughout Germany, Switzerland, and into England. Fausto exerted a great influence not only in the doctrinal discussions at the church

3. Racovian Catechism, p. xxix.

synods, but also in his voluminous correspondence with his friends and opponents. After the publication of Fausto's De Jesu Christo Servatore in 1594, which was taken as an open challenge of defiance by his opponents, he was recognized as the outstanding spokesman for the new theology. This publication served to fan the smouldering embers of envy into open flames of animosity. The Roman reaction to the publication was extremely strong, and Fausto became the victim of several outrageous bodily attacks.⁴

Fausto's last important religious work was undertaken as a defense of the Unitarian church, now named the Minor Church. He urged all who desired to find the true religion to join the Minor Church, "miscalled Arian." He charged that the Calvinist Church had not yet divested itself thoroughly of some of the errors of the Roman Church, and that the Calvinist Church had retained some doctrines contrary to Christ's teachings. He also pointed out that their standards were not strict enough, since many who did things which the church forbade were still admitted to the observance of the Lord's Supper. "This little work seems to have produced a deep impression, and it called forth several answers in defense for nearly a quarter of a

4. Earl Morse Wilbur, p. 402.

century, but it is of particular interest for the evidence it shows of the deep concern of the Minor Church for purity of Scriptural doctrine, and for strictness of moral life in its members."⁵

Fausto Sozzini, warned by his failing health that his days were limited, became increasingly concerned about the future of the church. Recognizing that he was by common consent the leader of the church, Fausto called a meeting of the ministers at Rakow in 1601 to discuss important doctrinal matters and to assure the continued amity and unity of the church. The meeting was informal and soon took on the air of a theological seminar directed by Fausto, who presented his opinions concerning certain doctrines and allowed open discussion by the gathering. It was at about ~~this~~ time that he began collecting and revising some of his earlier works in order that they might be published at a later date. Fausto Sozzini was unable to maintain this strenuous schedule, and at length worn out by illness and strain he died March 3, 1604.⁶ Fausto had not been able to publish much of his work during his lifetime. It was soon recognized that the Socinian thought had pervaded much of Western Europe, but it was not until 1668 that the

5. Ibid., pp. 405-407.

6. Ibid., pp. 406-407.

works of Fausto Sozzini were published. His collected works were included in the Folio edition of the Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum published in 1668 at Amsterdam.⁷ The publication which will interest us more, however, is that of the Racovian Catechism which provides the basis for our study of the Socinian doctrines in connection with those of Milton.

The Racovian Catechism took its name from the town of Rakow where it was published, and where the Socinians at the beginning of the seventeenth century convened most of their important religious meetings. According to Thomas Rees, author of the English edition of 1818, the Racovian Catechism had some important antecedents:

Among the earliest of these was one composed by Gregory Paul, who at that time was regarded as one of the heads of the sect. George Schomann, also, in his last will, inserted in Sandius' Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum, speaks of one which he had drawn up originally for the use of his own family. Among Socinus' works are inserted two unfinished treatises of this kind: the one entitled Christianae Religionis brevissima Institutio, per Interrogationes et Responsiones, Quam Catechism Vulgo' Vocant; and the other, Fragmentum Catechismi Prioris⁸ In the year 1574 there was printed at Cracow by Alexander Turobinus in duodecimo, a small work

7. Ibid., pp. 406-408.

8. Racovian Catechism, p. ixii.

of this description under the following title: Catechism or Confession of Faith of the Congregation Assembled in Poland This piece is ascribed to George Schomann by John Adam Muller. Which of these productions, or whether either of them, is to be regarded as the original of the Racovian Catechism, seems thus far not to have been satisfactorily determined. Sandius assigns this honor to the work of Gregory Paul, which he designates Catechesis Racoviensis prima, but he gives no account of its contents, The fragments of Socinus can hardly be entitled this distinction; for though some of the statements of the Unitarian doctrine contained in them bear a close resemblance to those which are found in the Racovian Catechism, the entire form is different; and they have all the appearance of being imperfect sketches, which the author had not thoroughly digested and arranged. If therefore the Racovian Catechism was grounded on either of the above productions, it seems most probable that it is on the confession which is ascribed to Schomann.⁹

Sandius states that the task of revising and reworking the original Racovian Catechism fell to Fausto Sozzini and Peter Statorius Junior. Neither of them was able to accomplish a great deal in the work of revision. The concepts of what was later known as the Socinian theology had an interesting background and a revision at the hands of Fausto Sozzini and Peter Statorius Junior would have provided an invaluable picture of the early development of Socinian thought. Both of them were unfortunately

9. Racovian Catechism, p. xxvii.

prevented by their deaths from completing their task. The work was consequently transferred to Valentine Smalcius and Jerome Moscorovius whom Volkelius later joined.¹⁰ The Racovian Catechism first appeared in the Polish language in 1605. It was later translated into German by Smalcius in 1608. Jerome Moscorovius published a Latin translation at Rakow in 1609 which was dedicated to James I of England. Another German version was printed at Rakow in 1612. The original work was reprinted at London bearing the imprint of Racovia in 1651 with the life of Sozzini appended. This book attracted public notice in London, and the Parliament passed a resolution on April 2, 1652, requiring all copies of the Racovian Catechism to be seized and burned. John Biddle is credited with an English translation from the press at Amsterdam which appeared in 1652. This version is not a literal translation and Thomas Rees remarks: "this work is, in many parts, rather a paraphrase than a version of the original; and that occasionally the translator has introduced whole new clauses to express his own opinion, though at variance with the sentiments of the compilers of the Catechism."¹¹

10. Sandius, Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum, p. 44.,
(From introduction to Racovian Catechism.)

11. Racovian Catechism, lxxx and lxxxi.

The Racovian Catechism was not constructed under the conventional methods and categories of the Protestant Confessions. The latter were generally produced by professional theologians who started with a traditional set of doctrines and explained and expanded them. The Racovian Catechism was begun from a different point of view altogether. Fausto, who actually had no formal training in the field of theology, ignored the authority and traditions of the existing creeds and set to work to form his doctrines rationally, objectively, and independently of traditional sources. E. M. Wilbur describes this approach stating that Fausto "went to Scripture as to a corpus juris, explored its teaching inductively, and built up his system out of those."¹² We shall inspect the major Socinian doctrines as they appear in the English edition of Thomas Rees.

The English edition by Rees, of 1818, provides a valuable historical introduction and copious footnotes to the text of the Catechism. Following the historical sketch the contents show the book to be divided into eight sections. These sections deal with the following subjects:

Section I	Of the Holy Scriptures
Section II	Concerning the Way of Salvation
Section III	Of the Knowledge of God
Section IV	Of the Knowledge of Christ

12. Wilbur, p. 412.

Section V	Of the Prophetic Office of Christ
Section VI	Of the Priestly Office of Christ
Section VII	Of the Kingly Office of Christ
Section VIII	Of the Church of Christ

After a prefatory definition, "The Christian religion is the way of attaining eternal life, which God has pointed out by Jesus Christ; or, in other words, it is the method of serving God, which he has himself delivered by Jesus Christ," it begins with the question, "Where may it be learnt?" and answers, "In the Holy Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament." From the very beginning of the Catechism we observe that the New Testament is assigned an extremely valuable position in the Socinian theology. This simple declaration of the regulating and unifying role of the New Testament is asserted early and positively by the Socinians.

In comparing Fausto Sozzini and his methods with the theologians of his time, Dr. Harnack makes this observation:

It is not that Christ is the revelation in the book, but in the book God has made manifest Himself, His will, and the way of salvation. If we recall here the fact that similar expressions are to be found in Calvin, we must not forget that as little as any other of the reformers did Calvin ever leave it out of view, that the Bible is given to faith. But of that we find nothing in Faustus. There is not even an approach made to discovering lines of connection between the outward revelation contained in the Bible and the nature of religion; what we have rather, is - on the one hand, - the book, on the other hand the human understanding.¹³

13. Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma (London: Williams and Norgate, 1899), Vol. VII, pp. 138-139.

Thomas Lindsay contrasting the Socinian and the Lutheran approach to Scriptural exegesis, states:

Socinianism, unlike the great religious movement under the guidance of Luther, had its distinct and definite beginnings in a criticism of doctrines, and this must never be forgotten if its true character is to be understood. We have already seen that there is [sic.]no trace of any intellectual difficulties about doctrine or statement of doctrines in Luther's mind during the supreme crisis in his spiritual history.... The central thing about the Protestant religion was that it meant a rediscovery of religion as faith.... The Reformation started from this living experience of the believing Christians, which it proclaimed to be the one fundamental fact in Christianity.¹⁴

Socinianism is disparaged upon this account as being a criticism of existing doctrine, but this fact is hardly reason enough to overlook the great contribution of Socinian thought. Milton himself declared, "According to my judgement, therefore, neither my creed nor my hope of salvation could be safely trusted to such guides; [theological treatises] and yet it appeared highly requisite to possess some methodical tractate of Christian Doctrine, or at least to attempt such a disquisition as might be useful in establishing my faith or assisting my memory."¹⁵ It is evident from this that Milton also was led by dissatisfaction with existing doctrines to formulate his own

14. Thomas Lindsay, p. 473.

15. C.E., XIV, 7.

system from Holy Scripture. Religion then should be "a
 matter of interest for the rational man."¹⁶

A brief summary of the contents of the Racovian Catechism is inserted here since it is desirable to gain an overall view of the Socinian doctrinal position before an examination of specific points is undertaken. Section I of the Catechism is devoted to a defense of the authority of the Holy Scriptures, an approach, incidentally, which Milton felt unnecessary to include in his Christian Doctrine. In this first section of the Catechism numerous external proof texts are enumerated for the authenticity of Scripture. The defense concludes with the thought that it is quite inconceivable that God should allow the corruption and falsification of a book in which his divine will is communicated. Finally the truth of the Christian religion is proved by the nature of the religion itself. "This appears from its precepts and promises; which are of so sublime a kind, and so far surpass the inventive powers of the human mind, that they could have no author but God himself. For its precepts inculcate a celestial holiness of life, and its promises comprehend the heavenly and everlasting happiness of man."¹⁷ All of the proofs adduced for the New Testament

16. Adolph Harnack, VII, 139.

17. R.C., p. 11.

apply as well to the Old Testament since the New Testament attests its authenticity. An important thing to remember is that typically these proofs attempt to establish the authority of Scripture through reason, without resorting to an appeal based upon faith. The two remaining chapters of the first Section, dealing with the Sufficiency and Perspicuity of the Holy Scripture, employ much the same line of reasoning. Reason, as we have repeatedly pointed out, is a fundamental factor in the Socinian doctrine. This is reiterated in the first section, "When I therefore stated that the Holy Scriptures were sufficient for our salvation, so far from excluding right reason, I certainly assume its presence."¹⁸ Of course, right reason is distinguished from human reason in the fact that right reason connotes divine inspiration or assistance. In passing, we notice in Milton "Again the existence of God is further proved by that feeling, whether we term it conscience or right reason which even in the worst of characters is not altogether extinguished."

Section II deals with the way of salvation. It is divided into two chapters, the reason of the way of salvation and the things which constitute the way of salvation. The creation of man, his fall, and God's

18. Ibid., p. 15

revelation to man are presented under the way of salvation. This section concludes with the observation that, "so glorious a recompense, and the sure means of attaining it, must wholly depend upon the will and counsel of God."

Section III treats of the knowledge of God, who, as in Milton, is denominated "the Supreme Lord of all things." In this section especially, we recognize strong similarities to the Scotistic conception of God. God is the absolutely arbitrary one who has "A right and supreme authority to determine whatever he may choose in respect to us and to all other things, and also in respect to those matters which no other authority can reach; such as are our thoughts, though concealed in the inmost recesses of our hearts;... for which he can at pleasure ordain laws, and appoint rewards and punishments." ¹⁹ "A fundamental conception in the Scotistic theology holds that we can never absolutely affirm that God will act in a certain manner. He is above any kind of considerations.... What God wills He wills only because He wills it. He does not will the good because it is good, but good is good because He wills it." ²⁰ The conception of God as the Dominium Absolutum led the Socinians to the natural question concerning the necessity of the Atonement, and its logical extension in their rejection of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.

19. R.C., p. 25.

20. Also cf. C.E., XIV, 189.

Section IV explains the knowledge of Christ. This point in the Socinian theology was an extremely essential and much disputed one, and in this section the Socinians entered the traditional controversy surrounding the nature of the person of Christ. The entire section is taken up with the clarification and explanation of this point of doctrine. The Socinians maintained of Christ that "by nature he was truly a man while he lived on earth but now²¹ immortal." A divine nature is not wholly disallowed; the distinction lies in the definition of the word divine. "If by the terms divine nature of substance I am to understand the very essence of God, I do not acknowledge such a divine nature in Christ; for this were repugnant both to right reason and to the Holy Scriptures."²² If we intend by the term divine nature, "the Holy Spirit which dwelt in Christ, united by an indissoluble bond, to His human nature," the Socinians admit its presence. The Catechism goes on to clarify this dual nature, observing that, "though by nature he was a man, he was nevertheless, at the same time, and even from his earliest origin, the only begotten Son of God. For being conceived of the Holy Spirit, and

21. R.C., p. 51.

22. R.C., p. 55 and p. 56. (quote)

born of a virgin, without the intervention of any human being, he had properly no father besides God." ²³

Dr. Harnack, in a discussion of Socinian reasoning concerning the person of Christ states "It Racovian Catechism has not drawn up its positions from the standpoint of the community redeemed by Christ from death and sin. The negative criticism is here again almost at every point unanswerable, in some places masterly; the positive assertions as to what Christ is to his own, fall short in respect of substance of the most attenuated doctrines of the most arid Scholastics." ²⁴

Section V is entitled, "Of the Prophetic Office of Christ." This section combined with Section IV constitutes the greater portion of the entire Catechism. The first chapter of this section deals with the precepts which Christ added to the law. In this chapter we find a discussion of the ceremonial rites of the Christian religion. The Socinians concurred in an abrogation of the Mosaic law, replacing its authority with that of Christ's precepts, which make up the new covenant. There follows, naturally, from the abrogation of the many ceremonial rites of the Decalogue, new interpretations of such rites as the observance of the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and the Sabbath.

23. Ibid., pp. 52-53.

24. Adolph Harnack, VII, 147.

The treatment by the Socinians of such subjects as free will, the Holy Spirit, Predestination and the death of Christ are also found in this section. We shall postpone a comparison of these subjects until their appearance in the section dealing with the similarities in doctrine which occur in the Catechism and in Milton.

The chapters dealing with baptism and the Lord's Supper will be briefly discussed at this point, since only a portion of them will be presented with the comparison of texts which is to appear in conjunction with Milton's Christian Doctrine. Baptism is defined in the Racovian Catechism as follows: "It is a rite of initiation, whereby men, after admitting his doctrine and embracing faith in him, are gained to Christ, and Planted among his disciples, or in his Church; renouncing the world, with its manners and errors, and professing that they have for their sole leader and master in religion, and in the whole of their lives and conversations, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." ²⁵ We observe that infant baptism is rejected by the Socinians as a necessary adjunct to the religion, but is tolerated as a part of the religious ceremony. Immersion, however, is treated as an important factor in the baptismal rite.

25. R.C., pp. 250-252.

Touching upon the question of the Lord's Supper, the Socinians devote much attention to the matter of the breaking of the bread and the taking of the cup. Following a refutation of the Lutheran and Calvinistic interpretation of the Communion, the Socinians explain the genuine sense of the ceremony: "Christ designed that in this rite his bloody death should be declared by us, under a kind of shadow or representation, he said that this bread which is broken is his body, delivered for us; that is to say, is a commemorating sign, a kind of emblem of his body to be shortly, on our account, broken, that is, lacerated, pierced, wounded, and tortured; and also in like manner, that the cup, or the wine contained in it, was for the same reason his blood, to be shortly shed for us."²⁶

The remaining sections (Sections VI, VII and VIII) are concerned with the Priestly Office of Christ, the Kingly Office of Christ, and the Church of Christ. A sufficient explanation for our purposes of the offices of Christ is contained in the introductory definition found at the beginning of Section VI: "The order of things demands that I should treat of the Priestly Office of Christ before his Kingly Office: for although while he abode on earth, and before his death, he executed both offices together, as

26. Ibid., pp. 272-273

far as was practicable in the condition of a mortal nature, Yet in his death, he first became properly a victim, and having ascended into heaven he continually presents himself an offering for us, and appears in the presence of God as a priest: which offering and appearance were so pleasing and acceptable to God, and also so efficacious, that he thereupon invested Christ with all the power of saving us, constituted him our King and the head over all things, and consequently by him conferred salvation upon us." ²⁷

The final section is entitled "Of the Church of Christ": "It is the church, or society of Christians; which, as it is distinguished by some, is either visible or invisible." ²⁸ Following this prefatory definition, questions concerning the government and discipline of the church are discussed. This final section does not represent much of a departure from conventional concepts, except in the fact that the Socinians held more tolerant views than those found among the contemporary creeds. We shall observe the movement of Socinianism into England in the next chapter.

27. Ibid., p. 349.

28. Ibid., p. 369.

CHAPTER III

SOCINIANISM PENETRATES ENGLAND

A consideration of the status and influence of Socinianism in seventeenth century England may prove helpful in our examination of various doctrinal similarities which occur in Milton's tractate and in the Racovian Catechism. It is not possible, except conjecturally, to establish definitely Milton's connection with the Socinians during his lifetime. It is likely, however, that the tolerant spirit of the Socinian movement would contain some appeal to a man of Milton's temperament. The spirit of toleration which the Socinians evinced might enlist Milton's sympathy, and the various similarities in doctrine indicate a definite influence upon Milton's tractate.

Socinian beliefs and literature probably made their way into England through the movement of the groups of Dutch Anabaptists to England. During the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth a steady flow of immigrants found their way to England and many of these eventually settled in London. This influx of Dutch ideas produced a new and stimulating effect upon the religious atmosphere of England. Although the Dutch may not have introduced such heretical ideas as anti-Trinitarianism, their presence and unorthodox position must

have exerted some influence upon the dissatisfied and heretically inclined Protestants and Puritans of England. The writings of the Polish Socinians also penetrated into England, but of more immediate effect were the writings of Erasmus (1465-1536). Erasmus is classed by some historians with Servetus, Ochino, Sozzini, and Castellio as revivers¹ of the heresy of Pelagius.

The Dutch were in quite a unique and enviable position at the turn of the seventeenth century. They possessed an advanced system of universal education and boasted a press free of restrictions. The Dutch press is said to have published more books during the seventeenth century than all² of the rest of Europe combined. The University of Leyden with its system of religious tolerance was looked upon as a symbol of an enlightened and free commonwealth. Holland undeniably provided a distinct impetus to the Socinian cause in England. Holland's reputed enlightenment led Milton himself to comment upon that "renowned commonwealth."

Some of the products of the famous printing press at Rakow also found their way into England. The first actual Socinian document or publication in England of which we

1. Harold J. MacLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 143 ff.

2. Ibid., p. 143.

have definite evidence was the Racovian Catechism from the Rakow press. This first book was the Latin edition of 1609 which contained a dedication to James I of England. There was a Latin edition published in 1652. Later in the same year an English version appeared in England, probably translated by John Biddle and supposedly at the press at Amsterdam. The earlier Latin edition of 1652 had been printed by William Dugard, the Council of State's own printer. We find in an outline of the council minutes, the following notation: "Tuesday, Jan. 27, : - That a warrant be issued to the Sergeant at Arms to repair to the house of William Dugard, printer, and there to make seizure of a certain impression of books entitled Catechesis Ecclesiarum Poloniae, and to require him to come forthwith to the council." ³ The committee of Parliament for the Propagation of the Gospel prepared a lengthy report concerning the Racovian Catechism which was presented to the House on the 2nd of April by Mr. Millington. From the Journals we find that Mr. Millington reported that "Mr. William Dugard is the printer of the Book, and Examination of the said Mr. William Dugard, and also considerations humbly presented to the Committee of Parliament by Mr. William Dugard,

3. David Masson, The Life of John Milton, Council Order Books; Jan. 27, 1651-2 (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1946), Vol. IV, p. 423.

and the humble petition of William Dugard; and the Examination of Mr. Francis Gouldman; and the Examination of Mr. Henry Whalley; and the Examination of Mr. John Milton, and a note under the hand of Mr. John Milton of the 10th⁴ of August, 1650."

The "note under hand" of Milton has not been found. Masson, speculating upon the nature of the note remarks, "Was the note under the hand, of August 10, 1650, anything to which Dugard could refer as a permission or recommendation to print this book, received from the Council of State's own Latin Secretary at the very beginning of Dugard's printing connection with the Council?" The fact that such a note existed is indication enough of Milton's connection with or interest in the Racovian Catechism. The result of the entire affair was that Parliament condemned the book as "blasphemous, erroneous, and scandalous," and ordered all copies to be publicly burned in London and Westminster.

The true nature of the note may never be decided, but the Racovian Catechism was no isolated example of Socinian penetration into England.

The flow of Socinian publications begun by the Racovian Catechism continued to gain momentum throughout the seventeenth

4. Ibid., p. 439.

century. The profession of Socinian beliefs or the possession of Socinian books was punishable by law. Despite this and the constant denunciation of Socinian doctrine by the church, the steady increase of its literature continued to mount throughout the century. MacLachlan, in his study of Socinianism in seventeenth century England, states that this steady flow of Socinian thought provided a "solvent to the harsh Calvinism of those times, with its rigorous views of Justification and Atonement, a corrective to irrational and intolerant dogmatism, a standing criticism of the Athanasian and scholastic dogma of the Trinity, (and) this stream of Socinian ideas from abroad was to merge with native English protests against the prevailing orthodoxy and at length bear fruit in the rational Christianity of a John Locke and an Isaac Newton, and in the Unitarianism of a Joseph Priestly."

One of the early exponents of Socinian doctrine in England was a Cambridge educated writer by the name of Paul Best (1590? - 1657). Best was the author of one of the first Socinian pamphlets to originate in England. In the year 1647, two Socinian tracts appeared and were subsequently burned by order of Parliament. The first of these

5. Harold J. MacLachlan, p. 144.

tracts was a pamphlet by Paul Best, and the second tract was John Biddle's criticism of the orthodox conception of the Holy Spirit. We will mention Biddle's work in connection with Milton's treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Apparently the pamphlet written by Best had achieved considerable notice and notriety for it is vituperatively criticized by Thomas Edwards in his Gangraena. Edwards, writing about the blasphemies of the sectaries, describes those of Best's as "most horrid blasphemies of the Trinity, of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, calling the Doctrine of the Trinity a mystery of iniquity, the three headed Cereberus, a fiction, a tradition of Rome, Monstrum, biforme, tri-forme, with other horrid expressions, borrowed from Hell, not fit to be mentioned."⁶ Thomas Edward's reaction was typical of the reactions of the churchmen of Milton's period. Edwards, as many others, was fearful of the rising tide of heretical publications and expression. Edwards conscientiously states, "By my Books, especially Gangraena, many Sectaries being so discovered by name and places of abode, laid open in several of their opinions and way,

6. Thomas Edwards, Gangraena (London: 1646, 1st. part.), p. 38.

will not be able for the future to do so much hurt and mischief among the people; their Sheep's skins are by this pulled over the Wolves ears, and many will now shun and be afraid of them, who before knew them not, and this disappointment of infecting and corrupting others vexes and mads them to the heart." ⁷ Socinianism, we see, did not have the most pleasant of environments in which to thrive.

Best was cited before Parliament and subsequently imprisoned for having written the Socinian pamphlet. Parliament debated Best's case and procrastinated until Best, tired of writing futile petitions for freedom, wrote and had secretly printed his famous heretical tract entitled Mysteries Discovered. Finally Best was able to obtain his release, but the question of how he was able to secure this release produces interesting speculations in connection with Milton. MacLachlan has suggested the possibility of Milton's having had a hand in securing Best's release. MacLachlan suggests that Milton may have prompted Cromwell to effect the release and states further that, "Milton, though no Socinian, was an anti-Trinitarian with a deep interest in the theological controversies of his time. There is good reason for connecting Milton with Best." ⁸

7. Ibid., (2nd. part) p. 46.

8. MacLachlan, pp. 160-161.

The editors of the Columbia edition of Milton's works also suggest the probability that Milton had in his possession a copy of Best's manuscript. "A copy of this rigidly suppressed religious work of a Unitarian character, in the Bartholomew Collection, given the Radcliffe Library about 1749, and transferred to the Bodleian about 1793, was discovered by R. Brook Aspland to contain a brief theological note in Latin, etc., which on grounds of style and MS. he attributed to John Milton. Aspland printed the text, with his ascription, notes and translation, in the Christian Reformer (of which he was editor) for September, 1853, and later on pp. 13-14 of his pamphlet, Paul Best, the Unitarian Confessor, London, 1853, a copy of which, acquired in 1893, is in the BM.

Aspland's notion about the MS. was that it was like that of the Ode to Rous, a very formal and beautiful professional hand, which is thought by some to be Milton's own and by others to be the work of a professional copyist. But the hand of the Best treatise is really, we think, identical with that of the official who wrote the letter to Hamburg described in our note to Vol. XIII, letter 151, which is surely that of someone connected with Milton and the Foreign Office. This is just what we should expect, for Milton was at times interested in heretical works officially, as we know he was personally from his possession of Bodin's MS., and was one of the few people who could safely have owned Best's book. The style is appropriate, and all the evidence favors the correctness of Aspland's ascription.... The work has received little or no attention from

other students of Milton, but the publication is admittedly obscure.⁹

An interesting note occurs also in the same volume of the Columbia Edition in the section of Marginalia. A discussion is found here from Paul Best concerning the person of Christ, which attempts to prove that Christ was by nature a real man, who, when he lived on earth, was mortal.¹⁰

Best did not publish much after his release from prison. He finally traveled to Driffield, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Another important figure who appeared in England during this period was John Biddle. Biddle contributed enormously in the spread of Socinian ideas in England. John Biddle (1615-1662) is called "the father of English Unitarianism." Biddle developed into a much stronger and more vociferous proponent of the Socinian beliefs than even Paul Best. Biddle entered Oxford in 1634, was awarded his master's degree in 1641, and soon after became master of the free school in the parish of St. Mary le Crypt. He was soon brought under suspicion and required to appear before the Magistrates of Gloucester for examination. Biddle was able to convince the Magistrates of the orthodoxy of his beliefs. In the year 1645, Biddle was betrayed by some of his friends, and he was

9. C.E., XVIII, 572.

10. Ibid., pp. 341-344.

required to appear before the Parliamentary Commissioners who were then in session at Gloucester. The Commissioners were given a copy of Biddle's manuscript containing a statement of his religious convictions. Biddle was immediately committed to prison to await trial before the House of Commons. A local gentleman paid bail for him, and Biddle was released upon the condition that he appear when summoned to answer the charges against him. Biddle was summoned about six months after his release to appear at Westminster to make his defense. The Parliament appointed a special committee to investigate the charges filed against Biddle. Biddle admitted readily that he did not believe in the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and expressed his readiness to defend his beliefs against any theologian whom they might appoint. As in the case of Best, Parliament was slow in arriving at any decision in Biddle's case. Biddle demanded that he be either allowed an opportunity to state his defense or be released from the obligation to return to prison. Upon the rejection of this petition, he published in 1647 a small pamphlet entitled Twelve Arguments Drawn out of Scripture. These arguments concerning the Holy Spirit so enraged the Parliament that he was called immediately to reappear at the House of Commons. Biddle, quite calmly, publicly owned the pamphlet and was again committed to prison. Not in the

least hampered by such restraints Biddle published during 1647 his Confession of Faith, touching the Holy Trinity according to Scripture, and in quick succession The Testimonies of Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Theophilus, Origen, Lactantius, and others.

Upon the publication of The Testimonies, the assembly of divines sitting at Westminster appealed to Parliament that Biddle might suffer death for his blasphemies; Parliament, however, refused to confirm the divines' appeal. Biddle was not even brought to trial, and again some of his friends were able to secure his release. Parliament soon discovered that Biddle had not only become a chaplain for his friend in Staffordshire, but he was also a preacher in a church there. Biddle was once again apprehended and confined to prison.

On the 10th of February 1652, by order of Oliver Cromwell, the Parliament passed the Act of Oblivion. This act freed Biddle and restored him and many others to their full liberty. Biddle, as soon as he regained his freedom, joined his friends in London and continued expounding his beliefs. He is also thought to have translated and published many Socinian books including the Racovian Catechism during this period of his freedom. The connection between Milton and the Catechism has already been mentioned.

In 1654 Biddle again was brought to trial. He had published A Two-fold Catechism, and formal complaint was made of them before Parliament. Biddle was summoned to appear and answer the charges which had been brought against him. He was asked by the court whether he wrote the books. He replied by asking whether it seemed reasonable that one would accuse himself before the bar. After debate by the Parliament it was determined that Biddle was to be "committed a close prisoner to the Gatehouse and forbidden the use of pen, ink, and paper, or the access of any visitant; and all the copies of his books which could be found were ordered to be burnt." This resolution was promptly put into effect and Biddle found himself back in prison. After about six months' imprisonment, he was able to obtain his liberty at the Court of the King's Bench, but he was only free for about a month before he became entangled in an argument with an illiterate Baptist pastor by the name of John Griffin. Instead of disputation, the law was invoked; Biddle was apprehended and subsequently committed to Newgate. The result of the entire affair was that Biddle was "banished to the Scilly Islands 5 October 1655, to remain in close custody in the Castle of St. Mary's during his life." He remained in prison until 1658. During the interval many people attempted to obtain his release. Finally, through the intercession of many of his friends, he was returned to Westminster and discharged.

On June 1, 1662, Biddle was seized in his house and brought to the Justice of the Peace, Sir Richard Brown, who charged him with conducting services unlawfully. Biddle was sent to prison; there he contracted an illness which terminated fatally. Biddle died on the 22nd of September¹¹ 1662.

Thus was ended the life of one of the strongest proponents of Socinianism that England had yet produced. The dismal prospects as illustrated in the lives of Best and Biddle would hardly serve to encourage the acceptance of Socinian ideas in England.

From the evidence of Milton's appearance in the cases of Best and Biddle, we may conclude that some connection did exist between Milton and proponents of Socinianism. The evidence is inconclusive, but it is supplemented by our study of the Christian Doctrine and the Racovian Catechism which appears in the following chapter. We shall discover that many similarities in expression, method, and doctrine occur in the following collation of texts.

11. Dictionary of National Biography, "Biddle, John," Vol. 2, pp. 476-477 (principal information from Life of Biddle by Joshua Toulmin, London: 1789).

CHAPTER IV

MILTON AND THE RACOVIAN CATECHISM

John Milton's Treatise of Christian Doctrine was not published until 1825. "Thus after a century and a half, the treatise which was rejected by an Elzevir, confiscated by a Principal Secretary of State, and buried for decades in the dusk of Whitehall, attained a university printer, a kingly patron, and an editor who was soon to become one of the great¹ bishops of Winchester."

We are now equipped, after having surveyed the background of the Socinian Movement, to examine the beliefs held by John Milton and to establish his doctrine and method. The doctrine of Scripture alone for the understanding of theological beliefs is the fundamental tenet in Milton's Christian Doctrine. "The rule and canon of faith, therefore,² is Scripture alone." Milton's belief that eternal salvation is granted to the individual only through his own faith is expressed at the beginning of his tractate: "But since it is only to the individual faith of each that the Deity has opened the way of eternal salvation, and as he requires that he who would be saved should have a personal belief of his own, I resolved not to repose upon the faith or judgement

1. Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument, p. 3.
2. C.E., XVI, 267.

of others in matters relating to God; but on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from divine revelation alone, and on the other having neglected nothing which depended on my own industry, I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the Holy Scriptures themselves." Milton's espousal of the doctrine of Scripture alone is often misunderstood. He adduces proof texts from the Scriptures, but his study of theology led him further than a careful perusal of Scripture. Milton, in describing his method of study, states "I entered upon an assiduous course of study in my youth, beginning with the books of the Old and New Testaments and their original language, and going diligently through a few of the shorter systems of divines, in imitation of whom I was in the habit of classing under certain heads whatever passages of Scripture occurred for extraction, to be made use of hereafter as occasion might require. At length I resorted with increased confidence to some of the arguments advanced by the conflicting parties respecting certain disputed points of faith."

The Socinians agree with Milton upon the importance and perspicuity of the Holy Scripture. In the Racovian Catechism

3. Ibid., XIV, 7.

4. Ibid., XIV, 8.

under the chapter dealing with the perspicuity of the Holy Scripture this concept is explained.

SCRIPTURE

Although some difficulties do certainly occur in them nevertheless, those things which are necessary to salvation, as well as many others, are so plainly declared in different passages that everyone may understand them; especially if he be earnestly seeking after truth and piety, and implore divine assistance. (R.C., I, 17.)

The Scriptures, therefore, partly by reason of their own simplicity, and partly through the divine illumination, are plain and perspicuous in all things necessary to salvation, and adapted to the instruction even of the most unlearned, through the medium of diligent and constant reading. (C.E., XVI, 259.)

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. Westminster Confession, Chapter I, VII. (Hereafter W.C.)

Much of this is commonplace, but following Milton's introductory chapter, his next chapters outline the basis of his systematic theology. In the following chapters he presents his conception of God as manifested in his divine decrees, in generation and creation. He explains the nature of God, predestination, his conception of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It might be remarked that he also attempts to

establish the doctrine of the election of those who believe and continue in the faith, disproving reprobation from eternity. Other important conceptions found in this first portion of his tractate are the subordinate position assigned the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, and creation ex Deo. The first of these conceptions to claim our attention will be the doctrine of the Trinity. The fact of the existence of God is presupposed by the Racovian Catechism; therefore, little space is spent establishing it. The explanation of the attributes of God and the important attempts to establish the unity of God are found in the chapters dealing with the nature and will of God. My comments are inserted occasionally in order to emphasize certain points of similarity. A more complete discussion of these parallel ideas will follow this chapter.

ATTRIBUTES

OMNIPOTENCE

That he is able to perform whatever he may will I do not say which he wills, but which he may will, that is, whatever he can will. For the power of God extends to all things whatsoever, or do not involve what is termed a contradiction. (R.C., 3, 1, 28.)

There seems, therefore, an impropriety in the term of actus purus, or the active principle,

which Aristotle applies to God, for thus the Deity would have no choice of act, but what he did he would do of necessity, and could do no other way, which would be inconsistent with his omnipotence and free agency. It must be remembered, however, that the power of God is not exerted in things which imply a contradiction. (C.E., XIV, 49.)

(Milton also considers it appropriate to dispel the theological quibble concerning the exertion of divine will in things implying a contradiction.)

OMNISCIENCE

That he not only, in a general way, knows all things, but is also intimately acquainted with every single thing, even the most secret; (R.C., 3, 1, 28.)

- even our hearts... are at all times perfectly seen and known by him: and that we may be convinced that he possesses a clear knowledge of the means of providing for and securing our salvation; (R.C., 3, 1, 30-31.)

Under the head of the intelligence of God must be classed his attribute of omniscience. So extensive is the prescience of God, that he knows beforehand the thoughts and actions of free agents as yet unborn, and many ages before these thoughts or actions have their origin. (C.E., XIV, 56.)

ETERNITY

... that he is without either beginning or end; that he always has been, and always will be. (R.C., 3, 1, 27.)

The evidence of the New Testament is still clearer, because the Greek word signifies always existent. (C.E., XIV, 53.)

UNITY

The essence of God is one, not in kind but in number. Wherefore it cannot, in any way, contain a plurality of persons, since a person is nothing else than an individual intelligent essence. (R.C., 3, 1, 33.)

Whence it is evident that the essence of God, being in itself most simple, can admit no compound quality. (C.E., XIV, 41.)

Thus Moses proclaims (Deut. VI. 4) "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord;" I Cor. VIII. 4, 5, 6, "There is none other God but one": (R.C., 3, 29.)

Deut. VI, 4 "the first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord"; I Cor. VIII, 4-6 "We know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is none other God but one": (C.E., XIV, 199.)

(Both Milton and the Socinians agree upon this essential point of doctrine. Their arguments are similar and the proof texts adduced are often identical.)

DIVINE DECREES

PREDESTINATION

The predestination of God means nothing more in the Scriptures than a decree of his made before the foundation of the world, concerning mankind, to give eternal life to those

who should believe in him, and yield him obedience, (R.C., 5, 10, 335.)

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; (C.E., XIV, 91.)

(Milton means only election by the term predestination. The Socinians do not make this distinction.)

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated into everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. (W.C., III, III.)

ELECTION

It was the purpose of God, before all ages, to call men to faith in Christ, and to give eternal life to those who believed with an efficacious faith, and loved God. They therefore who have this faith are called according to that purpose of God: They were also foreknown of God, that is, from eternity approved and loved by him. Such persons were in like manner from eternity appointed and predestinated.... (R.C., 5, 10, 336.)

God originally foreknew those who should believe, that is, he decreed or announced it at his pleasure that it should be those alone who should find grace in his sight... if they would believe... these he predestinated to salvation, (C.E., XIV, 121.)

(An important point in Milton's conception of election is that only those who continue in the faith are glorified.)

Those angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it can not be either increased or diminished. (W.C., Chapter III, IV.)

FREE WILL

... that having made a general decree for the salvation of believers and the damnation of unbelievers, he has left to every one at his own will to join the body of believers or of unbelievers: for otherwise he could not, with justice, punish anyone because he had not believed. (R.C., 5, 10, 333.)

God of his wisdom determined to create men and angels reasonable being, and therefore free agents; (C.E., XIV, 83.)

God foreknows all future events, but (that) he has not decreed them all absolutely: lest the consequence should be that sin in general would be imputed to the Deity. (C.E., XIV, 85.)

We must conclude, therefore, that God decreed nothing absolutely, which he left in the power of free agents. (C.E., XIV, 65.)

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto.... Neither are any other adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. (W.C., III, VI.)

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all his ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. (W.C., IX, III.)

SON OF GOD

NATURE OF CHRIST

... the sacred author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Chapter I, Ver. 5) shows from the words of the Psalmist (Psalm II, 7), "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," that Christ was glorified by God, in order that he might be made a Priest, that is, the chief director of our religion and salvation, ... in which office are comprised his supreme authority which he displayed even when he was yet mortal: much more may he be so denominated now that he has received all power in heaven and earth, and that all things, God himself alone excepted, have been put under his feet. (R.C., 4, 1, 55.)

"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Further it will be apparent from the second Psalm, that God has begotten the Son, that is, has made him a King: v. 6. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion"; and then in the next verse, after having anointed him King, whence the name of Christ is derived, he says, "this day have I begotten thee." (C.E., XIV, 135.)

If by the terms divine nature or substance I am to understand the very essence of God, I do not acknowledge such a divine nature in Christ; for this were repugnant both to right reason and to the Holy Scriptures. But if, on the other hand, you intend by a divine nature the Holy Spirit which dwelt in Christ, united, by an indissoluble bond, to his human nature, and displayed in him the wonderful effects of its extraordinary presence;.... I certainly do so far acknowledge such a nature in Christ as to believe that next after God it belonged to no one in a higher degree. (R.C., 4, 1, 55-56.)

The Scriptures explicitly declare that whatever of a divine nature Christ possessed, he had received as a gift from the Father. (Ibid., 56.)

(This important distinction is also emphasized by Milton.)

Though by nature he was a man, he was nevertheless, at the same time, and even from his earliest origin, the only begotten Son of God. For being conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin, without the intervention of any human being, he had properly no father besides God. (Ibid., 52-53.)

Nothing can be more evident than that God of his own will created, or generated, or produced the Son before all things, endued with the divine nature, as in the fulness of time he miraculously begat him in his human nature of the Virgin Mary. It must be understood from this, that God imparted to the Son as much as he pleased of the divine nature, nay of the divine substance itself, care being taken not to confound the substance with the whole essence, which would imply, that the Father had given to the Son what he retained numerically the same himself: (C.E., XIV, 193.)

(Milton and the Socinians continue to display a noticeable similarity in exegesis. Here we notice the important distinction that whatever of a divine nature the Son possesses is a gift imparted by God. Milton and the Socinians repeatedly declare that the Son is not co-eval with God nor of the same numerical essence.)

The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the

womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ; the only Mediator between God and man. (R.C., VIII, II.)

DISTINGUISHED FROM GOD

... the Scriptures propose to us but one only God; whom I have already proved to be the Father of Christ. And this reason is rendered the more evident from Christ's being in several passages of Scripture not only distinguished from God absolutely so called, but often also expressly from the one or only God. Thus I Cor. VIII, 6, "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." And John XVII, 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." John V, 19 and 36, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things so ever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." John X, 25, "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." Scriptures plainly show that Jesus Christ was accustomed to ascribe all his divine words and works, not to himself, nor to any divine nature which he possessed distinct from the Holy Spirit, but to his Father; (R.C., 4, 1, 57-58.)

... "but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." Here the expression there is none other God but one, excludes not only all other essences, but all other persons whatever; (C.E., XIV, 203.)

According to the testimony of the Son, delivered in the clearest terms, the Father is that one true God, by whom are all things.... Christ therefore agrees with the whole people of God, that the Father is that one and only God. For who can believe it possible for the very first of the Commandments to have been so obscure, and so ill understood by the church through such a succession of ages, that two other persons, equally entitled to worship, should have remained wholly unknown to the people of God, and debarred of divine honors even to that very day? (C.E., XIV, 199.)

"I and my Father are one," It does not follow from what is said of Christ's being one with the Father, that he is one with him in nature, the words of Christ (John XVII, 11), addressed to his Father concerning his disciples, demonstrate: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are:" and further on (Ver. 22), "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one." That Christ is one with the Father ought then to be understood, according to the usual manner of speaking, of the unvarying agreement of mind between the Father and the Son.... Christ asserts that the Father is greater than all, and consequently than himself, as he elsewhere expressly declares; both because he had given those sheep to him, and because he had drawn an argument from the invincible power of God that it could never happen that his sheep should be taken from him, since there existed between himself and God, as Son and Father, the most intimate agreement. But would he, who was himself the supreme God, deduce from the power and protection of another person, and not from himself, the proofs of those things which he had promised? Especially when that other person also would possess all his power no otherwise than as he was the supreme God? (R.C., 4, 1, 132-133.)

John X, 30. "I and my Father are one," Certain commentators conjecture that they are one in essence, -I reject what is merely man's

invention. The Father and Son are one, not indeed in essence, for he had himself said the contrary in the preceding verse, "My Father which gave me, is greater than all," (see also XIV, 28) "My Father is greater than I."

In the first place, they are one, inasmuch as they speak and act with unanimity; and so he explains himself in the same chapter, Here he evidently distinguishes the Father from himself in his whole capacity, but asserts at the same time that the Father remains in him; which does not denote unity of essence, but only intimacy of communion. Secondly, he declares himself to be one with the Father in the same manner as we are one with him, - that is, not in essence, but in love, in communion, in agreement, in charity, in spirit, in glory. (C.E., XIV, 209.)

(Milton and the Socinians explain the unity implied in John X, 30, as a unity of mind and as an agreement of mind.)

5

First Epistle of John, Chapter V, 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one." (R.C., 3, 1, 36-37.)

I observe, first, that since it is known that these words are wanting in most of the older Greek copies, and also in the Syriac, Arabic, Aethiopic, and the more ancient Latin versions, as the principal persons even among our adversaries have themselves shown, nothing certain can be concluded from them. There are, besides, some persons who deem the genuineness of the passage suspicious; that is to say, Erasmus, Beza, Franc Lucas, and the Louvain divines. (R.C., 3, 1, 39-41.)

5. John Biddle repeats this criticism in his Twelve Arguments, London: 1647, p. 15.

The other passage, and which according to the general opinion affords the clearest foundation for the received doctrine of the essential unity of the three persons, is 1 John V, 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." But not to mention that this verse is wanting in the Syriac and the other two Oriental versions, the Arabic and Ethiopic, as well as in the greater part of the ancient Greek manuscripts, and that in those manuscripts which actually contain it many various readings occur, it no more necessarily proves those to be essentially one, who are said to be one in heaven, than it proves those to be essentially one, who are said in the following verse to be one on earth. And not only Erasmus, but even Beza, however unwillingly, acknowledged (as may be seen in their own writings) that if John be really the author of the verse, he is only speaking here, as in the last quoted passage, of an unity of agreement and testimony. (C.E., XIV, 215.)

(Milton's exegetical methods again follow those of the Socinians in distinguishing the Son from God and in attacking the foundations supporting doctrine of the unity of the Godhead. Notice particularly their handling of John V, 7.)

OFFICES OF CHRIST

MEDIATORIAL

PRIESTLY OFFICE

... he continually presents himself an offering for us, and appears in the presence of God as

a priest: which offering and appearance were so pleasing and acceptable to God; and also so efficacious, that he thereupon invested Christ with all the power of saving us, (R.C., 6, 349.)

Christ's sacerdotal function is that whereby he once offered himself to God the Father as a sacrifice for sinners, and has always made and still continues to make intercession for us. (C.E., XIV, 291.)

DEATH OF CHRIST

It was such a death as was preceded by various afflictions, and was in itself most dreadful and ignominious; First, because Christ, by the divine will and purpose, suffered for our sins, and underwent a bloody death as an expiatory sacrifice. Secondly, because they who are to be saved by him, are for the most part obnoxious to the same afflictions and death. (R.C., 8, 297.)

This death was ignominious in the highest degree. The curse also to which we were obnoxious, was transferred to him. God raised from the dead the whole person of the Lord Jesus. Christ, therefore, was not raised in his human nature alone, but in the whole of his person; (C.E., XV, 305.)

(Milton goes further than the Socinians, in that he attempts to establish the concept of the death of the whole person of Christ. The Socinians contended that at the death of Christ his spirit ascended to heaven. "At the death of Christ the spirit returned to God." (R.C., 1, 7, 364.) The spirit here is understood as the divine spirit. The Westminster Confession does not allow the body

to corrupt or the soul to die. (W.C., Chapter VIII, IV.)

... precepts delivered by God through Moses,? There are: of these some pertain to external rites, commonly denominated Ceremonial; and other to judicial proceedings. But Christ has abrogated either expressly or tacitly, those of the ritual kind. He has by the Apostles, and especially by the Apostle Paul, openly abrogated and annulled a great part of the precepts relating to external rites or ceremonies: and the other external rites or ceremonies, that are not openly abrogated, ought to be considered as annulled by the property of the New Covenant, for the very reason on account of which of those that we find to have been openly abrogated were done away. (R.C., 5, 1, 173-174.)

But what say you respecting the judicial precepts - are not Christian governments bound by these? By no means: since many of them contain laws which were proper and peculiar to that people and government. First, because under the Old Covenant severity and rigour obtained; but under the New, favour and mercy, whereby the rigour which these laws exacted is mitigated, as far as can be done without public detriment: for, to adopt here also the words of the Apostle, "We are not under the Law but under Grace." Secondly, because under the Old Covenant God's people had a form of government prescribed and instituted by God himself; which government terminating, the laws and judicial regulations especially adapted to it, also vanished. Hence it happens that that class of laws which in their first application referred to earthly happiness, and the preservation of peace, are sometimes applied in an accommodated sense to a covenant which holds out to us scarcely any other than spiritual and celestial benefits, promising earthly advantages but very sparingly: -whereas, on the contrary, in the Old Covenant, nothing but the blessings of this life was expressly and openly promised to the Israelites, as I will

show you hereafter. If then any of the judicial laws of Moses are admitted into Christian governments also, it is not because they were published by him, but because without them civil society could not be preserved and maintained. (R.C., 5, 1, 175-176.)

On the introduction of the Gospel, or new covenant through faith in Christ, the whole of the preceding covenant, in other words, the entire Mosaic law, was abolished. In Rom. III, the Apostle illustrates our emancipation from the law by the instance of a wife who is loosed from her husband who is dead. V, 7. It is in the decalogue that the injunction here specified is contained; we are, therefore, absolved from subjection to the decalogue as fully as to the rest of the law. Now not only the ceremonial code, but the whole positive law of Moses, was a law of commandments, and contained in ordinances; nor was it the ceremonial law which formed the sole ground of distinction between the Jews and Gentiles, as Zanchius on this passage contends, but the whole law; (C.E., XVI, 125.)

To these considerations we may add that that law which, not only cannot justify but is the source of trouble and subversion to believers; which even tempts God if we endeavor to perform its requisitions; which has no promise attached to it, or, to speak more properly, which takes away and frustrates all promises, whether of inheritance, or adoption, or grace or of the Spirit itself; nay, which even subjects us to a curse; must necessarily have been abolished. It appears, therefore, as well from the evidence of Scripture as from the arguments above adduced, that the whole of the Mosaic law is abolished by the gospel. (C.E., XVI, 141.)

The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it: neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, anyway dissolve, but much strengthen the obligation. (W.C., XIX, V.)

PRECEPTS ADDED TO THE LAW, CEREMONIES

SABBATH

... the Sabbath was in a peculiar manner the sign of the covenant between God and the Israelites, by which he gave them rest from their toils in Egypt; On which account the Sabbath was somewhat more holy than the other ceremonies. God seems to have designed that there should exist some memorial that the most excellent part of the Mosaic law was not perfect, and that a Law more perfect than that of Moses should succeed, namely, the Law of Christ. (R.C., 5, 1, 216-217.)

With regard to the Sabbath, it is clear that God hallowed it to himself, and dedicated it to rest, in remembrance of the consummation of his work Moses, who seems to have written the Book of Genesis much later than the promulgation of the law, inserted this sentence from the fourth commandment, into what appeared a suitable place for it; where an opportunity was afforded for reminding the Israelites, by a natural and easy transition, of the reason assigned by God, many ages after the event itself, for his command with regard to the observance of the Sabbath by the covenanted people. (C.E., XV, 117.)

This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men ... do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy. (W.C., XXI, VIII.)

SACRAMENTS

INFANT BAPTISM

If you look to the custom of the ancient Apostolic Church, and to the end for which

this rite was instituted by the Apostles, it does not pertain to infants; since we have in the Scriptures no command for, nor any example of, infant baptism, nor are they as yet capable, as the thing itself shows, of the Faith in Christ, which ought to precede this rite, and which men profess by this rite. (R.C., 5, 3, 252.)

Hence it follows that infants are not to be baptized, inasmuch as they are incompetent to receive instruction, or to believe, or to enter into a covenant, or to promise, or to answer for themselves, or even to hear the word. For how can infants, who understand not the word, be purified thereby; (C.E., XVI, 171.)

IMMERSION

For they do not baptize them; since this cannot be done without the immersion and ablution of the whole body in water: (R.C., 5, 3, 253.)

In Milton's defense of immersion in running water he states: "Hence it appears that baptism was intended to represent figuratively the painful life of Christ, his death and burial, in which he was immersed," (C.E., XVI, 185.)

Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary: but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. (W.C., XXVIII, III.)

ADULT BAPTISM

That is a rite of initiation, whereby men, after admitting his doctrine, ... declaring, and as it were representing by their very ablution, immersion and emersion, that they design to rid themselves of the pollution of their sins, to bury themselves with Christ, and, therefore, to die with him, and rise again to newness of life." (R.C., 5, 3, 252.)

Under the gospel, the first of the sacraments commonly so called is baptism, wherein the bodies of believers who engage themselves to pureness of life, are immersed in running water, to signify their regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and there remain with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. (C.E., XVI, 169.)

(Both Milton and the Socinians deny the value of infant baptism and consider immersion necessary in adult baptism.)

LORD'S SUPPER

Since then the flesh and blood of Christ are by him called meat and drink, by way of similitude, it follows that to eat this flesh and drink this blood, was also spoken by him no otherwise than by way of similitude and so ought to be understood by all. (R.C., 5, 4, 271.)

That living bread therefore which Christ calls his flesh, and that blood which is drink indeed, can be nothing but the doctrine of Christ's having become man in order to shed his blood for us. (C.E., XVI, 195.)

(Milton, the Socinians and the Calvinists agree generally upon the error involved in the concept of transubstantiation.)

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a virtue or energy flowing from God to men, and communicated to them: whereby he separates them from others, and consecrates them to his own service. (R.C., 5, 6, 285.)

... the Holy Spirit is not a person in the Godhead. (R.C., 5, 6, 289.)

(Milton also denies the divinity or co-equality of the Holy Spirit, and his arguments against the co-equality of the Holy Spirit closely parallel those of the Socinians.)

The Holy Spirit, inasmuch as he is a minister of God, and therefore a creature, was created or produced of the substance of God ... probably before the foundations of the world were laid, but later than the Son, and far inferior to him. (C.E., XIV, 403.)

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. (W.C., II, III.)

CREATION

Now the creation of heaven and earth is never attributed to Christ absolutely, as it is here. But the supreme God (whom we have already shown to be the Father alone) is said to have done this, and that alone and of himself, Is. XLIV, 24; The Hebrews also, even to the present times, firmly believe that the creation of heaven and earth was effected by the one person of the supreme God, without any assistant or instrument Further, the first creation, which (as reason dictates, and the primitive Church constantly taught in opposition to heretics) was not made out of pre-existent matter co-eternal with God, could not have been executed by a plurality of Lords. B. Wissowatius; (R.C., 4, 1, 109.)

It is clear then that the world was framed out of matter of some kind or other ... it appears impossible that God could have created this world out of nothing; not from any defect of power on his part, but because it was necessary that something should have previously existed capable of receiving passively the exertion of the divine efficacy ... matter must either have

always existed independently of God, or have originated from God at some particular point of time ... that matter, I say, should have existed of itself from all eternity, is inconceivable. If on the contrary it did not exist from all eternity, it is difficult to understand from whence it derives its origin. There remains, therefore, but one solution of the difficulty, for which moreover we have the authority of Scripture, namely, that all things are of God. (C.E., XV, 19 and 21.)

(Milton, following the Socinians, emphasizes this concept of creation out of the substance of God, a concept directly contrary to that of the Calvinists.)

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world. (W.C., IV.)

Secondly, John writes, "All things were made by him," (per eum); a form of speech employed to denote not the person who is the first cause of anything, but him who is the second cause, or medium. Nor, indeed, can it be said that all things were made by Christ in any other sense, than that God had made them by him, (R.C., 4, 1, 87.)

"All things which were made," John 1, 3. "All things, except him which did put all things under him," 1 Cor. XV, 27. It is evident therefore that when it is said, "all things were by him," it must be understood of a secondary and delegated power; and that when the participle by is used in reference to the Father, it denotes the primary cause, as John VI, 57. "I live by the Father"; when in reference to the Son, the secondary and instrumental cause: (C.E., XIV, 205.)

(Both agree that the form of speech, by him, when referring to the Son implies a secondary cause and when applied to God is interpreted as the primary cause.)

ORIGINAL SIN

By the habit of sinning, the nature of man is infected with a certain stain, and a very strong disposition to wickedness; but I do deny both that this of itself is a sin, and that it is of such a nature that a man, after he has imbibed the divine spirit, cannot create for himself the power of obeying God as far as He, in his infinite goodness and equity, requires. (R.C., 5, 10, 326.)

(Milton does not like the term Original Sin and takes pains to show the injustice of such a state.)

This general depravity of the human mind and its propensity to sin is described Gen. VI, 5. This depravity was engendered in us by our first parents. For faith, though it takes away the personal imputation of guilt, does not altogether remove indwelling sin. (C.E., XV, 195.)

The object of this miraculous conception was to obviate the contamination consequent upon the sin of Adam. (C.E., XV, 1008.)

From the original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. (W.C., VI, IV.)

DEATH OF MAN

Because man is not only obnoxious to death; but could not of himself discover a way to avoid it,

... - that he was originally created mortal; - that is, was so constituted that he was not only by nature capable of dying, but also, if left to himself, could not but die. (R.C., 2, 1, 20.)

But we have nothing in us by nature, which, after we are dead, can recall us to life, or which can in any way prevent our remaining dead perpetually. (R.C., 4, 1, 165.)

(Milton concurs in this unorthodox doctrine declaring that the whole man dies.)

Inasmuch then as the whole man is uniformly said to consist of body, spirit, and soul I shall first show that the whole man dies, and, secondly, that each component part suffers privation of his life For what could be more just, than that he who had sinned in his whole person, should die in his whole person? (C.E., XV, 219.)

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust and see corruption: but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. (W.C., XXXII, I.)

TOLERATION

Whilst we compose a catechism, we prescribe nothing to any man: whilst we declare our own opinions, we oppress no one. Let every person enjoy the freedom of his own judgment in religion; (R.C., Preface, p. xcvi.)

It is not therefore within the province of any visible church, much less of the civil magistrate, to impose their own interpretations on us as laws, or as binding on the conscience; in other words, as a matter of implicit faith. If however there be any difference among professed believers as to the sense of Scripture, it is their duty to tolerate such differences in each other, until God shall have revealed the truth to all. (C.E., XVI, 267.)

This collation provides ample evidence of the influence which the well-formulated Socinian system exercised upon Milton's thinking. We have seen that Milton's doctrines are strikingly similar to those of the Socinians in all major respects. In the following chapter a tabulation of these major points of doctrinal similarity is presented.

CHAPTER V

MILTON'S SOCINIANISM

After surveying the statements of doctrine found in the Racovian Catechism and the Christian Doctrine, it becomes evident that Milton and the Socinians are generally in agreement concerning the major theological concepts. We have also noticed the particularly close resemblance between Milton and the Socinians in exegesis and hermeneutics and have found both agree with the Westminster Confession upon some of the major doctrinal concepts. We shall now examine the major doctrines which we have compared peculiar to Milton and the Socinians, as contrasted with the Westminster Confession. Since the Westminster Confession represents the Calvinistic scheme of doctrine, the doctrines peculiar to Milton and the Socinians represent heretical or unorthodox departures from the accepted standard.

The particular theological points which we have previously compared are here tabulated in order to illustrate their relationship to the standard Calvinistic scheme of Christian doctrine. The points of disagreement between the Westminster Confession with Milton and the Socinians are here represented.

Calvinists (Orthodox)	<u>Socinians</u>	<u>Milton</u>
<u>Westminster Confession</u> <u>Concepts</u>	<u>Racovian Cate-</u> <u>chism</u>	<u>Christian Doctrine</u>
Sufficiency of Scripture	Agrees with WC	Agrees with WC
Perspicuity of Scripture	Agrees with WC	Agrees with WC
Attributes of God (Omnipotence, omniscience, etc.)	Agrees with WC	Agrees with WC
Creation of Man	Agrees with WC	Agrees with WC
Fall of Man	Agrees with WC	Agrees with WC
(Trinity)	Three Major Points of Disagreement:	
Essence of God	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Nature of Christ	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Holy Ghost	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Creation	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Predestination	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Free Will	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Election	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Original Sin	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
(Mosaic Law)		
Sabbath	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Baptism	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Lord's Supper	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Death of Christ	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Death of Man	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC
Christian Liberty and Toleration	Disagrees with WC	Disagrees with WC

The first major point of disagreement concerns the concept of the Trinity, or more specifically, the essence of God in the Trinity. The Westminster Confession states:

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

1. W.C., II, III.

This statement from the Westminster Confession represents the generally acknowledged Protestant doctrine of the Trinity. The Apostle's Creed as well as the Nicene Creed substantiates the statement of the unity of the divine Trinity. The Apostle's Creed states:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost

and in the Nicene Creed is found:

I believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord the Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified

Milton and the Socinians draw their defense from the Bible in their assertions as to the unity of God. Milton states that Scripture is sufficiently clear on this point and that the true and original conception of God had been obscured by the schoolmen who "through their confidence in their own sagacity, or, more properly speaking, on arguments purely contradictory, impugned the doctrine itself of the unity of God which they pretended to assert."² Milton's argument and that of the Socinians is better understood in comparison with the Calvinistic view. The orthodox

2. C.E., XV, 49 and 51.

conception of the Trinity is that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are each equally God, and that the divine essence, being spiritual, is indivisible. The different titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not names of a single person, but of different persons distinguished from each other by particular personal characteristics and in the order of subsistence and operation. The concept of different subsistences contained in one substance is considered a mystery which cannot be explained, since it is beyond human understanding and transcends all analogy.

Milton and the Socinians were not satisfied with the concept of the Trinity as explained by the orthodox theologians. The explanation of different subsistences in one substance seemed implausible to Milton, and was not accepted blindly as a divine mystery.³ Milton, as the Socinians had done, went forward in his customary rational approach to scriptural criticism, and although admitting that the subject was "so sublime, and so far above our reason," he nevertheless believed that evidence from the word of God was sufficient to refute the accepted view of the Trinity. Milton attacked the idea of different subsistences contained in an indivisible essence not as a divine mystery but as an indefensible contradiction. Milton argues that,

3. C.E., XIV, 221.

as he has one hypostasis, so must he have one essence proper to himself, incommunicable in the highest degree, and participated by no one, that is, by no person besides, for he cannot have his own proper hypostasis, without having his own proper essence in common with any other thing whatever, since by this essence it is what it is, and is numerically distinguished from all others. (C.E., XV, 271.)

The Racovian Catechism stated:

The essence of God is one, not in kind but in number. Wherefore it cannot, in any way, contain a plurality of persons, since a person is nothing else than an individual intelligent essence. (R.C., 3, 1, 33.)

Thus Milton and the Socinians take their major departure from the orthodox creed. The logical extension of these arguments led the Socinians and Milton to a reappraisal of the prevailing concepts of the nature of the Son of God. The accepted view of this question as set forth by the Westminster Confession is that,

The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. (W.C., VIII, II.)

The most ancient and universally accepted statement by the Church concerning the nature of Christ is that formed by the fourth General Council at Chalcedon, A. D. 451.

Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same (person) that he is perfect in Godhood and perfect in manhood, very man, of a reasonable soul and body consisting consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead⁴

In the Athanasian Creed it is stated that Christ is "God, of the essence of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world. Perfect God and Perfect man"⁵

The arguments concerning the constitution of the person or nature of Christ have had a long history prior to their treatment by the Socinians and Milton. The extremes of heretical opinions had culminated in Nestorianism, which maintained that the human and divine natures of Christ constitute two persons, and in Eutychianism which maintained that the human and divine natures of Christ are so blended as to constitute one nature. Eutychianism was condemned at the Council of Ephesus, A. D. 431, and the refutation of the "frenzied folly of Nestorius" occurred at the Council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451. The accepted explanation as set

4. The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (New York: Chas. Scribners, 1900), Vol. XIV, p. 264.

5. Ibid., p. 265.

forth by the councils and embodied in the Westminster Confession states that Christ contains a human and divine nature united in one person. As we have seen, Milton and the Socinians disagree fundamentally with the orthodox concept. They maintained that the Son was generated by God of his own free will in pursuance of a decree and that what the Son possessed of a divine nature was imparted to him by God. They explained that the Son and God are one in unity of communion or agreement, not in unity of numerical essence.

It must be understood from this, that God imparted to the Son as much as he pleased of the divine nature, nay of the divine substance itself, care being taken not to confound the substance with the whole essence, which would imply, that the Father had given to the Son what he retained numerically the same himself: (C.E., XIV, 193.)

The Scriptures explicitly declare that whatever of a divine nature Christ possessed, he had received as a gift from the Father. (R.C., 4, 1, 56.)

A review of the treatment of the role and nature of the Holy Ghost by Milton and the Socinians contrasted with the orthodox declarations expressed in the Westminster Confession is our next concern. We have seen that Milton stated that he was unable to discover any teaching in Scripture to support the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he concluded that "the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as he is a minister of God, and therefore a creature, was

created or produced of the substance of God, not by a natural necessity, but by the free will of the agent, probably before the foundations of the world were laid, but later than the Son, and far inferior to him." ⁶ We noticed the Socinian manifestations in Paradise Lost in the concept of the Holy Spirit as a spirit or emanation existing as a bond between God and man, and providing guidance and inspiration for man. Both Milton and the Socinians argued against the equal divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The Westminster Confession representing the received doctrine declares a unity of the Godhead and a co-equality of the persons of the Trinity. The Calvinists explain that since there is but one God, infinite and absolute, His essence being spiritual cannot be divided and if the Son and the Holy Ghost are that one God, they must equally consist of the same essence. The Socinians employ just this premise in their refutation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Racovian Catechism states "since God is numerically one, he has not a plurality of persons, and that the one numerical essence of God is not common to many persons; it is therefore clear that the Holy Spirit is not a person of the Godhead." ⁷ Thus another major departure common to Milton and the Socinians is found in their treatment of the divinity

6. C.E., XIV, 403.

7. R.C., 5, 6, 291.

of the Holy Spirit and the nature of the Holy Spirit. Milton devoted a chapter of his Christian Doctrine to the explanation of these vital questions. He differs from the orthodox doctrine in his understanding of the nature and function of the Holy Spirit. Milton first points out the occurrence of the term "spirit" in Scripture and explains its varied uses and meanings. In his concept of the supreme and indivisible God, he found it necessary to determine the nature and role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. Milton was aware of the difficulty of this question remarking that "With regard to the nature of the Spirit, in what manner it exists, or when it arose, Scripture is silent; which is a caution to us not to be too hasty in our conclusions on the subject."⁸ In enumerating the uses of the word "spirit" in Scripture, Milton employs a technique similar to that used by John Biddle in his Twelve Arguments. Milton argues that:

if Scripture nowhere expressly teaches the doctrine of his divinity, not even in the passages where his office is explained at large, nor in those where the unity of God is explicitly asserted, nor where God is either described, or introduced as sitting upon his throne, -- if, further, the Spirit be frequently named the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit of God, so that the Spirit of God being actually and numerically distinct from God himself, cannot possibly be essentially one God with him whose

8. C.E., XIV, 357.

Spirit he is, (except on certain strange and absurd hypotheses, which have no foundation in the Holy Scripture, but were devised by human ingenuity, for the sole purpose of supporting this particular doctrine) -- if, wherever the Father and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together, the Father alone be called God, and the Father alone, omitting all notice of the Spirit, be acknowledged by Christ himself to be the one true God, as has been proved in the former chapter by abundant testimony; -- if, finally, 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father,' whence it follows that he who sent both the Spirit of his Son and the Son himself, he on whom we are taught to call, and on whom the Spirit himself calls, is the one and the only Father. (C.E., XIV, 377-379.)

Below are listed particular arguments by Biddle similar to Milton's discussion.

1. He that is distinguished from God, is not God; the Holy Spirit is distinguished from God;
2. He that speaketh not of himself, is not God; the Holy Spirit speaketh not of himself;
4. He that heareth from another what he shall speak, is not God, the Holy Spirit doth so;
6. He that is sent by another is not God; the Holy Spirit is sent by another;

We recognize again the similarity and agreement apparent in the comparison of Socinian views and methods with those of Milton.

After Milton is satisfied with his concept of the unity of essence in the Trinity, he concludes with an explanation of the nature and role of the Holy Spirit.

... the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as he is a minister of God, and therefore a creature, was created or produced of the substance of God, not by a natural necessity, but by the free will of the agent, probably before the foundations of the world were laid, but later than the Son, and far inferior to him. (C.E., XIV, 403.)

This explanation by Milton and a similar conclusion drawn by the Socinians illustrates another of the major differences apparent in their systems contrasted with that of the orthodox interpretation. The Calvinists do, however, distinguish the persons of the Trinity, but without destroying their unity and essential divinity as Milton and the Socinians had done. The Calvinists explain that the persons of the Trinity are mentioned in Scripture in a constant and unchanging order; the Father first, the Son second, and the Spirit third. This, they believe, does not imply an order of degree or subordinate relation, but merely distinguishes the persons as to their method of operation. The Father communicates and operates through the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son communicates and operates through the Spirit. This order is constant and the persons remain eternal in essence and equal in honor. We have found that Milton and the Socinians disagree with the Westminster Confession upon this most vital and fundamental tenet of the Christian system--the concept of the Trinity.

Many minor points of disagreement occur, such as those listed in the table at the beginning of the conclusion. The differences are at once apparent upon examination of the parallel passages found in Chapter IV and require no further elaboration. We have, at the conclusion of this study, definitely established the influence exerted by the Socinians upon the Miltonic system of Christian doctrine. We have also examined the major points of disagreement in some detail, thereby determining the great departure from the orthodox system which the beliefs of Milton and the Socinians represent, and the consistent similarity of these concepts expressed in the Christian Doctrine and the Racovian Catechism. In our study of the mystery of the Trinity we have also noticed that exactness in use and understanding of terms is essential in any approach to Biblical scholarship.

The Racovian Catechism has provided a convenient and reliable standard for use in this study. Some of the concepts which the early Socinians defended have come to be rejected by modern Unitarians, but the basic beliefs which have been selected do present a valid and representative picture of Socinianism despite the changes which later occurred. Actually, as the authors of the Catechism declare, eventual modification and change are inherent in such a religious system as their own.

Dr. Toulmin in his Life of Socinus observes, "it would be inconsistent with the liberty of prophesying, for which we see they argue in the preface [to the Catechism] to have limited their religious enquiries to this standard; and to have treated it as a Rule of Faith, would have been a violation of their declarations, that they dictated to no one, and assumed no authority. And the alterations their sentiments underwent were the consequence of their avowed principles, and the result of the free inquiry they allowed. The [last] edition of the Catechism was different from a preceding publication of that kind, being in some places altered, and in some places enlarged 'We think,' say they, 'there is no reason to be ashamed of it, if our Church improve in some respects. We are not in every instance to cry out - I believe - I stand in my rank - here I fix my foot, and will not be removed the least from this place It is the duty of the Christian philosopher, or of the candidate for the wisdom that comes from above, to be ... easy to be persuaded, not pertinaciously pleasing himself; but ready to give up his opinions, when any other offers ⁹ [opinions] supported by stronger evidence.'"

The aim in this study has been to present the parallels and similarities which occur and to evaluate them in the

light of Socinianism in seventeenth century England. These important parallels stated again are:

Essence of God	We have seen that Milton and the Socinians both stress the essential unity of God the Father.
Nature of Christ	The important similarities in treating the Son as subordinate to God and in treating the divine substance possessed by the Son as a gift of God have also been noted.
Holy Ghost	Milton and the Socinians are again in agreement concerning the role and nature of the Holy Ghost. The similarities in exegesis are particularly noteworthy.
Creation	Milton and the Socinians both depart from the Calvinist scheme of Christian doctrine in emphasizing the creation out of the substance of God.

We have noticed also certain minor points of disagreement with the Calvinist doctrines, such as the concepts held by Milton and the Socinians concerning: Predestination, Election, Original Sin, Mosaic Law, Sabbath, Baptism, Free Will, Lord's Supper, Death of Christ, Death of Man and Christian Toleration. We should not conclude that Milton modeled his tractate solely upon that of the Socinians, but the alliance in doctrine suggests that Milton is closer to the Socinians in his religious professions than has heretofore been recognized.

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