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Oliver Cromwell and the Monarchy

Neil E. Bayant
History 391H

The English civil war of the 1640's was the hostile culmination of a long period of social, political and religious unrest which began during the Tudor era. The problems of religious liberty and parliamentary government were linked in a close-working connection. The rigid discipline of Puritanism had grown to establish itself as a contending force in English ecclesiastical and political circles and was straining even more to acquire full liberty of expression for its believers. With the death of Elizabeth and the succession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne, the glorious period of the Tudors came to an end. The Stuart kings, beginning with James I, were ill-equipped to handle the delicate issues which plagued their reigns. Gradually the demands of this burgeoning Puritan class, when answered by tyranny and royal suppression of free thought resulted in war between the king and the Puritan parliamentarians.

The period required the talents and leadership of men determined to act, to promote the firm establishment and maintenance of a parliamentary government with its adjacent liberties of thought, speech and religious toleration, at least for Puritanism. Oliver Cromwell was one such man who devoted his tireless energies to the realization of the Puritan demands. More than any other figure of this period, Oliver Cromwell emerged as the dominant

force embodying the hopes and fears of the Puritan class. In an "age of divine right monarchy" Oliver Cromwell rose to become "perhaps the greatest Englishman."¹

Oliver Cromwell was born and lived during a period of growing English prosperity. Moreover, Britain enjoyed a new sense of national security that replaced the Tudor feeling of impending national danger.² The Tudor queen Elizabeth had ruled over an England always conscious of the threat posed by a powerful Catholic Spain. With the defeat of the large Spanish armada, England no longer had to fear the encroachment from the Spanish menace. The removal of this Spanish threat from Elizabethan England also eradicated "the danger to which Puritanism owed its being."³ Consequently, the national consciousness turned inward from external matters to direct its concern towards the internal considerations of domestic English life. Samuel Rawson Gardiner views the English Revolution as "the product of two factors, dissatisfaction with existing ideas and dissatisfaction with existing practices."⁴

As a youth Oliver must have been aware of the "dissatisfactions"

¹Wilbur Cortez Abbot,^{ed.} The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell (New York: Russell and Russell, 1970), I, p. 1.

²Samuel Rawson Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell (New York: Longman, Green, and Co., 1901), p. 15.

³Samuel Rawson Gardiner, Cromwell's Place in History (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 1.

which were beginning to divide the country. Moreover, the young Cromwell had to view this growing dissension in light of his English heritage and the role his ancestors had played in that history. The Armada years, the Catholic conspiracies involving Mary Queen of Scots; the Gun Powder Plot to assassinate the king, destroy parliament and restore Catholicism to England; and the tales of adventurous sea mauraders were events which were fresh in the minds of most Englishmen: events which Cromwell knew and recognized as pivotal experiences in England's recent history.⁵ Historical, political and most dramatically, religious factors combined to mold Oliver Cromwell into a leading advocate for revolution in the 1640's, and though Cromwell's personal and national heritage was deeply imbued with the necessity for maintaining a strong monarchy, by 1649 he was adamant in his declarations for the execution of Charles I. Oliver Cromwell was not a revolutionary bent upon the destruction of king and government. Instead he was a profoundly religious man, keenly interested in correcting, even abolishing the oppressive conditions in the English ecclesiastical system. Cromwell was quite willing to coexist with a monarchial government that would observe toleration for the Puritan conscience, but he could not abide what he considered the popish forms of Anglican church worship as

⁵Abbot, I, p. 26.

instituted by William Laud. With the realization that the king was deaf to the Puritan grievances, Cromwell

directed all the iron force of his will to the attainment of the one thing immediately needed. . . to deliver England from the king and such bishops as Charles had appointed.⁶

Cromwell's original intent was not to depose Charles; neither did Cromwell begin as an antimonarchist calling for the abolition of kingship. However, Charles' continual use of deception and his refusal to deal openly and honestly with the people confronting him forced Cromwell to conclude that monarchy, as personified in the mien of Charles Stuart, must be destroyed. Therefore the only amenable course of action open to Cromwell was regicide and on January 30, 1649 the King of England became one more tragic victim of the revolution.⁷

Oliver Cromwell was born at Huntingdon in eastern England on April 25, 1599,⁸ and as he later told one of his Protectorate Parliaments:

I was by birth a gentleman living neither in any considerable height nor yet in obscurity.⁹

⁶Samuel Rawson Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, no date), p. 134

⁷D. R. Watson, Charles I (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 186.

⁸Charles Firth, Oliver Cromwell (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), p. 6.

⁹Ibid., p. 1.

In fact, Cromwell's family had risen to a position of moderate success and influence during the Reformation. Oliver, the future Lord Protector of England, received his baptismal name from his uncle, Sir Oliver Cromwell of Hinchinbrook.¹⁰ It was at his uncle's large estate, Hinchinbrook, where Oliver had his first sight of English royalty in 1603.¹¹ As the new king, James I, journeyed from Scotland to his throne in London, he stopped his progress at Hinchinbrook. There, according to James, he

had such entertainment as the like had not
beene seene [sic] in any place before his
his first setting out of Scotland.¹²

Not only did James receive a favorable first impression of his new subjects, but the young boy, Oliver Cromwell, had his first contact with monarchy. Furthermore, W. C. Abbot speaks of a "later tradition" which says that young Oliver quarrelled and fought with the sickly Prince Charles, then a child of only 2½ years. During Oliver's youth, Hinchinbrook was visited several times by King James and his royal entourage, thus giving Oliver and the entire community a continued interest in the affairs of royalty.

While Oliver was still young he was placed under the influence of a schoolmaster named Thomas Beard.¹⁴ Beard became a "great

¹⁰Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *Oliver Cromwell* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), p. 1.

¹¹Abbot, I, p. 21.

¹²Firth, p. 4.

¹³Abbot, I, p. 21.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 25.

determining principle" upon Oliver's life. Beard was what Abbot called

an admirable example of the new clergy then rising in the church, especially of the element then coming to be called Puritan.¹⁵

Cromwell's family had slight Puritan tendencies, but under the direction of Thomas Beard, Oliver developed a strong Calvinistic background that would fortify him for the remainder of his life.

When Oliver was about twelve years old two events appeared that must have had considerable effect on the mind of this young boy. First, Oliver's instructor, Thomas Beard had written a book called Theatre of God's Judgements which stressed the omnipotence of an avenging God and His presence in the world of men.¹⁶ Almost simultaneous with the appearance of a second edition of Beard's book, there was the publication of the King James Version of the Bible. W. C. Abbot notes that there is little doubt that Cromwell was fully exposed to these complementary works. The new translation of the Bible offered the word of God as the unquestioned source for all authority. The language was simple and beautiful, and it allowed the reader to interpret personally the judgements of

¹⁵Abbot, I, p. 22.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 25.

Biblical events without the mediation of a priest or clergyman. The wonderful simplicity of the King James Bible combined with Beard's injunctions for mankind and

especially rulers, to obey God's laws and consequently the Lawes [sic] of man and nature,¹⁷

must have shaped Cromwell's character and beliefs in his later life. His knowledge of some Latin and history and perhaps a smattering of Greek; his remarkable command of the Scriptures and their phraseology; his sense of the immediate concern of God with him and his affairs; his enduring hatred for the popish worship of Roman Catholicism and Spain; all of these factors reflect the assimilation of his youthful training. More importantly, these factors served as major determinants influencing Cromwell's views toward the monarchy of Charles Stuart and helped shape his ideas about the proper functions of government.

In order to understand Cromwell as a political figure who advocated governmental reform, it is necessary to examine his views on religion. The historian, S. R. Gardiner sees Cromwell's Puritanism as being "moral rather than intellectual."¹⁸ Cromwell's beliefs rested upon a rigid morality where the individual was placed in a direct relationship with God. Justification by faith,

¹⁷ Abbot, I, p. 25.

¹⁸ Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 7.

predestination, the doctrine of the elect and salvation through works were religious principals anchored in John Calvin's theology.¹⁹ Cromwell was an ardent subscriber to this Puritan doctrine and religion was the prime concern in his life. The humbler virtues of truth, honor, thrift were attributes which should be glorified and followed by all. The religion of Cromwell was deeply personal; one where God was revealed in the Bible and the words of the "true Christian were founded in the Bible."²⁰ Moreover, within Puritan doctrine, there was a sentiment of resistance to tyranny in either church or state. Divine law took precedence over the law of man, therefore the individual was directly responsible to God. Cromwell was always conscious of this close, personal relationship with a deity that could be at once all-loving, omnipotent and wrathful. As a result of this strong, all pervasive religious sense, it was virtually impossible for Cromwell to violate divine strictures or compromise his beliefs simply to conform to the demands of a hostile system.

Cromwell's youth was spent in a period of political and ecclesiastical conflict and Oliver himself, was bred in a school opposed to royal and episcopal dominance. For Cromwell, monarchy,

¹⁹Abbot, I, p. 9.

²⁰Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 134.

or at least the monarchies of James I and especially Charles I, became living symbols of the opposition to Puritan worship and the freedom to practice that religion. According to Calvinist thought, the ideal government would be one where aristocracy and democracy were mixed.²¹ Within the framework of the Puritan mentality, there could be no support for an unlimited monarchy which exercised tyranny and the suppression of its subjects. However, James I exemplified "a belief in autocracy."²² He strongly advocated that he ruled by virtue of divine right and possessed "more learning than became a king."²³ James was an absolutist living in a country leaning towards parliamentary government. In his "True Law of Free Monarchies," James I put forth his theory of the proper government. This political creed was a simple one:

It is atheism and blasphemy to dispute what God can do; it is presumption and high contempt to dispute what a King can do; or to say that a King cannot do this or that.²⁴

Furthermore, in an address to his first Parliament, King James asserted that

Parliament derived all matters of privilege from him and by his grant.²⁵

²¹Abbot, I, p. 9.

²²Ibid., p. 43.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

C. H. Firth explains James' theory of monarchy as an attempt to extend the power of the Crown and diminish the rights of Parliament.²⁶

James argued that he could create and impose new taxes and customs duties on the basis of his royal prerogative. When Parliament members protested against these royal actions, James had them imprisoned. James disregarded the Commons assertion to freedom of speech, saying that

its (Commons) privileges were derived from the grace and favor of his ancestors.²⁷

When James died in March 1625, there was hope among Cromwell and other Puritans that his successor, Charles I, would restore certain basic freedoms to England.²⁸ Charles had shown a particular liking for a Dr. John Preston, who was described as one who

governed the affairs of the Puritan faction.²⁹

²⁶Firth, p. 12.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Raymond Phineas Stearns, The Strenuous Puritan (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1954), p. 33.

²⁹Ibid.

However, Puritan hopes were soon destroyed. Not only was Charles married to a Catholic queen, Henrietta Maria, but he quickly avowed his belief in divine right monarchy.³⁰

The brief and temporary influence of Dr. Preston was replaced by that of "red-faced irascible little cleric" named William Laud.³¹ In the summer of 1628 Laud was promoted from a small bishopric to the important see of London and the "Laudian" program for the reformation of the Church of England was initiated.³² James' proclamation about "No bishop, no King," still echoed in the recent past and Laud advocated the maintenance of a strong Anglican episcopacy. Puritan leaders issued loud complaints against Laudian sermons which promoted absolute monarchy or innovations in the ritual of worship.³³ Their protests against state religious policies were met with harsh persecutions of the dissenters. Charles, with the assistance of his chief cleric William Laud, sought to crush religious opposition and destroy Puritanism. Charles was unable to estimate the true strength of the Puritan faction in England, so he exercised his energies toward the destruction of Puritan elements, rather than use his

³⁰Abbot, I, p. 48.

³¹Stearns, p. 60.

³²Ibid.

³³Firth, p. 17.

power to guarantee toleration for their beliefs.³⁴

Oliver entered politics at a time when the forces of monarchy and episcopacy were being severely challenged in England. It seemed inevitable that episcopacy would find an enemy in Cromwell. Furthermore, a monarchy that served as the champion and supreme protector of an episcopal church system

should feel scarcely less the weight of his animosity.³⁵

Cromwell was elected to the House of Commons in 1628 as a representative from the Huntingdon district. During this meeting of Parliament, which was Charles' third, the Petition of Right was discussed. Cromwell remained silent in the debates concerning this issue yet it is probable that he tacitly supported the measure which prohibited arbitrary imprisonment and taxation without parliamentary consent.³⁶ Although Cromwell remained a silent member of Parliament on the Petition, he did ally himself with a group of men--several of whom were very influential in the House--that were opposed to the forced payments which the Petition of Right sought to end. John Hampden, Edmund Dunch, Sir Francis Barrington and Oliver St. John found Cromwell an industrious worker and very much opposed to "royal principals which had assumed

³⁴Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, P. 15-16.

³⁵Abbot, I, p. 53.

³⁶Firth, P. 16.

dogmatic stature."³⁷

The focus of Oliver's concerns was still primarily religious and though he disagreed with the king on certain matters of governmental procedure, it remained for religion, and not politics, to be the principal source of friction between them. Cromwell found fuel to feed his growing religious discontent in the sermons and reforms of Archbishop Laud. In a sermon given before King Charles' first parliament in 1627, Laud upheld the belief in divine right monarchy:

A King is God's immediate lieutenant upon earth, and therefore one and the same action is God's by ordinance and the King's by execution.³⁸

A subsequent sermon by a vicar Sibthorpe of Northampton urged public compliance with the issue of forced loans. Sibthorpe argued that because it was the King's responsibility

to direct and make laws, of the subjects to obey them, and not resist even when obedience was impossible or contrary to the laws of God or nature.³⁹

One of the royal chaplains, Manwaring, asserted that Parliament,

Though the highest and greatest assemblies. . . most sacred and honorable . . . and necessary . . . yet were not ordained . . . to contribute any right to kings, whereby to challenge tributary aids and subsidiary helps.⁴⁰

³⁷Abbot, I, p. 55.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Manwaring continued by maintaining,

nor could anyone that should not satisfy such demands defend his conscience from that heavy prejudice of resisting the ordinance of God, and receiving to himself damnation.⁴¹

Cromwell probably received these speeches on religious obedience to the king with consternation, fear and even anger. For this simple Puritan, the solution to the religious problem was a simple one. Cromwell favored religious toleration for all, even though his views opposed those Puritan members of the House who argued that Calvinism alone should be preached. When Charles imposed silence to settle ecclesiastical disputes between the two parties, Cromwell still stressed the importance of freedom of conscience for everyone, including those who upheld what he called the "tenets of Popery."⁴²

It was during the religious disputes that Cromwell first took part in the debates of the Commons. Inheriting the traditions of a family that prospered from the Reformation, schooled by a Puritan teacher and a Calvinist college (Cambridge), Cromwell could take but one side, and he rose to denounce the friends of "Popery in the Church."⁴³ When Charles dissolved parliament in

⁴¹Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 9.

⁴²Ibid., p. 8.

⁴³Firth, p. 17.

1629 before it could perfect a remonstrance against royal ecclesiastical policy, Cromwell was one of the members who refused to adjourn until Sir John Eliot's resolutions had been passed.⁴⁴ Eliot declared that any person who introduced religious innovations, or sought to establish "Popery, Arminianism, or any opinion disagreeing from the true and orthodox Church,"⁴⁵ should be regarded as a capital offender against the English nation. The levying of nonparliamentary taxation, tonnage and poundage, should likewise be considered as a capital crime and anyone who willfully complied by paying those taxes was equally culpable as a traitor to English liberties.⁴⁶ Cromwell's support of Eliot's proposals was in open defiance of the king's orders and demonstrated his ever-increasing discontent with Charles' monarchy. Furthermore, Cromwell's active participation in the Remonstrance signified a new awareness that religious and political discontents were bound together. Both the Petition of Right and the Remonstrance were decisive blows to the royal prerogative. Though Charles assented to the Petition of Right, he could not abide the Remonstrance. Charles prorogued parliament saying

I must avow that I owe the account of my actions to God alone.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Firth, p. 17.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁶Watson, pp. 60-65.

⁴⁷Abbot, i, p. 58.

The king was unwilling to yield to any more legislation which attempted

to take away . . . one of the chiefest maintenances of my crown . . . for none of the Houses of Parliament, either joint or separate have any power to make or declare a law without my consent.⁴⁸

Charles' statement did more than just elucidate the royal position, it challenged the authority and concepts of a faction rising to power in the Commons: a party to which Oliver Cromwell had fastened his allegiance.

For the next eleven years, following the dissolution of Parliament in 1629, Charles ruled as an absolute monarch. In 1626 the king had reminded parliament that

they are altogether in my own power for their calling, sitting and dissolution; therefore as I find the fruits of them Good or Evil, they are to continue or not to be.⁴⁹

When parliament was called in 1640, Cromwell was again elected to serve in the House of Commons as a representative from the Cambridge borough.⁵⁰ Charles' prorogation of parliament and his autocratic government had been very unpopular. The royalist historian, Edward Clarendon, wrote in later years, that

There could not a greater damp have

⁴⁸Abbot, p. 58.

⁴⁹Watson, p. 55.

⁵⁰Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 10.

seized upon the spirits of the whole nation ⁵¹

than was produced by Charles' action. Parliamentary opposition stiffened towards Charles and sought not only to abolish Laudian church reforms, but also to prevent royal authority from extending any further into the State. They were determined to limit the authority of the monarch and transfer that power from the Crown to the Commons.

When the Long Parliament met on November 3, 1640, Cromwell took his place in what was to be the longest and most event filled parliament in English history.⁵² Christopher Hill notes that "Most of the lasting achievements of the English Revolution came during the first two hundred days to the Long Parliament's existence."⁵³ Charles' advisors were still asserting the necessity for maintaining an absolute monarchy rooted in the principle of divine right kingship. Thomas Wentworth, now the Earl of Strafford, argued that

The King is loose and absolved from all rules of government.⁵⁴

Strafford advised Charles that

In an extreme necessity you may do all

⁵¹ Edward Earl of Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion, new edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1826), I, p. 231.

⁵² Abbot, I, p. 116.

⁵³ Christopher Hill, God's Englishman (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 55.

⁵⁴ Abbot, I, p. 116.

your power admits. Parliament refusing,
you are acquitted towards God and man.⁵⁵

The parliamentary leaders were eager for an impending conflict between King and Commons and they felt assured of support from the country, London and the powerful City mob. The Long Parliament began to enact legislation to dismantle the authoritarian mechanisms of Charles' government. The quasi-legal, prerogative courts--Star Chamber, High Commission, Council in the North--which had long been grievances of parliament were abolished. Any taxation that was not first passed with the specific consent of the parliament was declared to be illegal. Parliament excluded the Anglican bishops from the House of Lords in an effort to free parliament and the nation from the church policies of crown appointed ecclesiastics. Finally, the leaders in parliament hoped to avoid future periods of absolute rule by passing the Triennial Act. This resolution stated that parliament must be convened at least once every three years. Furthermore, the Long Parliament assured its longevity and ability to function as an official body, even in opposition to the crown, by declaring it was indissoluble except with its own consent.⁵⁶

When the grievances to the nation had been heard and the

⁵⁵Abbot, i, p. 116.

⁵⁶Firth, p. 53.

petitions of individuals who had suffered under the royal courts (Star Chamber, etc.) referred to committees, the Long Parliament turned to punish Charles' ministers. The Puritan opposition viewed the king as a man deluded and misled by his evil counsellors, who had prevented Charles from acting according to his native wisdom and goodness.⁵⁷ On November 11th Strafford was arrested and impeached on charges of attempting

to change the whole frame and to deprive the nation of all liberty and property . . . and subjected to the arbitrary power of the Privy Council which governed the Kingdom according to their will and pleasure.⁵⁸

One month later William Laud followed Strafford to the tower, and likewise, Windebank, the Secretary of State, and Lord Keeper Finch were accused, but fled to the continent.⁵⁹ In May 1641 Strafford was condemned and Oliver St. John argued for the counsellors execution, saying

We give law to hares and deer but it was never accounted either cruelty or foul play to knock foxes and wolves on the head.⁶⁰

The success or failure of Parliament's cause depended upon the ability to prosecute and convict Strafford. Strafford became the scapegoat for all the grievances voiced by the country. Parliaments attack upon the royal administrator became legal,

⁵⁷Watson, p. 100-105.

⁵⁸Abbot, p. 117.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 119.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 118.

then political and eventually ended in Strafford's death. Charles had abandoned his faithful minister even after promising him that no harm would come to him. Charles sought to ensure his own personal safety, but in so doing, he disheartened royalist sympathizers, spurred the hostility of parliament's accusations against the crown, and exposed his own instability, weakness and vacillation.

Throughout the turmoil involving Strafford and other royal advisors who had been impeached by the House, there was a strong fear that Charles might enlist foreign aid to support him against parliament. The Commons was aware of plots to rescue Strafford from the tower, of negotiations with Rome to send aid against parliament, of English royalist troops backed with Irish money to support the monarchy and there was a great fear that Charles might bring in Scottish troops to subdue parliament.⁶¹ In 1641 Charles refused to abdicate his throne and flee to the continent, and instead, he embarked on a Scottish visit to gain support for his monarchy.⁶² Charles' intrigues with the Scots only served to create suspicion about his integrity and honesty. Parliament was becoming increasingly distrustful of Charles.

The period between the meeting of the Long Parliament and the beginning of civil war was very influential on Cromwell. For the

⁶¹Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, pp. 19-20.

⁶²Ibid., p. 20.

most part, he remained a silent member of the Commons as he "took no delight in representative institutions,"⁶³ or in constitutional matters. However, Cromwell was not an inactive, passive member of parliament. To begin, W. C. Abbot notes that Cromwell sat in the Commons of 1640 with eighteen of his relatives, among whom were John Hampden and Oliver St. John.⁶⁴ Cromwell sat in the middle of the opposition to the crown and it is probable, but not documented, that he actively attended party meetings held at Sir Richard Manly's house.⁶⁵ Moreover, during the early sessions of the Long Parliament, Cromwell became an intense committeeman, serving on some eighteen committees. As C. H. Firth points out, the fact that he was chosen for so many committees indicates his close association with Hampden and John Pym, the two leaders of the parliamentary opposition.⁶⁶ Cromwell's numerous appointments demonstrate the respect which leaders had for his capabilities while also recognizing that he was an important element of the opposition party. Shortly after parliament reassembled in 1640, Cromwell had presented a petition on behalf of John Lilburne--later destined to be Cromwell's enemy--who had been jailed for

⁶³Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 10.

⁶⁴Abbot, p. 119.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁶⁶Firth, p. 49.

the printing and distribution of unlicensed pamphlets. This was Cromwell's first intervention in the House debates, yet his manner and sincerity carried great weight with his audience. Sir Philip Warwick recorded his impressions of Cromwell's first speech in the House and described him as

A gentleman . . . very ordinarily apparelled . . . his countenance swollen and reddish; his voice sharp and untunable, and his eloquence full of fervour. . . and he aggravated the imprisonment of this man (Lilburne) by the Council-table unto that height that one would have believed the very government itself had been in great danger by it.⁶⁸

Another contemporary witness of Cromwell's speech, Sir Richard Bulstrode, saw Lord Digby, going down the steps after Cromwell, turn to John Hampden and ask who that man was,

For I see he is of our side, by his speaking so warmly this day.⁶⁹

Hampden replied,

That slovenly fellow . . . if we should ever come to have a breach with the King (which God forbid) in such case will be one of the greatest men of England.⁷⁰

John Hampden's quotation is important for two reasons. First, Hampden's praise of Cromwell is an indication that the prominent men of parliament realized that Cromwell possessed valuable

⁶⁸Firth, p. 50.

⁶⁹Abbot, p. 121.

⁷⁰Ibid.

talents for their cause, qualities which in some cases still remained latent. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Hampden's parenthetical exclamation--(Which God forbid)--show that the mood of the parliamentarian leaders was still one of loyalty to the idea of monarchy. Though the Commons had major disagreements with Charles and was beginning to doubt his honesty, parliament was still not ready to demand the abolition of kingship. Given Cromwell's close relationship with Hampden, it is safe to say that Cromwell too, was willing to continue under the direction of a monarchical government, but one that was limited in power.

Cromwell's support for the limitation of royal prerogative and the extension of parliamentary power is shown by his being "selected to move the second reading of the Bill for the revival of annual Parliaments",⁷¹ which ultimately resulted in the Triennial Act. During 1641 Cromwell continued to be among the most pronounced adversaries to monarchical tyranny, but all that could be suggested was to allow Charles to retain his royal trappings while subjugating him to parliamentary control. It was left for parliament

to do in his (Charles) name everything
that he least desired to do himself.⁷²

⁷¹Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 20.

⁷²Ibid., p. 16.

In ecclesiastical affairs Oliver Cromwell played a more prominent role. Parliament was generally unanimous on issues calling for constitutional reform, but on the question of religion, there was much disagreement. The principal aim of the opposition leaders was to subject the Church to the control of the State as embodied in parliament, rather than leave ecclesiastical control in the hands of the king as its "supreme governor."⁷³ While one faction within parliament sought to promote Calvinism as the doctrine of the church and abolish the Anglican Prayerbook, another faction desired simply to discard a few of the ornaments and rituals of Laudian ceremony. On the question of Church government, parliament agreed the system needed reforming, but there was disagreement as to the nature of the future Church establishment. Some of the royalists in parliament, Hyde and Lord Falkland, feared that a

tyrannical episcopacy would be followed by a still more tyrannical Presbyterian discipline.⁷⁴

The royalist proposals called for the establishment of a modified episcopacy with bishops who were directly responsible to church councils for their authority.⁷⁵ When on February 19, 1641 Sir John Strangsways declared that equality within the church

⁷³Firth, p. 54.

⁷⁴Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 18.

⁷⁵Ibid.

the establishment. Nevertheless, the bill did not gain a large popular support, remaining a subject only for committee debate and destined never to be passed.⁸⁰

The religious debates of 1641 were also concerned with the Scottish effort to promote a settlement with Charles. When the Scots issued their "Demands towards a Treaty", the eighth article contained a provision for the "uniformity in religion."⁸¹ This uniformity required the promotion of Presbyterianism in England before "a solid peace between the Nations" could be concluded. Cromwell became interested in the proposals and wrote to George Willingham, a London merchant with Scottish contacts to "find out what he could."⁸² Cromwell wrote,

I desire you to send me the reasons of the Scots to enforce their desire of Uniformity in Religion, expressed in their eighth Article; I mean that which I had before of you. I would peruse it against we fall upon that debate, which will be speedily.

London, Feb. 1641

OL. Cromwell.⁸³

No records were left of Cromwell's actions in the debates which followed, but S. R. Gardiner notes that Cromwell, like the royalist, Falkland, was opposed to the creation of Scottish

⁸⁰Stearns, p. 160.

⁸¹Abbot, p. 125.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

church courts within England.⁸⁴

Charles' 1641 visit to Scotland to negotiate for Scottish aid was tragically interrupted by the massacre of English and Scottish citizens by Irish Roman Catholics in Dublin.⁸⁵ The fact that these Irish insurgents were sympathetic to Charles greatly alarmed the members of parliament. Several months prior to Charles' departure for Scotland and before the Irish rebellion, the Commons had passed a list summarizing the grievances of Pym's opposition party. While this document accused the king and his followers of plotting to subvert the "Fundamental Laws" of the kingdom and trying to institute a "Tyrannical Government," the protestation also promised to uphold the Church of England "against all Popery," to defend the Crown, parliament, the liberties of English subjects and to preserve the peace among England, Scotland and Ireland.⁸⁶ Oliver Cromwell favored the protestation and took steps to curry support for this declaration, while also urging the creation of an organization to enforce its effectiveness. In a letter to his Cambridge constituents which urged their compliance with the document, Oliver stated that

The conformity is in itself praiseworthy. . .
It's dreadful to adversaries; especially when
it's in order to the duty we owe to God, to
the loyalty we owe to our King and sovereign,
and to the affection due to our country and
liberties.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 19.

⁸⁵Firth, pp. 57-59.

⁸⁶Abbot, i, pp. 126-27.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 128.

Cromwell also voiced his opposition to the King's journey to Scotland. Cromwell viewed the royal excursion into Scotland as

a danger to his person going through the Armyes; factions will stand up in Scotland; (and there is) danger in this Kingdome if he go instante.⁸⁹

However, Charles' trip proved unsuccessful for his purposes while it worked out to the advantage of parliament. On August 14, 1641 a committee of defense was formed and two days later it was recommended that

authority shall be given to some person during the King's absence to putt the Kingdome in a present posture of defence.⁹⁰

With Charles out of the country the Committee of defense became the only government enforcement agency. Moreover, when the Irish rebellion occurred, parliament recognized that an English army was needed to suppress the Irish insurgents. It was necessary for parliament to secure the appointment of army officers who were sympathetic to their beliefs, so that once the Irish were subdued, Charles might not use the army to attack parliament. Consequently, Pym attempted to subject military appointments to parliamentary control.⁹¹ Cromwell participated in these events by calling for

⁸⁹Abbot, i, p. 133.

⁹⁰Ibid, p. 134.

⁹¹Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell p. 21-22.

a vote that would give the Earl of Essex command of the militia bands to the south of Trent.⁹²

The meeting of parliament in 1641-42 was a very important formation period in Oliver Cromwell's life. He was drawn into close contact with great issues and great leaders of his day, he gained a knowledge of public business and public affairs, drew attention to himself with his hostility towards the church and he emerged as a leading Puritan figure in an ascendant party. The Long Parliament had been extremely successful in extending its control into royal authority. Through a series of ordinances parliament had gained at least partial control over the military and as W. C. Abbot notes

there were at least some among them who aspired to substitute the House of Commons for the crown.⁹³

Furthermore, parliament began to assume the power to levy taxes. The newly formed committee of defense was an important first step not only in the control of the army, but also in the acquisition of executive authority for parliament. By assenting to the Tonnage and Poundage Acts and the clause which blocked the dissolution of parliament without its consent, Charles had relinquished two important examples of his royal prerogative. However, Charles still wanted to rule as a constitutional king and

⁹²Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 21-22.

⁹³Abbot, i, p. 135.

not as a figurehead for a parliamentary government.⁹⁴ He refused to abdicate his right to choose his royal advisors, nor would he consent to the destruction of the established church. Finally, with the removal of Strafford, Laud, Finch, Windebank and certain other royal advisors, Charles was left to his own uncertain devices and those of his Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria. The removal of Charles' ablest counsellors also directly exposed the king to the attacks and criticisms of parliament. Now, any failure to meet the demands of the Puritan opposition would fall upon Charles' head and not on his advisors. Parliament would soon distrust Charles in much the same manner as it had Strafford and Laud.

The rift between parliament and crown had widened beyond the point of peaceful reconciliation by the end of 1642. Each side distrusted the other's possible use of force while it justified arming itself by virtue of self-defense. By this point, Cromwell felt that Charles couldn't be trusted to wield the sceptre of unlimited power for the good of all, since he detested puritanism and had attempted to subdue the Commons with foreign mercenaries. Cromwell's interests became preoccupied with training and maintaining the efficiency of the militia. As early as January 14, 1642 he had called for an organization to

⁹⁴Abbot, i, p. 138.

provide a defense of the kingdom.⁹⁵ Moreover, he had personally contributed 500 pounds for the raising of an English parliamentary army. In his own Cambridge district, Cromwell personally took charge of military affairs there. He bolstered their defenses through contributions of military stores worth 100 pounds. On July 15, Cromwell moved to allow Cambridge to organize 2 companies of volunteers.⁹⁶ Later, Cromwell seized the magazine store of arms at Cambridge castle to be distributed to the militia when necessary.

When war finally erupted between royalist and parliament forces, Cromwell soon rose to the forefront as the ablest commander on both sides. Cromwell immediately recognized the superiority of the royalist cavalry and the many weaknesses which riddled the parliamentary forces. The military importance of cavalry was an axiom of war and unless parliament could muster an adequate contingent of horse, parliamentary resistance would dissolve. In a conversation with John Hampden, Cromwell discussed the inferiority of parliament's army to that of the royalists:

Your troops are most of them old decayed serving men and tapsters, and such kind of fellows . . . You must get men of spirit.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Gardiner, Oliver Cromwell, p. 26.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 28-29.

Cromwell's statement to Hampden that the army needed "men of spirit" was crucial to Cromwell's understanding of the revolution. When on September 5, 1644 Cromwell told Colonel Walton that

I profess I could never satisfy myself of the justness of this war but from the authority of the Parliament to maintain itself in its rights; and in this cause I hope to approve myself an honest man and single-hearted,⁹⁸

Cromwell saw the preservation of individual and representative liberties as a valid justification for revolution. But Cromwell viewed the war effort as more than just a confrontation over political freedoms. He was a man "inspired with the higher spiritual life of Puritanism."⁹⁹ The revolution was a religious war for Cromwell and he wanted "men of spirit" who believed in the moral rightness of their cause, men who were willing to be disciplined. A man's courage, according to Cromwell, was but "the outward expression of a spirit set upon high and holy things."¹⁰⁰ Cromwell rode into battle protected by the armor of a strong Calvinistic faith, so that when the parliament army had scored a crushing victory over the royalists in 1644, he could write

It had all the evidence of an absolute victory obtained by the Lord's blessing upon the godly party principally. We never charged but we

⁹⁸Hill, p. 53.

⁹⁹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 143.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 135.

routed the enemy, God made them as stubble
to our swords.¹⁰¹

Cromwell was a man of action, strong and decisive, and when his mind was fixed on a certain goal there was very little that could be done to dissuade him. When disagreement between himself and Manchester, the commanding general of the parliamentary forces, came to a head in 1644, Cromwell was unable to understand his superior's negligence in pushing for total victory. The conflict between them was compounded by Manchester's desire to work in conjunction with the Scots. When Charles received seasoned reinforcements fresh from the war against the Irish rebels, the Parliamentarian Puritans turned to Scotland for aid. The Solemn League and Covenant pledged the two nations to unite for the reformation of religion "according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches."¹⁰³ Cromwell viewed the Scots with animosity, a feeling which also "embraced his opinion of his own general, the Earl of Manchester."¹⁰⁴ Cromwell viewed the Scottish peace settlement as a desire to enforce the Presbyterian discipline

in the teeth of the men whom Cromwell regarded
as the most zealous executioners of the enemies
of God.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 143.

¹⁰²Ibid., 145.

¹⁰³Firth, p. 102.

¹⁰⁴Gardiner, History of the Great Civil War (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893), ii p. 3.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

On July 18, 1644 Manchester joined with Generals Leven and Fairfax in addressing a letter to the Committee of Both Kingdoms which promised to defend the Solemn League and Covenant. The generals concluded with the hope that parliament would take

the building of the House of God and
settlement of church government into their
Chiefest thoughts¹⁰⁶

and also advised that a peace be made with the king. Cromwell wanted nothing to do with the Scots or with a peace settlement promoted by the English lords, which would allow Charles to retain his power. While Manchester saw peace available through mutual concessions, a peace that would provide a Puritan establishment under Charles' control, Cromwell viewed peace attainable only through total victory. Furthermore, Manchester's letter to the Committee of Both Kingdoms practically amounted to a "declaration of war against Lieutenant-General Cromwell."¹⁰⁷ If the conservative Puritans, Manchester among them, were somewhat frightened by the radical idea of liberty of conscience,¹⁰⁸ they must have been appalled by Cromwell's claim

that if the King chanced to be in the body
of the enemy that he was to charge, he would
discharge his pistol upon him as at any other
private person.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶Gardiner, The Great Civil War, ii, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 145.

¹⁰⁹Abbot, p. 190-91.

The Cromwell of 1644 was dedicated to the task of overthrowing prelacy and if monarchy stood in the way of his attack on the bishops, then he was prepared to overthrow the King himself.

The trouble with Manchester ended in the promulgation of a Self-denying Ordinance in 1645. This Ordinance prohibited any member of either House of Parliament from holding a military command, though Cromwell was eventually allowed to retain his generalship.¹¹⁰ The Self-denying Ordinance got rid of Manchester, Essex and several other commanders who Cromwell thought were indolent. Furthermore, Cromwell played a leading role in the whole scheme of operations which led from the Ordinance to the New Model Army, and in getting Sir Thomas Fairfax appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the new army. The New Model Army, fashioned on Cromwell's own "Ironsides" regiments, was to become a crack fighting unit and this time

There could be no hesitation about beating the king too much.¹¹¹

Cromwell's experimental New Model Army proved to be a successful venture when it utterly devastated royalist forces at Naseby in June 1645.¹¹² The victory not only assured parliament that ultimate triumph was close at hand, but it also demonstrated Cromwell's genius as a commander and guaranteed the security of

¹¹⁰Hill, pp. 73-74.

¹¹¹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 147.

¹¹²Firth, pp. 126-27.

his military title. Cromwell's actions during this period were important for the parliamentary cause. Through his efforts, both militarily and politically, Cromwell had shaped a loose association of disorganized military bands into a consolidated well trained fighting unit. Moreover, through his example, parliament came to the conclusion that total war must be waged against the enemy, or as Cromwell had stated earlier

Why did we take up arms at first if not to fight ever hereafter.¹¹³

In August 1646 Raglan Castle surrendered to parliament forces and thus ended the last garrison of organized resistance for the king.¹¹⁴ Charles' only chance for safety was a swift acknowledgement of monarchy on parliament's terms, but his blindness to the Puritan mood caused him to play the mutual jealousies of the parties against one another. Through a careful system of intrigue and deception, Charles hoped to ensure his place and restore himself to full monarchical power. The king began negotiations with parliament while determined to place his hopes in his trust of the Scots. On May 5, 1646 Charles had entered the Scottish camp at Newark and was taken to Newcastle for security from the English army.¹¹⁵

The Scots entered into talks with Charles fully expectant that he intended to promote their Presbyterian interests. However,

¹¹³Hill, p. 72.

¹¹⁴Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 149.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 150.

Charles hoped that through clever scheming he might draw the Scots into disagreement with the New Model Army and then play off that collision to his own advantage. Cromwell and the army opposed any attempts at settlement on Presbyterian terms. The Presbyterian's refusal to grant religious toleration to sects was viewed with hostility by Cromwell. The soldiers of the New Model Army

had not exposed their lives in order to be sent home again without liberty of conscience. It was for parliament to put an end to the Presbyterian tyranny.¹¹⁶

Cromwell was a strong exponent for religious toleration, for he viewed

Presbyterians, Independants, all here have the same spirit of faith and prayer, the same presence and answer. They agree here, but have no names of difference; pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere. For, brethren, in things of the mind we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason.¹¹⁷

Again as before, the prevailing concern of Cromwell was religion. With the end of royalist resistance there was little hope for Cromwell and the Independents that parliament would listen to their political and religious demands. If the parliament allowed

¹¹⁶Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 152.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

the Presbyterian clergy to enforce their discipline, Independents could expect nothing but persecution. That Cromwell was openly contemptuous of Scottish Presbyterianism and its refusal to allow toleration for sects is obvious when he declared

In the way they now carry themselves, pressing for their discipline, I could as soon draw my sword against them as against any in the King's army.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, Cromwell refused to recognize any distinctions except those arising from services rendered to the common cause. His difficulties with Lord Manchester, the trouble with the Presbyterians and his growing distrust of Charles prompted Cromwell to remark

That he hoped to live to see never a nobleman in England,¹¹⁹

or still later, "that he loved certain persons better than others because they did not love lords."¹²⁰

By the of 1645 toleration was gaining some influence in parliament as the new elections had seriously eroded Presbyterian strength in both houses, However, the depletion of the Presbyterian party in parliament wasn't sufficient to counter their influence on the terms being offered to the king. Charles received parliament's proposals for a settlement on July 14 while at

¹¹⁸Gardiner, The Great Civil War, ii, p. 23.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 24.

¹²⁰Ibid.

New castle. According to the proposed articles for peace, Charles was to surrender the militia to parliament for 20 years and promise to rule as a Presbyterian king. In addition, he was required to take the Covenant and uphold the principals of the new Presbyterian church system.¹²¹ Yet the king had no intention of fulfilling the demands put forth by parliament. Charles preferred to wait, hoping that the disagreement between the Presbyterians and the Independents would result in a violent clash, whereby he could then present his own terms for peace. In a letter written to Henrietta Maria, Charles said that

All my endeavors must be the delaying of my answers till there by considerable parties visibly formed.¹²²

The king delayed his answer for six month. Charles believed that bishops and apostolical succession were necessary to a true Church and the acceptance of the Covenant would be a "perpetual authorising of rebellion."¹²³ Finally, after extended negotiations, Charles was prepared to accept terms which would provide the establishment of Presbyterianism for three years, and control of the military for ten years. However, Charles stipulated that at the conclusion of ten years, military control would again be restored to the crown. Furthermore, after three years he made it clear that he intended to reestablish episcopacy.¹²⁴

¹²¹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 152.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Firth, p. 154.

¹²⁴Ibid, p. 154-55.

The Scots, perceiving Charles' deceptive tactics, became dissatisfied with the negotiations and prepared to give Charles up to the English parliament. On December 21, 1646 Cromwell wrote to Fairfax telling him

We have now, I think, almost perfected all our business for Scotland. I believe Commissioners will speedily be sent down to see agreements performed.¹²⁵

Two days later, on December 23, the Articles of Agreement were signed between a committee of parliament and a committee representing the Scottish interests. According to the terms of the pact, the Scots were to be paid 400,00 pounds for the surrender of Charles to parliamentary commissioners.¹²⁶ Cromwell's support of this agreement is obvious by his willingness to sign the Articles. Abbot mentions that there is little evidence of Cromwell's influence on the agreement beyond the fact that he consented to sign it. Nor is there any record of Cromwell's actions in the events which followed. Yet no matter what part Cromwell played in the acceptance of the treaty, royalists viewed the Articles as an act of treachery perpetrated by the Scots. In the words of Charles' supporters, the Scots had "sold their King."¹²⁷

From February to June of 1647 Charles was quartered in Holmby

¹²⁵Abbot, i, p. 421.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 425.

House, in Northamptonshire, where he was treated with at least the external respect of a king. Just as Charles' hopes looked bleakest, there were threatening rumbles between the army and parliament which served to arouse the King's interest. Parliament feared the strength of the New Model Army and the Presbyterians moved for the disbandment of the army. The Presbyterian intolerants viewed the army as a "strange institution" in which the beliefs of many diversified sects found sanctuary.¹²⁸ Parliament was wary of an army in which soldiers occupied their liesure hours in "theological argument or Scriptural exposition."¹²⁹ The army argued that it had not fought to ensure the supremacy of parliament at the expense of individual freedoms. Instead, army spokesmen demanded toleration for the religious beliefs of the soldiers and until these liberties were assured, the army refused to disband. Charles saw the breach between parliament and the army as an opportunity to pursue his favorite, fatal policy of attempting to divide and rule. With his usual incautious duplicity he proposed publicly to agree to the establishment of Presbyterianism for three years and to parliamentary control for ten, while his private letters, outlining his genuine hopes, revealed and defeated his plan.¹³⁰ The struggle for power became threefold--the King, clinging to the recovery of his royal

¹²⁸Gardiner, *The First Two Stuarts*, p. 153.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

¹³⁰Gardiner, *Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 75-78.

authority; the Parliamentary Presbyterians determined to retain their dominance over both Charles and the army; and the army Independents who were resolved not to be bullied by politicians in parliament nor to submit to Presbyterian authority in ecclesiastical matters. Again Abbot writes that Oliver Cromwell was only slightly involved in the early disagreements between the army and parliament. Cromwell's inaction was due primarily to an illness he had contracted earlier and it was only on March 7, 1646 that he could write General Fairfax, "It hath pleased God to raise me out of a dangerous sickness."¹³¹

The army grew increasingly hostile to parliament and threatened to mutiny even in the face of Cromwell's promise to parliament that it would disband. It became more evident that Charles intended to accept parliament's provisions, but with the modification that he rule for only three years as a Presbyterian king, while reserving religious liberty for himself.¹³² The army refused to accept the terms of either and on May 20, 1647 army leaders, among whom were Cromwell, Henry Ireton, and Charles Fleetwood, issued a statement outlining the army's position. This Saffron Walden pronouncement included a sixth article which

expressed a passionate sense of the scandal concerning the petition to the King, protesting

¹³¹Abbot, i, p. 428.

¹³²Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 153.

against the thing and the appearance of it
amongst them.¹³³

When parliament attempted to raise a volunteer expeditionary force to be sent to Ireland, but still refused to forward the soldiers' pay which was already many months in arrears, the army organized itself into regimental councils and refused either to disband or go overseas. Agitators or deputies were elected to voice army grievances within the council and as Esme Wingfield-Stratford notes, "revolution in politics was coloured [sic] and intensified by revolution in religion."¹³⁴

By June the army was ready to take matters into its own hands and on June 3-4, Charles was secured by a group of cavalry led by Coronet George Joyce.¹³⁵ Coronet Joyce appeared at Holmby House with a supporting contingent of cavalry and told Charles that he had been commissioned to remove the king to Newmarket. Joyce claimed that his orders to seize Charles were given by Cromwell, but Cromwell later asserted that

he knew nothing of Joyce's going for the king.¹³⁶

The army now issued a statement which increased their demands by

¹³³Abbot, i, p. 450.

¹³⁴Esme Wingfield-Stratford, King Charles the Martyr 1643-1649 (London: Hollis & Carter, 1950), p. 181.

¹³⁵Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 153.

¹³⁶Wingfield-Stratford, p. 184.

calling for the exclusion of eleven leaders in the Presbyterian Party from the Commons. When the eleven members withdrew, a large Presbyterian mob broke into parliament and demanded the Commons to resist the army attempts at coercion. But on August 7 the army marched against London and took military possession of the city. By the end of 1647 the army and nation had come to realize that with the possible exception of King Charles, Oliver Cromwell was the most important figure in the country.¹³⁷

The army was founded and existed upon freedom of discussion and Cromwell explained the army coup d'etat by saying

the blow it struck was on behalf of that freedom of thought and speech without which the supremacy of a Parliament is as despotic as the supremacy of a king.¹³⁸

Cromwell and the army leaders had to deal with a Parliament to which their obedience was pledged, but whose leaders were now feverishly seeking to promote a civil war between Presbyterians and Independents. Moreover, the army and Cromwell especially, were enthusiastically persuaded of their mandate to execute and interpret God's will. For Cromwell, the army's possession of Charles was now the key issue. By capitalizing on Joyce's bold action, Cromwell thought the army could impose a peace settlement which would embody their demands, and if the proposals were acceptable to Charles, the King's royal authority and prestige might balance the impending crisis on lines favorable to the army.

¹³⁷Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 154.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 155.

Necessity dictated that Cromwell treat Charles with respect and cordiality, for in placating Charles, Cromwell hoped to persuade him to accept the army settlement. Charles was given enormous freedom at Hampton Court and was even allowed to practice his Anglican faith. When Charles asked to allow his children to visit him, Cromwell consented and later told Sir John Berkley,

that never had man been so abused as he had been in his former ill opinion of the King, whom he now thought to be the uprightest and most conscientious man in his three kingdoms.¹³⁹

However, Charles was still reminded of his captivity by the soldiers assigned to guard him. The flattering intentions of Cromwell and the army leaders were only part of a calculated plan to bring the weight of the Crown over to their side. Furthermore, should Charles fail to agree to the army's terms, "they would not hesitate to discard--and perhaps destroy him."¹⁴⁰ Cromwell was forced to deal rapidly with the king, for parliament realized their success rested upon dealing privately with Charles and forestalling Cromwell, while on the other side the Agitators argued that the army leaders' negotiations with Charles betrayed the soldiers and their revolutionary cause.

The army leaders realized that the army could not dictate the mechanism of government which would rule the country. During

¹³⁹Wingfield-Stratford, p. 202.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 203.

the period 1647-49, the Army Council met to decide upon the terms to be offered to the king for his acceptance. Cromwell was a prominent member at the Putney debates which were held in October and November 1647.¹⁴¹ When Henry Ireton declared that he

would not seek, nor will join with them that do seek, the destruction of either Parliament of King,¹⁴²

Cromwell later concurred, arguing it was the duty of the army to make its proposals to parliament. It was for parliament to settle the question of government, but Cromwell hoped the government would be representative and not "perpetuate itself."¹⁴³ When the Army Council met again in November Cromwell maintained

that the King is king by contract; and I shall say, as Christ said, 'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.'¹⁴⁴

As the fanatical army element represented by lieutenant-colonel William Goffe declared that heaven was against Charles, Cromwell calmly replied that

though it was their duty to give ear to all that was revealed to anyone, they must not

¹⁴¹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 155.

¹⁴²A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴³Gardiner, The Great Civil War, iv, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴Woodhouse, p. 96.

forget the Scriptural injunction, 'Let the rest Judge.'¹⁴⁵

Cromwell's conciliatory influence was felt in his support of the Heads of Proposals which the army offered to Charles. The settlement allowed for complete religious toleration for all except Catholics; it allowed for voluntary submission to episcopal or Presbyterian jurisdiction, if desired, but there would be no civil penalties exercised against those who wished to practice a different faith.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, a Council of State would be appointed from members of both Houses in parliament. Though Charles was not allowed the power to appoint or dismiss appointees, the document was regarded as magnanimous in its terms.

At this point Cromwell was still willing to uphold the idea of monarchy provided that Charles would consent to certain limitations in the royal authority. However, Charles still hoped to regain his position by playing each side off of the other. Although the King's advisors recommended that Charles accept the Heads of Proposals, Charles seemed uninterested in the settlement and sealed his fate against any future reconciliation with the army when he escaped to the Isle of Wight. Charles again looked to the Scots for aid and eventually concluded a secret treaty by

¹⁴⁵Gardiner, The Great Civil War, iv, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 155

which he agreed to acknowledge Presbyterian discipline in England for three years and to suppress the Independents and all other religious sects. In return for these concessions the Scots consented to supply Charles with the military support needed to restore him to the monarchy.¹⁴⁷ Charles' negotiations with the Scots hardened Cromwell against the king and when Sexby exposed a royalist plot to restore Charles and establish supremacy of the House of Lords, Cromwell protested

If it were free before us whether we should set up one or the other, I do, to my best observation, find a unanimity among us all that we should set up neither. I must further tell you, that as we do not make it our business or intention to set up one or the other, neither is it our intention to preserve the one or the other with a visible danger and destruction to the people and the public interest.¹⁴⁸

War with Scotland came in 1648 and the English army was horrified to learn that their king "had delivered England up to Scottish Presbyterianism."¹⁴⁹ According to Cromwell it was now the duty of the army to "call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed and mischief he had done to his utmost against the Lord's cause and people in these poor nations."¹⁵⁰ The second civil war was brought to a swift conclusion in 1648 and Cromwell and the army leaders were

¹⁴⁷Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 156.

¹⁴⁸Gardiner, The Great Civil War, iv, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p.156.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 157.

determined to end Charles' haggling once and for all. An Army Remonstrance was issued which stated the army's case against Charles and declared the king

to be but the highest functionary of the State, and that if he deliberately abused his trust he was liable to be called to account.¹⁵¹

The Remonstrance continued by demanding that Charles be brought to justice for his deceptions.¹⁵²

The army next had to deal with a parliament that still favored reconciliation with the king and on December 6, 1648, 96 members of parliament were prevented from taking their seats. "Prides Purge" excluded the unacceptable members of parliament and made it a "mere instrument" for the army's use. On December 13, the remaining 50-60 members of the House passed a resolution demanding Charles be tried for crimes against the nation.

Cromwell argued against those factions who believed there could now be safety if the king was allowed to retain HISTORY steps in public affairs. On the same day that the Army Bristow to decrease the King's "royal state", December 2 on fo proceeding capitally against Charles came up in the House of Commons. Cromwell rose to speak and according to one account

When it was first moved in the House of Commons

¹⁵¹Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 158.

¹⁵²Gardiner, The Great Civil War,^{iv} pp. 233-35.

to proceed capitally against the King, Cromwel [sic] . . . told them, That if any man moved this upon design, he should think him the greatest Traytor in the world, but since providence and necessity had cast them upon it, he should pray God to bless their Councils, though he were not provided on the sudden to give them counsel.¹⁵³

When Charles explored the possibility of last minute aid from Cromwell and Ireton in negotiating a personal treaty with parliament, Ireton exclaimed "that he hoped any peace between king and parliament would be such as to allow the army a safe conscience to fight against them both."¹⁵⁴ Only slightly earlier, Berkely, the King's messenger, learned that Cromwell and Ireton were both ready "to destroy the King and his posterity."¹⁵⁵ By January 1, 1649 when the Commons had appointed a High Court of Justice to preside over Charles' trial, Cromwell had turned full circle in his view of the monarchy. Where in 1647 Captain Bishop said after talking with Cromwell, that he found "in his spirit the root-of their sufferings was a compliance to preserve that man of blood and those principles of tyranny,"¹⁵⁶ by 1649 that same Cromwell believed that God intended to destroy Charles Stuart.¹⁵⁷ On January 4 the Commons declared itself independant from the House of Lords, asserting that it was the only august and sovereign power in the nation and had no need of the King's or the

¹⁵³ Abbot, i, p. 718.

¹⁵⁴ Wingfield-Stratford, pp. 234-35.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁵⁶ Gardiner, The Great Civil War, iv, p. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

Lords' concurrence.¹⁵⁸ Consequently it was by the authority of the Commons alone, that Charles was brought to Whitehall on January 19, and to trial on the next day.¹⁵⁹

Cromwell's conversion to the party committed to regicide was neither hasty nor a design seeking the advancement of personal ambition. Cromwell earnestly believed that the Hand of God was present in the world directing and manipulating the events of his own life. In November 1647, while at Putney, Cromwell espoused his conviction in the predestination of his role in the revolution:

I am one those whose heart God hath drawn out to wait for some extraordinary dispensations, according to those promises that he hath held forth of things to be accomplished in the later time, and I cannot but think that God is beginning of them.¹⁶⁰

Cromwell wrote to Colonel Robert Hammond on November 25, 1648:

If thou wilt seek to know the mind of God in all that chain of providence whereby God brought thee thither and that person [Charles] to thee; how, before and since, God has ordered him, and affairs concerning him; and them tell me whether there be not some glorious and high meaning in all this above what there hast yet attained? And, laying aside thy fleshly reasons, seek of the Lord to teach thee what that is; and he will do it.¹⁶¹

When Cromwell finally decided to commit himself to the cause of

¹⁵⁸Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 159.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Christopher Hill, "Providence and Oliver Cromwell," Cromwell A Profile, ed. Ivan Roots (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), p. 190.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 203.

regicide, an account of Cromwell's conversion was reported to Berkely:

He acknowledged that the glories of the world had so dazzled his eyes that he could not discern clearly the great works the Lord was doing, and said that he was now resolved to humble himself and desire the prayers of the Saints, that God would be pleased to forgive his self-seeking. These arts, together with comfortable messages to the prisoners (arrested at Corkbush munity) . . . perfected his reconciliation, and he was reinstated in the Fellowship of the Faithful . . .¹⁶²

Charles' trial began on January 20, 1649 with a reading of the charge against him. The King was accused of using "wicked design to erect and uphold in himself an unlimited and tyrannical power. . . to overthrow the rights and liberties of the people." Furthermore, Charles had "traitorously and maliciously levied war against the present Parliament and the people therein represented."¹⁶³ When Charles was called upon to answer the charge, Lady Fairfax, wife of General Fairfax who had refused to sit on the court of judges, shouted from the gallery:

It's a lie, not half, nor a quarter of the people of England! Oliver Cromwell is a rogue and a traitor.¹⁶⁴

Though she was forced to leave the proceedings, Lady Fairfax's

¹⁶²Wingfield-Stratford, p. 235.

¹⁶³Abbot, i, p. 737.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

outburst was significant because in had singled out Cromwell as the man whom most people credited with pressing Charles' case to its fatal conclusion. Throughout the trial Charles refused to recognize the authority of the court chosen to judge his case, yet on January 27, the court found him guilty of the charges and sentenced the King to be executed.

The records of the courts' deliberations are so scarce that it is difficult to know just what happened, but it seems that there was disagreement among the commissioners themselves on how the King's guilt would be treated. Abbot mentions that it was probably the votes of the "Cromwellian colonels and creatures which turned the scales against the King."¹⁶⁵ In later years when Charles' executioners were brought to trial for regicide, the testimony adduced at those trials pointed heavily at Cromwell and Ireton as the leading proponents for the King's death. The royalist historian Clarendon told the story of how Cromwell forced Sir Richard Ingoldsby to sign the King's death-warrant:

As soon as Cromwell's eyes were upon him, he ran to him, and taking him by the hand, drew him by force to the table; and said, 'though he had escaped him all the while, he should sign that paper as well as they' . . . and Cromwell, with a loud laughter, taking his hand in his, and putting the pen between his fingers, with his own hand writ 'Richard Ingoldsby.'¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵Abbot, i, p. 744.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 745-46.

Whatever Cromwell's direct role was in calling for regicide, Charles went to his death still firmly convinced that

There can be no fairer form of liberty
than under a pious King.¹⁶⁷

Charles believed his cause had been just and that his vacillation, his intrigues

were legitimate weapons to be used in
defense of the nation whose
happiness was inextricably bound up with
his own authority.¹⁶⁸

It is easy to portray Cromwell as some kind of Machiavellian plotter bent upon the achievement of personal gain through coercion, even murder, yet as Wingfield-Stratford noted, it was possible for Charles to save himself and his crown, but "Charles was more resolved to die than Oliver Cromwell to kill him."¹⁶⁹ Cromwell and the other like minded members of the army were forced to depose and kill the King by Charles himself. Political, social, and most particularly, religious forces combined to pressure Cromwell into a long and agonizing decision, but when once firmly convinced of the moral rightness of his cause, he did not hesitate to pursue it to the necessary conclusion. When Charles was executed on January 30, 1649, the King's death was

¹⁶⁷Gardiner, The First Two Stuarts, p. 161.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁶⁹Wingfield-Stratford, v.

viewed by Cromwell as a political and religious necessity, for
as he had said earlier

it matters not who is our Commander-in-Chief
if God be so.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰Hill, p. 83.

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