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John Milton : religious independent

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JOHN MILTON: RELIGIOUS INDEPENDENT

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An independent being in his day—
Byron

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CRITICAL PREFACE

In the preface to De Doctrina Christiana John Milton makes it clear that his religious views underwent a continual process of revision throughout his life, and he assures us that at no time during his life did he follow any heresy or sect. During the century and a half prior to the discovery of De Doctrina Christiana in 1823, however, Milton was regarded as one of the highest figures in English literature, passing as an orthodox Protestant of the Calvinistic faith. The seventeenth century biographers did much to establish this Miltonic tradition, and while they cast considerable light on the poet's life, they are at times extremely unreliable. Criticism is not completely omitted but it is usually biased or unwarranted, in an attempt to give a sympathetic portrait of Milton's highminded and philosophical character. They have little regard for Milton's religious and political views and almost no consideration for the events and circumstances governing the poet's life.

The first biography appeared in 1681 when John Aubrey published Minutes of the Life of John Milton, and the second, The Anonymous Life of Milton, later attributed to John Phillips, was published shortly afterwards. Neither of these earlier biographers thought Milton's religious views worthy of consideration and only in the latter is there

a hasty reference to Milton's anti-Episcopal pamphlets as "objective judgement concerning the church government controversy."

The third biography of Milton was published in Fasti Oxonienses in 1691 by Anthony à Wood in the form of an outline. Wood presented for the first time a reference to Milton's Presbyterianism.

> At first we find him a Presbyterian and most sharp and violent opposer of Prelacy (the established ecclesiastical Discipline and orthodox clergy.)

It may be worth noting that while nearly one half of Wood's Life has been taken almost verbatim from the Anonymous Life and a part from Aubrey's manuscript, Wood does not depend on the earlier biographies for the above reference, nor does he substantiate this reference other than that he places Milton in the Presbyterian camp because in offering his objective judgement he had denounced the Episcopacy and aided the Puritan cause.

The fourth biography, The Life of Mr. Milton, by Edward Phillips, appeared in 1694; and while this book is longer, more complete, and certainly a more detailed literary history of Milton's works, it added very little concrete information that had not already been contributed by the earlier biographers. However, Edward Phillips' biography, and later John Toland's biography, The Life of John Milton, published as a preface to the first collected edition of Milton's prose in 1698, give a more constructive sympathetic portrait of Milton's public and private life. Although Toland did not know Milton, he did know his widow and the earlier biographers; and while he does follow the earlier biographies at times, he gives much more attention to Milton in relationship to the political and religious background. Toland's Life reveals, like the earlier biographies, that Milton undertook a part in the church government

controversy to offer his objective opinion. Toland, however, continued, stating that Milton's denouncing of the Episcopacy "was only a service to the Presbyterians by accident," for Milton did not intend "by humbling the Hierarchy, to set up the Consistorian Tribunal in the room of it." For the first time, Toland gives us an explanation concerning Milton's Presbyterianism, and later, gives an explanation regarding the Presbyterians:

> All the consequences of this Tyranny (Presbyterianism), as depriving men of their natural Liberty, stifling their Parts, introducing of Ignorance, ingrossing all advantages to One Party, and the like, were perpetually objected before the Civil Wars by the Presbyterians to the Bishops; but no sooner were they possest of the Bishops Pulpits and Power, than they exercis'd the same authority with more intolerable Rigor and Severity.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century published works on Milton turned from biography to criticism of Paradise Lost. Six editions of Paradise Lost were published before 1700, and while previous interest in Milton was primarily biographical, the new criticism placed its greatest emphasis on the religious philosophy of John Milton as expressed in Paradise Lost. Andrew Marvell published the complimentary verses, "On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost" in 1674 and John Dryden gave Milton high praise as a representative of the English heroic tradition in his criticial essays and in 1688 in an epigram:

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

This early praise had a tremendous influence in popularizing Paradise Lost, and we find the fifth and sixth editions in 1692 and 1695 "were now so well received, that notwithstanding the price of it

was four times greater than before, the sale increased double the number every year." John Dennis continued the influence in 1704 with his discussion of Paradise Lost and epic poetry in his essay "The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" and Joseph Addison strengthened the popularity in 1712 when he wrote six essays on the epic for the Spectator. The essays were issued on consecutive Saturdays and each essay dealt with Paradise Lost as a whole. These essays were followed by twelve more essays, also issued on consecutive Saturdays, each dealing with one book of Paradise Lost. Later Gilbert Burnet contributed a biographical sketch in History of His Own Times in 1724, and Samuel Johnson aroused much excitement when his series of essays on Paradise Lost were published in the Rambler in 1751 and again when his biography of Milton was published in 1779.

The years that followed produced very little criticism. The men who were considered the leading literary critics failed to produce constructive or objective criticism. The essays that were written were published as prefaces to collected works and consisted of a biography and an interpretative criticism of the work or works collected. The most notable of these early scholars were Thomas Newton, Thomas Burgess, John Mitford, Thomas Birch, Elizah Fenton, and John and Henry Richter. It was still conceived, however, that John Milton was an orthodox Christian of the Calvinistic faith. De Doctrina Christiana being unpublished, few critics or scholars realized the Arian tendencies in Milton's theology, and while his Arminianism, if it were realized, did no harm to the prevailing Anglican belief, it was usually passed unnoticed even by persons of Calvinistic background. Paradise Lost appealed equally to all sects and in 1792 it was maintained that the epic poem had "contributed

more to support the orthodox creed than all the books of divinity that were ever written."

It was generally conceived that as an orthodox Christian of the Calvinistic faith, John Milton had allied himself with the Presbyterians during the church government controversy. His five anti-Episcopal pamphlets had committed him to the Puritan Root and Branch Party and since Presbyterianism was the dominating force within the Party, it was conceived that Milton was a Presbyterian at this time. Throughout almost two centuries writers regarded Milton's Presbyterianism as an accepted fact, and it was not until David Masson's seven volume Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time, that any concrete analysis was presented. Masson concluded that Milton advocated a Presbyterian form of church government similar to the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland, later accepting Scottish Presbyterianism as established by the Westminster Assembly in 1643, and finally breaking with his adopted religion when they, the Presbyterians, attacked the divorce pamphlets. The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, the first of the divorce pamphlets, was printed and on sale 1 August 1643. That Milton wrote this pamphlet, and the belief that he wrote the later divorce pamphlets, as a result of his marital difficulties, will long be a minor point of controversy. The more important controversy developed during the following months when the divorce pamphlets became the object of adverse criticism. Masson's account of this criticism can hardly be refuted, but Masson and other scholars are certain that the outcry against Milton's divorce pamphlets by the Presbyterians drove Milton into the society of the Independents who had begun to detest and fear the rise of Presbyterianism. Thus, scholars

presented Milton not only as one who was Calvinistic in doctrine, but also as one who accepted Calvin's ideas of a highly organized church—the Presbyterian discipline. Such accusations, they contended, were substantiated in Milton's works prior to 1644, and even though he expressed orthodox and Calvinistic views in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, it was still conceived that Milton broke with his adopted Presbyterian religion because of repeated attacks on the divorce pamphlets.

De Doctrina Christiana came to light in 1823 and, after its translation by Charles Sumner, was published in 1825. No one had attempted anything more than a theological interpretation of Milton's poetry, and it would appear that with the discovery of the treatise, Miltonian scholarship would flourish and the attitudes of the scholars and the general public would be considerably altered. However, De Doctrina Christiana met with indifference and a document that should have proven a valuable commentary on the religious doctrine underlying Milton's poetry was set aside, and Milton's poetic craftsmanship became the primary object of every critic.

During the years that followed its publication interest in Milton as a controversialist became secondary to the interest in him as a poet. Slowly the scholars developed their theories and have long since been involved in a controversy that had not existed before 1823. In a preface to "Of True Religion and Heresy, Schism, Toleration" in Protestant Union, in 1827, Thomas Burgess, Bishop of Salisbury, tried to establish evidence of Milton's orthodoxy and to deny the genuineness of De Doctrina Christiana. Sumner, however, presented evidence to prove the authenticity of De Doctrina Christiana and that Milton was the author. After establishment of its authenticity, the treatise fully proved what had

been partially and reluctantly suspected before: John Milton had departed from the current Protestant orthodoxy in certain important respects. His radical views on divorce were quite evident, but in some of the more important points of faith, he revealed a bold independence of mind. He modified the doctrine of predestination; he refused the Son equal status with the Father; he asserted that God created the Universe, not out of nothing, but out of Himself; to this form of materialism he added the belief that God endowed matter with the principle of life and thought; and that the body and soul in man were one, not two. These were Milton's most fundamental beliefs and, strikingly enough, there was an elaboration and classification of these unorthodox views in the early parts of De Doctrina Christiana, and on them are based many of the doctrines advanced in the latter portions of the systematic theology. They concern God and His efficiency as manifested in His decrees, in generation, and in creation; and discuss the nature of God, predestination, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the creation of the visible and invisible Universe.

De Doctrina Christiana definitely established Milton's unorthodox religious beliefs. Immediately following its discovery, however, scholars revealed little interest in the treatise as a commentary on Milton's poetry and prose. The more important scholarly issue was centered around establishing when De Doctrina Christiana was written. After 1823, beginning with Burgess's attempt to deny the genuineness of De Doctrina Christiana and Sumner's proof of its authenticity, scholars were long involved in this Miltonian controversy. Early writers attempted to prove that Milton's religious views were unorthodox in his youth, and it was not until the poet reached maturity that his views became orthodox. These writers contended that the treatise was probably composed

during the first years after his return from Italy and was the substance of familiar lectures on theology to his students. These critics advanced three main theories for the date of De Doctrina Christiana: 1639-1642, 1643-1645, and 1642-1649. (Rufus Griswold felt so depressed about De Doctrina Christiana, a document he felt Milton would never have given to the press himself and which, he felt even stronger, was "on every account" less worthy of praise than any of his other writings, that he did not include the work in his edition of Milton's prose in 1851.)

More recent writers, however, dealing with Milton's theological ideas, have argued that Milton was orthodox in his youth and developed unorthodox views in later life. To support this theory scholars have attempted to reveal orthodox religious beliefs in Milton's early works, and are certain that in all his early writings he was not only perfectly orthodox, but thought of Arianism with complete abhorence. Therefore, the unorthodox statements found in Paradise Lost and De Doctrina Christiana appear to have been written during the same period, if not simultaneously, 1655-1660.

Holly Hanford has written that nothing we know about Milton or the times in which he lived is irrelevant to modern interest, and the most accidental details of his personal and literary career are worth the pains which an army of investigators has taken to assemble them. Hanford writes with scholarly authority; no major literary figure in the history of English literature was so much an intrigral part of the history of his own times as John Milton. It is the purpose of this study to examine the religious controversy, and to present, within a selective circle of almost unlimited material, a critical analysis refuting

modern scholarship concerned with identifying Milton with the Presbyterians.

Since the publication of The Life of John Milton in 1880 Masson's views of Milton have been greatly modified by later writers, with the single exception of Masson's interpretation of Milton's form of church government, and today Masson's interpretation is the only extensive one available. Most critics do not attempt to explain Milton's Presbyterianism, putting forth little effort to reveal new evidence concerning Milton's religious convictions and his relationship with the Presbyterians. They depend almost completely on conclusions reached by Masson, contending that Milton advocated a Presbyterian form of church government in the early pamphlets.

The form of church government as expressed by Milton, while it was presbyterial in structure, it was not Presbyterian or Calvinistic in nature. Modern scholars, however, fail to realize that these early pamphlets reveal a form of church government that would not have agreed with the Scottish Presbyterian form of church government and presents three principles that the Scottish Presbyterians would have opposed from the very beginning. This point of view, as we have already seen, was established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by writers primarily interested in biography. Later, Masson's biography presented a clearer and fuller picture of Milton and for the first time attempted to substantiate with analytical evidence that which had been held as truth for more than two centuries. This point of view, however, is erroneous. There is little or no concrete evidence to prove that Milton allied himself with the Presbyterians, either in discipline or in doctrine.

The religious controversy during the Puritan Revolt involved only

the question of church government and did not include religious doctrine. While there is not concrete evidence to support the theory that John Milton had allied himself with the Presbyterians there is also very little from which we can draw Milton's religious convictions. Modern scholarship has substantiated the popular concept concerning Milton's orthodoxy at this time and although seventeenth century orthodox religious doctrine was under the influence of Calvin, Milton was not a Calvinist. Thus, having presented analytically evidence to prove Milton did not have Presbyterian views concerning church discipline, it becomes necessary to approach the question of doctrine. The latter part of this study, therefore, is devoted to the examination of Milton's religious doctrine. Since authorities are not in a position at the present time to determine the development of Milton's religious beliefs, such an examination must be confined to the doctrine expressed in De Doctrina Christiana. This study proposes to compare this doctrine with a composite of orthodox Protestant doctrine in an attempt to show that even as late as 1655-1660 those points with which Milton agreed allied him with all Christian faiths, including the Presbyterians, and those points from which he departed also separated him from all Christian faiths including, again, the Presbyterians. The orthodox doctrinal views from which Milton departed in later life are very few and the majority of these seem to approach eccentricity rather than heterodoxy and we find Milton guilty of two offenses against the orthodox Protestant creed: Arianism and Armianism.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

In 1640, after eleven years of personal rule by Charles I, England was extremely weary and rebellious. The grievances that existed in certain aspects of the church system, and the men who had been instigators of these grievances, had caused considerable religious agitation, and the country was much divided over the question of church government. The main issue at this time lay between the Prelatical Party, which was the established discipline, and the nonconforming Puritans who demanded church reform and the abolition of Episcopacy. The Puritans, however, having been suppressed for many years by the rigid disciplinarianism of William Laud, had gathered support against the prelates with the publication of anti-Episcopal pamphlets by a few determined and vociferous leaders.[1] When the Long Parliament assembled on 3 November 1640, the Puritan faction demanded more than ever a reformation, and on 11 December 1640, fifteen hundred London citizens appeared at the House of Commons with the Root and Branch Petition, demanding that the Episcopal church government be

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[1]David Masson, The Life of John Milton (London, 1859-80), II (Rev. Ed., 1946), 174.

abolished.[2]

The Root and Branch attitude in 1640, however, was negative rather than positive and destructive rather than constructive, their main objective being the abolition of Episcopacy. What was to replace Episcopacy was relatively unimportant and vague until the Bishops had been removed, and it is generally conceived that the Puritan Root and Branch Party in 1640/41 was divided into two fundamentally opposed concepts.

On the one side there were the Presbyterians who felt that a complete reform of the English church was an attempt to reorganize society, and who wished to keep society organized as a church with large powers over moral and intellectual life. The recent revolt in the Scottish church in 1638 was the freshest and nearest example for imitation and the Presbyterians advocated some form of the consistorial model then established in Scotland as the best form of church government for England. There was, however, no perfect or precise agreement as to the degree of similarity.[3] On the other side there were the Independents. This group had broken earlier with the Church of England and had become a gathering of Baptists, Brownists, and a great many other sects and schisms. The Independents advocated the principle of liberty of conscience, regarding spiritual compulsion by the Presbyterians as prodigious as that of the Prelaty and regarding society as a secular nationalistic state composed on individuals bound only to civil obedience.

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[2]John R. Green, A Shorter History of the English People (New York, 1901), p. 529.

[3]Masson, II, 199.

The main principle of Independency, however, was the completeness of every congregation of believers within itself, each selecting its own office bearers and managing its own affairs independently,[4] while the Presbyterians advocated a presbyterial government with order and effective administration, declaring that Independency with its principle of toleration opened the door to all kinds of sects and schisms. Although the essential difference between the two groups was relatively small, the Presbyterians were by far the stronger group and it is probable, without the necessity of calling in Scottish aid and adopting the the Solemn League and Covenant, the Long Parliament would have established a presbyterian church government similar to the Reformed Church of Scotland.[5]

The union of church and state was universally accepted during the middle of the seventeenth century. The convenience of such a union was of fundamental importance to civil administration and to ecclesiastical administration, and it was the unanimous conviction that toleration of sects and schisms was incompatible with the successful maintenance of a state church.

During the early days of the Puritan Root and Branch Party the toleration principle must have been one of controversy, and this important issue, no doubt, had been contemplated by every party and sect comprising the Puritan Root and Branch Party. The problem, however, was not toleration, but the exceptions to the principle voiced by each

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[4] Ibid., II, 535.

[5] William A. Shaw, A History of the English Church (New York, 1900), I, 14.

party and the amount of deviation from the church that should be tolerated. If we are to believe Masson, the history of the Church of England might have been altered had a toleration principle been adopted by the Presbyterians, and there could have been toleration with an established Presbyterian State Church. Masson's proposal is essentially that advocated by the Independents. Generally this view held that it was the duty of the state to promote the formation of churches and to see that the churches organized were not wrong in doctrine or in practice. Civil authority might lawfully compel all its subjects to some sort of hearing of the Gospel with a view to their belonging to churches or congregations, and might even assist the preachers by some whip of penalties on those who remained obstinate after a due amount of hearing. This proposal, however, was not acceptable to the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians wanted toleration for themselves. Some of them went to the extreme, in preparation for the Solemn League and Covenant, advocating the substitution of Presbyterianism for Episcopacy as the state church with the prerogative of being intolerant.

After the Second Bishops War in 1641, a group of Scottish Commissioners proposed a settlement between England and Scotland that appeared before Parliament in the form of a document entitled, "Demands Toward a Treaty."[6] The eight articles included in the document called for a financial settlement on the part of England, the eighth and final article including a provision for a uniform religion in the two countries.

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[6]Hervey Woods, The History of the Presbyterian Controversy (Louisville, Ky., 1843), p. 125.

Parliament rejected the provision and within a few months Oliver Cromwell and Henry Vane introduced the Root and Branch Bill into Parliament.

In the debates that followed, the Puritan Root and Branch Party, under the leadership of Cromwell and Vane, advocated a scheme of church government that would be some modification of Scottish Presbyterianism. The form of church government that eventually grew out of the Root and Branch Bill was indefinite but it did advocate a separation of church and state, with church authority invested in representative bodies made up of ministers and lay-elders.[7]

Parliament, at this point, appeared to be ready to establish a form of presbyterian church government, when it became necessary to call in Scottish aid. The Scots were willing to aid the Long Parliament in its strife with the King if the two countries could unite in some common form of church government not essentially different from Scottish Presbyterianism. Parliament agreed to the Scottish proposal and in August, 1643, Alexander Henderson formulated the Solemn League and Covenant.

When the League and Covenant was returned to England for consideration, Parliament invited four Scottish ministers to be members of the Westminster Assembly to direct the Assembly in the strict Presbyterian direction. During the debate in the Westminster Assembly, the Independents, with the support of a few Presbyterians, stood in opposition to the Covenant and fought vigorously to prevent Scottish Presbyterianism from becoming England's adopted religion. Had there been no opposition to Scottish Presbyterianism, it would not have been necessary for Parliament to have invited Henderson and a group of Scottish ministers to

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[7]Masson, II, 234.

direct the Assembly in the strict Presbyterian direction, since it is probable that, without the necessity of calling in Scottish aid and adopting the Solemn League and Covenant, the Long Parliament would have established a presbyterian church government. But there was no alternative; Parliament was pledged to the adoption of Scottish Presbyterianism.

The League and Covenant was a reformation within the Church of England in an attempt to establish Scottish Presbyterianism, and included not only Presbyterian doctrine and church government, but also church worship and church discipline. Although Laud was no longer around to take citizens before the Star-Chamber for refusing to conform to the hated high-church, an anti-toleration principle still dominated England's church government. The Presbyterians had argued with the Independents that a toleration principle would endanger the church by encouraging sects and schisms, and in its place had advocated a limited toleration; a toleration of Presbyterians.

As the Covenant circulated through London, all members of Parliament signed; and John Milton, as a London householder also must have signed.[8] This does not prove, however, that all members of Parliament, or Milton, were in complete agreement with the Covenant or that they were satisfied with Scottish Presbyterianism. There appeared many objections to the Covenant and it was regarded as a religious and civil test, subjecting any person who did not sign it to be regarded as an enemy to religion and to his country.[9]

Milton's early anti-Episcopal tracts had been written in 1640/41

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[8] Ibid., II, 13.

[9] Woods, Presbyterian Controversy, p. 15.

when the Root and Branch cause had been the abolition of Episcopacy. The general idea of church reform at that time was indefinite, and while it was, in a sense, presbyterian, and from the Root and Branch Petition, it appears Scottish Presbyterianism was not contemplated. It is possible Milton's pamphlets were accepted by the Presbyterians because they opposed the Episcopacy. The views expressed in the pamphlets appear to be more Congregationalism than Presbyterianism, and would not have met with Scottish Presbyterian approval. On the other hand, had Milton anticipated the Solemn League and Covenant, and that Scottish Presbyterianism would replace the Episcopacy, he no doubt would have rejected it from the very beginning.

The Presbyterian State Church, as proposed for England by the Westminster Assembly in August, 1643, does not meet Milton's description of church government as outlined in the early pamphlets, and the pamphlets stand in direct conflict with the Covenant on three basic principles: (1) it denied toleration to the non-conforming sects and schisms; (2) it repudiated the doctrine of separation of church and state; and (3) it rejected democracy in church organization.

Milton had promoted the cause of Protestant toleration and it is probable he had conceived the principle long before it was expressed in the pamphlets. Milton was in strict opposition to the enforcing of any uniform belief and felt that the multitude of sects and schisms manifested "those that are sound-hearted."[10] In demanding toleration for the sects and schisms, Milton thought it much better to have a variety

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[10] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, V, 222.

of doctrine and belief than one uniformed throughout the country, secured through the suppression of free thought.[11]

Before the Solemn League and Covenant was signed, the toleration principle must have been one of controversy. While Milton writes in favor of such a principle, he does not write as one who considers himself a member of a sect or schism. If the Scottish Presbyterians had ever advocated a toleration principle in their form of church government, it is quite likely Milton would have considered and accepted Presbyterianism, and it is possible he had conceived just that, for he tells us later:

> As for the Party called Presbyterians of whom I believe very many to be good and faithful Christians though misled by some of turbulent spirit, I wish them earnestly and calmly not to fall off from their first principles.[12]

and continued, explaining that one of those first principles was toleration:

> Let them (Presbyterians) not oppose their best friends and associates, who molest them not at all, infringe not the least of their liberties, unless they call it their liberty to bind other men's consciences, but are still seeking to live at peace with them and brotherly accord.[13]

It had been argued that with the removal of Episcopacy sects and schisms would arise, and the Presbyterians who followed also fought against the principle of toleration. To grant toleration meant the release of repeated attacks against their cherished state church, and the

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[11] Ibid., V, 225.

[12] The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Columbia, V, 41.

[13] Ibid., V, 42.

Presbyterians had no desire to grant toleration to the multitude of independent sects.

Under the Episcopacy, and later under the Presbyterians, centralized authority had marked the entire governmental structure of the Church of England. The Presbyterians, however, thought that the new state church, purged of its ceremonies and consecrations, and more democratic in government, represented a victory for the reforming Puritans over the Prelates and felt that a settled state church would bring peace and harmony to England's confused population.[14]

Although Milton seemed to advocate a presbyterial church government, he was also an apostle of toleration with a dominant passion for liberty. Whereas complete toleration of sects and schisms does not mean a separation of church and state, Milton desired a toleration principle with a separation of church and state. He felt a country that fostered a state church would soon become a church state: a natural tyrant in religion and in the state the agent and minister of tyranny.

Milton at this time was a monarchist[15] and he argued in the early pamphlets that a hierarchy of power in the church was dangerous to the throne, and it was for this reason he advocated a presbyterial system of church government. Milton no doubt thought that a democratic presbyterial system would conform to the state of England, but it is evident that he did not realize the Scottish Presbyterians would enforce a state

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[14]Donald M. Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution (New York, 1941), p. 77.

[15]James H. Hanford, John Milton, Englishman (New York, 1949), p. 84.

church without toleration and would eventually be no different than the Episcopacy.

The Long Parliament, having broken with the Episcopal hierarchy, had summoned the Westminster Assembly in 1643 to advise them concerning the reformation of religion. The great majority of the Assembly was Presbyterian and disposed to follow Scottish Presbyterianism, having no more thought of toleration than had Laud himself. There were included in the Assembly, however, some representatives of the Independent Party who asked for recognition of the separatist tradition, and there were also scattered members of more democratic and sectarian groups who were rallying support for the Assembly minority.[16]

Milton no doubt responded to this Independent faction. The early tracts had advocated an individual freedom, an advocacy that had unknowingly made him an Independent from the very beginning. Thus, fully understanding the Root and Branch cause, Milton departed from it, and it became necessary that he undertake the larger Independent cause just as he had undertaken the earlier cause against the Episcopacy in 1641.

The most prominent Puritan sect during Milton's childhood was Presbyterian, and while the State Church was Anglican, the universities had fallen into the extremity of Calvinism. The pedagogues appeared to delight only in the expression of the most violent dogma.[17] Men had come to recognize, under the rule of Queen Elizabeth, that England needed a national and independent church as well as a national and independent state. Theorists were striving to denationalize religion by introducing

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[16] Ibid., p. 122.

[17] Henry D. Trail and James S. Mann, Social England (New York, 1909), Vol. V, Section I.

the Geneva System,[18] and theology was supreme in the universities.

Young John Milton became quite familiar with the history of the church controversy that had begun in 1534, when Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church and established the Anglican State Church. During the years that followed, the church controversy continued, but with relatively little contention. However, before the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the controversy broke anew: the Puritan faction began a general withdrawal from the Anglican Church, organizing individual sects and demanding a complete reformation of religion in England.

Presbyterianism, strictly speaking, was a system of church government, and was not necessarily allied to any one system of doctrine. However, history shows it so steadily inclining toward, and so generally associated with the system of doctrine commonly styled Calvinistic, as to suggest the existence of strong affinities. The Calvinistic struggle for England in the sixteenth century was victorious so far as doctrine was concerned. The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England could have been capable of a Calvinistic interpretation. Article XVII, on Predestination, was obviously Calvinistic:

> Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they be endured with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling; they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works: and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

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[18] Ibid., Vol. V, Section I.

There is no point in attempting to prove the Articles were taken from or influenced by Calvin. It is sufficient to note that a reading of the Articles shows numerous points of doctrine which are compatible with Calvinism and in which Calvin might see much of his own doctrine. The Articles are strong evidence of the maturation of Calvinistic theology in England toward the end of the sixteenth century, and of the acceptance it received in the highest circles of the Anglican Church.[19]

While Calvinism and Anglicanism held essentially the same doctrine, they differed only in the form of church government by which the identical doctrine was to be administered. But it was on the questions of worship and church government that the invasion of Calvinism was repelled, and it was for these reasons that the English Puritans proposed the abolition of Episcopacy and the establishing of a presbyterial form of church government. The arguments of the unyielding English Puritans were on points of worship and ceremony: they protested against the pontifical garments, desired to sit at communion rather than accept the kneeling position, protested the vestments, proposed alterations to the Prayer Book, and asserted the right to determine standards of discipline.

The English Puritans were thought to be the most vigorous of the religious parties, "having a great part of the best captains and soldiers on their side."[20] The extreme tenets of the Puritan group concerning church government were many: they would dissolve all gifts of bishoprics and deaneries by the monarchs, and all patronages; all ecclesiastical

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[19]Charles D. Cremeans, The Reception of Calvinistic Thought in England, Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences (Urbana, Ill.,1949), p. 76.

[20]George B. Harrison, The Elizabethan Journals (London, 1938), p. 27.

functions should be elective by the people or their elders; they would dissolve the monarch's power of final appeal in all ecclesiastical causes; all ecclesiastical causes would be made from an Eldership Consistory to a Conference, thence to a Provincial Synod, lastly to a National Synod which would be final; in all matters of the church the highest authority would belong to the eldership; and, they said, "it was unlawful for any state to tolerate the present government Ecclesiastical, for it is false, unlawful, bastardly, and unchristian and can be defended by no good and sound subject."[21]

The non-conforming Puritan theory was as thoroughly Calvinistic as Scottish Presbyterianism, but it was by no means an imitation of Scottish Calvinism during its revolutionary phase. The hope of many English Presbyterians was that the Church of England might be transformed into a presbyter structure by parliamentary action. However, from the teaching of Bucer and Knox there appeared a concept of reform that came to be called "a reduction of Episcopacy." Thomas Sampson, in a letter to William Cecil in 1573, explained and suggested that a good model for the reformed government of the English Church might be found in Martin Bucer's De Regno Christi, a book which the reformer had written for Edward VI.[22] Sampson assured Cecil that though the system outlined in this provided a church government by pastors and ministers, bishops, each with a council of presbyters, would be set over areas of twenty parishes, to maintain efficiency in preaching and discipline.

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[21]Ibid., p. 340.

[22]Cremeans, Calvinistic Thought, p. 99

They would be rid of "proud prelates" with their "great dominions," and, in the interests of effective preaching and pastoral care, would divide the dioceses "so that for every one as they be now (for the most part) be made ten."

In spite of the general agreement of the Puritans and the Church of England on Calvinistic theology, the separation of the two groups was fundamental. However, while the two parties disputed on polity, vestments and ceremonies, the Puritans tried to stay in the Church of England and maintain their loyalty to the state. They had tried to follow Calvin's counsels of moderation and had failed to bring any satisfactory reformation within the Church of England. The complete rejection of unscriptural rites and ceremonies by the Puritans, and their later animus against Episcopacy was a radicalism that was in contrast with Calvin's conciliatory attitudes in his correspondence with the Anglicans. No doubt this caused Calvin much anguish at his English disciples, and there is no evidence to conclude that Calvin would have favored what the English Puritans attempted.[23] Thus, as a minority group under the leadership of Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers, the Puritans worked out their own program of reformation. It was not until 1570, beginning with Cartwright's series of lectures at Cambridge on the Acts of the Apostles, that the Puritans made clear their concepts of the function of the church and of church government; and the Puritan emphasis upon ecclesiastical polity was given its authoritative form three years later by Walter Travers in his book, A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical

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[23]John T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism (New York, 1954), p. 314.

Discipline Out of the Word of God.[24] There was no longer any doubt as to the real conflict.

For almost seventy-five years the Puritans had been urging that the Church of England should have a purer and more Scriptural form of church government, purer doctrines, purer worship and purer living. As a result of the Root and Branch Petition the opportunity had arisen. Parliament accordingly called together the Westminster Assembly of Divines. The Assembly had not proceeded very far with its work when the tide of the First Civil War began to turn against the parliamentary forces and Parliament hurriedly sent to Scotland to seek military aid. The Scottish people agreed to send aid on the condition that all members of the Westminster Assembly and all members of Parliament sign the Solemn League and Covenant drawn up by the Scots.

With the arrival of the Scottish Commissioners and the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in September, 1643, the Assembly made a radical change in its work. Prior to this the Assembly had spent most of its time trying to revise the Thirty-nine Articles, and seemed to have no thought of making a new Confession of Faith.[25] But now the Assembly laid aside the Thirty-nine Articles and proceeded to reform the Church of England in both discipline and doctrine: (1) The Directory for the Public Worship of God was completed in December, 1644, and approved by Parliament in January, 1645; (2) The Confession of Faith was completed in December, 1646, and approved by Parliament in March, 1648; (3) The

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[24]Cremeans, Calvinistic Thought, p. 85.

[25]Walter L. Lingle, Presbyterians: Their History and Beliefs (Richmond, Va., 1944), p. 59.

Larger and Shorter Catechisms were completed in the autumn of 1647, and approved by Parliament in September, 1648; and (4) The Form of Church Government and Ordination was completed in November, 1644, and approved by Parliament in 1648.

Early in the Assembly the attention of the Divines was drawn away from other matters to settle upon a government for the church. Parliament deemed it necessary to settle this matter as quickly as possible to prevent the church from plunging into anarchy.[26] About nine months had elapsed since the passing of the bill for abolishing the Episcopal form of church government, during which time there was no form of church government in England. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find the Assembly urged to place settlement in policies of government ahead of other matters. The "Propositions" were completed within several months and were taken by the Scottish Commissioners to their own General Assembly which met in Edinburgh February 10, 1645, where they were approved.[27] It appears strange that Parliament delayed final action on the "Propositions Concerning Church Government" for so long after having so urgently laid the matter before the Assembly and after making repeated requests that the Assembly send to them such portions as they had completed.

The central feature of Presbyterianism is the government of each congregation by the minister and a council of elders chosen by the church

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[26]Dorsey D. Ellis, The Presbyterian System of Church Government: Its History and Its Characteristics (Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1954), Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation, p. 84.

[27]Ibid., p. 85.

for that purpose, and all of equal official rank and authority. This, they contended could be traced throughout the New Testament. The functions of the minister were to preach the Scriptural Word, instruct and admonish, to administer the sacraments, and with the elders, to make moral and spiritual corrections within the congregation.[28] Candidates for the pastoral office gave proof of their vocation to it, first by passing a test in doctrine and being approved in moral conduct, and second, through the stages of presentation by the ministers, acceptance by a presbyterial council, and consent of the congregation.[29]

Elders were ordained by the minister of the congregation by prayer. The elder's duties, apart from general oversight, were stated to include visiting the sick, arousing the careless, instructing the young, guiding and encouraging inquirers, and edifying and comforting believers.[30] The Sessions delegated the elders of a congregation to the higher courts, and all ministers in office were members of the General Assembly.

The spiritual oversight of each congregation was committed to the minister and to the elders. This first unit of church discipline, the congregational Presbytery, was made up from one large congregation or two or three smaller associated congregations. This congregational Presbytery was called the Session. The minister had his own duties to perform as teacher and preacher, but in the matter of rule, he had no

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[28]McNeill, Calvinism, p. 161.

[29]Ibid., p. 161.

[30]G. D. Henderson, Presbyterianism (Aberdeen, England, 1954), p. 145.

individual authority, but acted as moderator of the Session, with no deliberative but a casting vote.[31]

Its representative system of government enabled Presbyterianism to maintain the unity of the church over a wide area. England was to be divided into many districts, in each of which the approximately twelve congregations, the strong and the weak, were bound together equally under the common administration of the Classis. The Classis was composed of the minister and one or more elders elected by the Session, of each congregation within the district. An appeal from all decisions of a Session was to the Classis. Likewise, while the ministers were elected by their respective congregations, they held office by the authority of the Classis, and were accountable to the Classis alone for the discharge of their duties.

Similarly, the Classis were grouped together to form the third unit, the Province, or the Synod. The Synod was composed of approximately twelve Classis and included all the Sessions in each Classis. The Synods combined to form the General Assembly, which in most cases consisted of the ministers and representative elders of a certain proportion— a half, a third, or a fourth—of the congregations in each Classis, in rotation.

The minister and elders from each congregation were to meet in congregational Presbytery, the Session, once a week and in a Classis once a month. The Synods met twice a year and the General Assembly, the Supreme Court of the Presbyterian Church, met in nearly all cases once a year or as often as Parliament should decide.[32] The decisions of the various

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[31]Masson, III, 51.

[32]Ibid., III, 53.

representative assemblies were to be binding on members within their jurisdiction, and the General Assembly was to be the final court of appeal, its decisions and acts being binding on individuals, congregations, and the Nation, the fourth unit of the Presbyterian Church. Through this gradation of representative courts the Presbyterian polity enabled the church to maintain its organic unity, conformity, and control over the widest area desirable.

CHAPTER TWO

"Lycidas"

John Milton revealed strong anti-Episcopal feelings in "Lycidas" in 1638 before departing for Italy, and there appears to be little doubt that he sided with the Root and Branch Party from the very beginning. "Lycidas" was Milton's first work in three years. Although "Comus" had been published in 1637, it had been written in 1634, and from that date until he wrote "Lycidas" in 1637, and from 1637 until he wrote Of Reformation in 1641, Milton wrote nothing as far as we know. "Lycidas," therefore, stands in the center of an otherwise vacant seven year period. In "Lycidas" there is a twenty-nine line digression on Episcopacy[1] that reveals evidence to conclude that Milton was dissatisfied with the Church of England, and that he already had a bitter hatred for the Episcopal clergy. It is even suggested that this digression represents both a conclusion and a prelude in Milton's life: a conclusion to the Cambridge Period and a prelude to the ecclesiastical controversy.

The prose statement at the beginning of "Lycidas,"

> In this Monody the author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester

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[1] "Lycidas," Columbia, I, 80-81, ll. 103-131.

> on the Irish Seas, 1637; and by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height.

was not printed in 1638 when the poem was published in Justa Edovardo King, but was added in 1645 when the first volume of Milton's poetry was published. Since "Lycidas" did not have a wide circulation in 1638, Milton probably wished to announce that he had foretold the ruin of the prelates. Milton, however, was not the first to foretell the ruin of the prelates. On Friday, 25 August 1637, there was fastened to the north gate of St. Paul's,

> The government of the Church of England is a candle in the snuff, going out in a stench.[2]

It is quite possible Milton heard of this action, and the note referring to William Laud as the "arch-Wolf," on one of his frequent trips to London. Such gallantry could have given Milton the idea for this allegorical satire.

The digression is typical of pastoral poetry but Milton's satirical use of the digression is a masterpiece. In using St. Peter to attack the clergy, Milton is speaking through the identical person whose words had been misinterpreted to establish Papacy. Not only is Milton speaking, denouncing and foretelling the ruin of Episcopacy, but St. Peter is also speaking, denouncing the very people who esteem him as the first Bishop of Rome, because they have misinterpreted his real significance and the true form of church government as decreed by God.

St. Peter was the Apostle to whom Christ had committed the

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[2]"The Diary of William Laud," Seventeenth Century Prose and Poetry (New York, 1929), eds. Robert P. T. Coffin and Alexander M. Witherspoon (Rev. Ed., 1946), p. 150.

guardianship of His church and was esteemed by early Christians as the first Bishop of Rome. Therefore, every succeeding Bishop of Rome was an immediate successor to Peter, and it was believed that his position was identical with that to Peter as primate of the Universal Church, and that he was also endowed by the Savior with the same prerogatives as was Peter.[3] Striking at the prelates through the voice of their beloved first Bishop, Milton was not being hypocritical. He recognized the fact that this position rested primarily on Biblical and historical texts and was both dogmatic and traditional. In The Reason of Church Government he tells us:

> No less to the contempt of him whom they feign to be the archfounder of prelaty, St. Peter, who, by what he writes in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, should seem to be for another man than tradition reports him: there he commits to the presbyters only full authority, both of feeding the flock and episcopating; and commands that obedience be given to them as to the mighty hand of God, which is his mighty ordinance. Yet all this was as nothing to repel the venturous boldness of innovation that ensued, changing the decrees of God that are immutable, as if they had been breathed by man.[4]

Milton, in satirizing the corrupt clergy in "Lycidas," thought the bishops were violating not only the decrees of God, but the commands of St. Peter as well; for Peter in addressing his fellow elders in the fifth chapter of his first epistle told them:

> Tend the flock of God that is your charge not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in

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[3]An Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Vergillius T. A. Ferm (New York, 1945), p. 579.

[4]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 193.

your charge but being examples to the flock.

St. Peter was not a shepherd by occupation, but a fisherman, "the Pilot of the Galilean Lake." Christ bade him to relinquish this occupation as a fisherman and "henceforth you will be catching men." According to Biblical texts Christ gave Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" and in so doing, according to tradition and dogma, gave him unified and unqualified executive power. Milton had this in mind when he wrote:

> Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
> (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain)

Immediately after this, Milton presents St. Peter carrying "two massy keys" shaking his "mitred locks" preparing to denounce the prelates. What could be more satirical?

The following two lines:

> Anow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
> Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold.

reveal that Milton was not at all satisfied with the clergy or the method of taking ministerial orders in the Church of England. Ruskin interprets these lines:

> First those who "creep" into the fold, who do not care for office, nor name, but for secret influence, and do all things occultly and cunningly, consenting to any servility of office or conduct, so only that they may intimately discern, and unawares direct, the minds of men. Then those who "intrude" themselves into the fold, who, by natural insolence of heart, and stout eloquence on tongue, fearlessly perseverant self-assertion, obtain hearing and authority with the common crowd. Lastly those who "climb", who, by labor and learning both stout and sound, but selfishly asserted in the cause of their own ambition, gain high dignities and authorities, and become "lords over the heritage", though not "ensamples to the flock."

And in writing these lines Milton must have had the following Biblical

verse, John 10:1, near at hand:

> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheep fold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

From the following lines:

> Of other care they little reckoning make
> Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
> And shove away the worthy bidden guest.

Milton reveals a strong resentment toward the bishops who were not fulfilling their duty and responsibility to the people, and who were dependent on the "whore Plurality" to benefit themselves.

In The Reason of Church Government Milton was to express the belief that "discipline is the practice work of preaching directed and applied" and the most important factor in church government. In "Lycidas," five years before The Reason of Church Government, Milton expressed:

> Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how
> to hold
> A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the
> least,
> That to the faithful Herdman's art belongs!

There is no doubt he is addressing the bishops. Ruskin interprets "Blind mouths!"

> A "bishop" means "a person who sees." A "pastor" means "a person who feeds." The most unbishoply character a man can have is, therefore, to be blind. The most unpastoral is instead of feeding, to want to be fed, — to be a mouth. Take the two reverses together, and you have "blind mouths."

While Milton felt discipline was the most important factor in church government he also felt discipline was the only removal of disorder in the church, and that the bishops with their "sheep-hook(s)," were not fulfilling the commands of St. Peter nor their obligation to the people. Milton continues the attack:

> What recks it them? What need they?
> They are sped;
> And, when they list, their lean and
> fleshy songs
> Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched
> straw;

blasting the clergy for their utter disregard of their church duties and their preaching of insipid sermons.

When Christ bade St. Peter, "Feed my Sheep," Peter became the shepherd of His flock. Peter, as the first Bishop of Rome, and his successors, the Bishops, were to be, according to traditional texts, the spiritual parents of the sheep. That Christ refers to the sheep as His people and to doctrine as the spiritual food is evident from the whole context, and there is no doubt Milton had this in mind when he and Peter spoke together:

> The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
> But swoln with wind and rank mist they draw,
> Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;

and there is no doubt Milton had in mind the false doctrine of the prelates and is referring to the multitude of conversions that the church had won.

In the following lines:

> Besides what the grim Wolf with privy paw
> Daily devours apace, and nothing said,

Milton could very well be centering his attack more specifically. Before this Milton had centered his attack on the prelates in general, but now he directs his attack on the anti-tolerant William Laud, the "grim Wolf."[5] This is usually said to be the Roman Catholic Church. Laud, the

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[5]Thomas Newton, Paradise Lost, 7th ed. (London, 1777), p. vii.

Archbishop of Canterbury since 1633, was crushing the Puritans and other non-conforming sects with his "privy paw," the Star-Chamber, and was terrorizing the country with his Reign of Thorough. On 7 July 1637 one of these sects pasted a short note on the cross in Cheapside referring to Laud as the "Arch Wolf of Canterbury."[6] Newton does not substantiate this assertion. He writes:

> ...(Milton) seems to have first discovered his acrimony against Archbishop Laud, and to threaten him with the loss of his head, which afterwards happen'd to him thro' the fury of his enemies. At least I can think of no sense so proper to be given to the verses in Lycidas.

The concluding lines,

> But that two-handed engine at the door,
> Stands ready to smite once and smite no more.

are obscure, and although they are open to various interpretations, I accept David Masson's theory that Milton uses the "two-handed engine" to refer to the Long Parliament.[7] This is Milton's prognostication that the Episcopacy would be abolished, and at that time there was only one way to do this and smite Laud and the Star-Chamber: the Long Parliament. In foretelling the abolishment of Episcopacy in 1637, Milton was already anti-Episcopal, thinking as a Puritan Root and Branch Party member.

The Root and Branch Party during the Puritan Revolt was a composite of many religious groups. It appears that Puritan thought may be said to have started with a concept of the function of the church. For almost a century the Puritans conceived the church as God's instrument for the

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[6]"The Diary of William Laud," p. 150.

[7]Masson, I, 657.

santification of human life. Ecclesiastical organization existed to secure right preaching of the Word and right administration of the sacraments, and for the establishment of a moral discipline for all.

In seventeenth century England Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents agreed that a form of church government was ordained by God, and so obligatory for all, but they differed as to which of these three systems was exclusively prescribed in the Scriptures. Many Puritans were, or later became, Presbyterian in their views of church discipline. Many joined with the Independents.

The Independents maintained as a fundamental principle that every society of believers united for worship and religious fellowship was a perfect church within itself. They felt they possessed full power to regulate their own affairs and thus be independent of all external control. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Independents had become a gathering of Baptists, Brownists, Congregationalists, Quakers, and a great many other sects and schisms. The Independents as a composite of many religious groups thought that, in spite of the eldership, the priesthood of believers was not sufficiently recognized in Presbyterianism. They felt this system was too forceful and neglected the covenant idea, and that the emphasis upon unity and conformity through the Presbyterian courts spelt tyranny once again.

The essential differences between the English Presbyterians and the Independents were relatively small. The Puritans had been suppressed for many years and the various religious sects in the Root and Branch Party overlooked any differences or opinion concerning church government in an attempt to abolish Episcopacy. It seems, too, that had it not been

for the necessity of calling in Scottish aid and adopting the Solemn League and Covenant, the Long Parliament, through the Westminster Assembly, would have established a presbyterial form of church government and granted toleration to the multitude of independent sects and schisms then in England.

John Milton had revealed himself as anti-Episcopal. He was a Puritan. He was also a member of the Root and Branch Party. However, there is no evidence to prove or to conclude that John Milton held Presbyterian views as a Puritan and as a member of the Root and Branch Party.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ANTI-EPISCOPAL PAMPHLETS

In the spring of 1638 Milton left England on a journey to the continent in order to complete his formal education. In the summer of 1639 rumors reached him in Italy concerning the controversy at home and he returned to England immediately. The first of Milton's five anti-Episcopal pamphlets did not appear until 1641, but there seems to be little doubt he was attracted to the Puritan Root and Branch Party because it was the marching force against Episcopacy, and his primary purpose in writing the anti-Episcopal pamphlets was to aid the Puritan Root and Branch Party in their attempt to abolish Episcopacy. Hundreds of anti-Episcopal pamphlets had been published during the Root and Branch debate. These pamphlets either bitterly denounced Episcopacy or advocated a form of church government to replace the outgoing Episcopacy. Milton was in complete agreement with those pamphlets that denounced the Episcopacy for he himself had written three such pamphlets.

The first, entitled, Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England, And the Causes that hitherto have hindered it; Two Books Written to a Friend, was vigorously written in the light of Milton's scholarly historical studies. He vehemently denounced the prelates and all

their works, arguing systematically against the established Episcopacy. Milton attempted to show that the original Reformation in England for some various reasons was incomplete, and he discussed the three chief causes that had hindered England's consent to the Reformation in a comprehensive history of the English church. Milton concluded that Episcopacy, "the new-vomited paganism of sensual idolatry," must be abolished if the Reformation was to be completed in England. Hanford writes that this pamphlet is essentially one of Calvinism and that while Milton was primarily interested in getting rid of the bishops and did not elaborate on a system of church government, he did suggest that the English church be brought into unity with the Reformed Church of Scotland.[1]

> ... and come from schisms to unity with our neighbor reformed sister churches, which with the blessing of peace and pure doctrine have now long time flourished.[2]

Tillyard, likewise, writes that Milton could see nothing but good in his future abhorrences, the monarchy and the Scottish form of church government.[3] Certainly there is no evidence to conclude that Milton is specifically referring to Scottish Presbyterianism. His purpose in writing the pamphlets was to solve England's religious problems by completing the Reformation.

> ... for, albeit in purity of doctrine we agree with our brethren; yet in discipline———we are no better than a schism from all the Reformation, and a sore scandal to them.[4]

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[1]James H. Hanford, A Milton Handbook, 4th ed. (New York, 1946), p. 79.

[2]Of Reformation, Columbia, III, 62.

[3]E. M. W. Tillyard, Milton, 3rd ed. (London, 1946), p. 127.

[4]Of Reformation, Columbia, III, 6.

The distinct feature of Presbyterianism is its form of church government. Presbyterianism is so called because it is the system that entrusts the rule of the church to presbyters, i.e. elders, 'presbyter' being a transliteration of the Greek word meaning 'elder.' During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was no necessary connection between presbyterian government and any particular form of creed, and Calvinistic doctrine was held by churches that were not presbyterian, as, for an example, by the Church of England, whose Thirty-nine Articles were as Calvinistic as the Westminster Confession of Faith. And it was equally true, almost without exception, that the presbyterian churches did not necessarily hold the same creed.[5] Milton looked to the reformed churches on the continent: the Swiss, the Hollanders, the Grizons, the French, who had a monarchy to live under as well as England. These countries might have a presbyterian form of church government, a government of elders with organic unity of the church through a gradation of representative courts. They were not necessarily Calvinists.

Milton's basic argument in this pamphlet was centered around the assertion that church government must conform to civil polity and that the only form of church government agreeable to monarchy was that of bishops. In his discussion we find Milton a monarchist, desiring to free the King as well as the people from the prelate's yoke. The essence of monarchy, according to Milton, was the supremacy of the King and the liberty of the people. Episcopacy tends to destroy monarchy,

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[5]Woods, Presbyterian Controversy, p. 127.

and Episcopacy, or any state church, is incompatible with civil and religious liberty. Thus, to solve the problem of Reformation Milton would separate church and state.

> Must church-government that is appointed in the gospel, and has chief respect to the soul, be conformable and pliant to civil, that is arbitrary, and chiefly conversant about the visible and external part of man?[6]

The minister's position is:

> ... to teach men the Christian faith, to exhort all, to encourage the good, to admonish the bad, privately the less offender, publicly the scandalous and stubborn.[7]

To do more than this would go beyond church authority and if the minister correctly administered to the people, civil government would be easier for the magistrate. There would be no necessity in what Milton calls "linking the one with the other in a special conformation."

Hanford is correct in stating that Milton does not elaborate on a system of church government in this pamphlet, but, since a state religion was abhorrent to him and he advocated a separation of church and state, it must follow that the basis of his theory would be a democratic presbyter church government. He was already an apostle of toleration sympathizing with the multitude of non-conforming sects and schisms. Milton did not elaborate this principle, but he did attack the Episcopacy and the Libertines, "the reduction in Episcopacy," for their lack of toleration. The toleration principle was certainly important. Scottish Presbyterianism asserted that it was so satisfactory a system of church government, keeping

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[6] Of Reformation, Columbia, III, 39.

[7] Ibid., III, 40.

the souls of its subjects in such a strong grip, that wherever it existed toleration would be unnecessary since there would be very little error to tolerate.[8] Sir Henry Vane, the Younger, notorious for his advanced religious views, and Oliver Cromwell, the rising young Independent, leaders during the Root and Branch debate, would not agree with such an ambiguous principle. Vane and Cromwell, like Milton, had not advocated a form of church government to replace Episcopacy, but they had advocated toleration. Vane, Milton, and Cromwell, too, at this time, did not wish to establish any form of State Church, and there is even evidence to conclude that Cromwell was not in favor of Scottish Presbyterianism. The only Cromwell letter of this period[9] is addressed to a book seller and asks for a copy of printed "reasons of the Scots to enforce their desire of uniformity in religion" and concludes, "I would peruse it against we fall upon the debate, which will be speedily."

The second pamphlet, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical times by virtue of those Testimonies which are alleged to that Purpose in some Late Treatises; One whereof goes under the Name of James, Archbishop of Armagh, followed the first pamphlet immediately. The title sufficiently explains the content, and Milton concluded that Episcopacy cannot be deduced from apostolical times. Therefore, since Episcopacy is of human constitution,

> ... we have the same human privilege that all men have ever had since Adam, being born free, and in the mistress island of all the British, to retain

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[8]Masson, III, 108.

[9]Charles H. Firth, Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England (London, 1907), p. 55.

> this episcopacy, or to remove it, consulting our occasions and conveniences...[10]

While Milton was in complete agreement with those pamphlets that denounced the Episcopacy, he was not in agreement with those pamphlets that proposed a form of church government to replace Episcopacy. In Of Prelatical Episcopacy Milton personally denounced this group[11] and we find the third and fifth pamphlets, Animadversions Upon the Remonstrant's Defence Against Smectymnus and An Apology For Smectymnus, a personal defense against those who in turn had attacked the earlier pamphlet, Smectymnus. Because of this they have but little value; however, the most important pamphlets proposing a form of church government to replace Episcopacy were published by Oxford University entitled, Certaine Briefe Treatises Written by Diverse Learned Men, Concerning the Ancient and Moderne Government of the Church, and Milton wrote his fourth pamphlet, The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty, for the sole purpose of denouncing those "wretched projectors...that bescrawal their pamphlets every day with new forms of government for our church."[12]

These pamphlets undertook a common cause but Milton felt the question of church government was not left to the conjecture, invention, or descretion of men. He contended that church government was outlined in the Bible, and The Reason of Church Government was not so much to advocate Scottish Presbyterianism as it was Milton's attempt to present the form of church government he considered "ordained and set out to us by the

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[10] Of Prelatical Episcopacy, Columbia, III, 81.

[11] Ibid., III, 82-83.

[12] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 186.

appointment of God in the Scriptures."[13] Milton confessed in the preface, however, that the form of church government is "not formally and professedly set down"[14] but is revealed by implication, and for this reason, therefore, we are not surprised to find Milton's interpretation of church government vague and ambiguous.

Masson's seven volume biography is the fullest picture of Milton and contemporary seventeenth century England. In this biography Masson asserts without hesitation that Milton was "a kind of Presbyterian," desiring a form of church government in England similar to the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland.[15] Masson's analysis of Milton's Presbyterianism is based on The Reason of Church Government and the evidence presented is a personal interpretation of this pamphlet well supported with specific quotations. The quotations are taken out of context to support the biographer's own interpretation and he concludes that Milton for the first time presented the form of church government he would like to see replace the Episcopacy.

Masson writes that Milton's argument concerning church government was primarily one in which he was advocating Presbyterianism to replace Episcopacy and he quotes Milton at the very beginning of his discussion as writing "whether it ought to be Presbyterian, or Prelatical,"[16] asserting that Milton believed "One of these, and none other, is of God's

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[13] Ibid., III, 184.

[14] Ibid., III, 184.

[15] Masson, II, 376.

[16] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 182.

ordaining."[17] It seems doubtful Milton believed Presbyterianism, or any specific religion, was of God's ordaining and could be found evident in the gospel, and Masson himself in conclusion makes haste in conceding that Milton's theory of church government does not agree on all points with the Scottish system and that there is some taint of Independency.[18]

Since 1880, however, Masson's views of Milton have been greatly modified by later writers, with the single exception of Masson's interpretation of Milton's form of church government, and today Masson's interpretation is the only extensive one available. Most critics do not attempt to explain Milton's Presbyterianism, putting forth little effort to reveal new evidence concerning Milton's religious convictions and his relationship with the Presbyterians. They depend completely on conclusions reached by Masson, contending that Milton advocated Scottish Presbyterianism in the early pamphlets. They, too, however, fail to realize that these early pamphlets reveal a form of church government that would not have agreed with the Scottish Presbyterians and present three principles that the Scottish Presbyterians would have opposed from the very beginning.

Milton's anti-Episcopal pamphlets had advocated Reformation, but were not necessarily pro-Presbyterian; his cause had been the Root and Branch cause: complete Reformation beginning with the abolition of Episcopacy. Milton departed from the Anglican Church in abandoning the idea of ecclesiastical hierarchy and in admitting no definite prescriptive form of church government. His departure from the Anglican Church did not

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[17]Ibid., III, 195.

[18]Masson, II, 381.

necessarily mean that he adopted or advocated Scottish Presbyterianism, nor does it imply that he held the Calvinist doctrine as his own.

Wilbur Gilman maintains Milton's early pamphlets were Puritan in that they were written to inspire confidence in Presbyterian doctrine and discipline, and that they had for their specific problem proof that Scottish Presbyterianism was the expedient form of church government for England.[19] Many scholars have more or less expressed this view,[20] assuming Milton, the Puritan, had complete understanding of Scottish Presbyterianism, that it would solve England's religious problems and result in greater happiness, security, freedom, and justice for the individual by completing the Reformation. Belloc explains that Milton's Puritanism was special to himself; as an opportunist[21] he was attracted to it because he was by nature rebellious and combative, and the Puritan faction was the rebellious and combative side of England marching against Episcopacy.[22]

Denis Saurat writes that Milton in 1642, as a spokesman for the Puritan faction, was a "wholehearted Presbyterian."

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[19]Wilbur E. Gilman, Milton's Rhetoric: Studies in His Defense of Liberty (Columbia, Missouri, 1939), The University of Missouri Press, XIV (No. 3), 75.

[20]Logan Pearsall Smith, Milton and His Modern Critics (Boston, 1944); Edward Dowden, Transcripts and Studies (London, 1910); Mark Pattison, Milton (New York, 1880); Sir Walter Raleigh, John Milton (New York, 1900); Barrett Wendell, The Temper of the XVIIth Century in English Literature (New York, 1909); Hiram Corson, John Milton (New York, 1899).

[21]Hilaire P. Belloc, Milton (Philadelphia, 1935), p. 146.

[22]Ibid., p. 14.

> ...I shall...hope through the mercy and grace of Christ, the head and husband of His Church, that England shortly is to belong, neither to see patriarchal nor see prelatical, but to the faithful feeding which the blessed apostles constituted throughout the churches; and this, I shall essay to prove can be no other than that of Presbyters and Deacons.[23]

Continuing, Saurat states that Milton from the above reference advocated Presbyterianism, identifying himself with a cause without knowing exactly what the cause was. Later, this proves to be not so much Presbyterianism as it was Milton's own personality as an individual to think as he liked; and, Saurat concludes, it is Milton's egotism that is the champion of Presbyterianism.[24]

Tillyard disagrees with Saurat on this point, asserting that it was Milton's poor judgement of Presbyterianism and not his strength of mind that was at fault during the writings of the early anti-Episcopal pamphlets. Tillyard goes a step further, saying that Milton was almost blind to everything but abolishing Episcopacy, seeing nothing but good in the Scottish form of church government.[25] Belloc, too, feels that it was not until Milton engaged in the church controversy that the Calvinistic side of him developed.[26] The controversy at this time primarily involved church discipline. Milton was quite satisfied with the prevailing doctrine and it was only in discipline that England was considered

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[23]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 183.

[24]Denis Saurat, Milton: Man and Thinker (London, 1924), p. 41.

[25]Tillyard, Milton, p. 158.

[26]Belloc, Milton, p. 42.

no better than a schism from the Reformation. Belloc has already ascertained Milton's Puritanism, but it is also Belloc who points out that the Puritan faction among the English people were those individuals who were under the influence of Calvinistic doctrine and not those who accepted Calvin's ideas of a highly organized church, the Presbyterian discipline.[27]

Holly Hanford agrees with Saurat that the logic of Milton's position at this time, as he afterward found, leads through Presbyterianism to Independency and finally to Individualism. Hanford, however, continues his explanation also supporting Tillyard and the inconsistent Belloc. In the anti-Episcopal pamphlets, however far his opinions may already have gone, he allied himself with the orthodox Presbyterian cause and he speaks of the Scots in terms of friendly admiration.[28] Hanford writes, as does Masson, that while Milton commits himself to the Presbyterian cause in the earlier pamphlets, it is not until The Reason of Church Government that he comes out openly in favor of Scottish Presbyterianism, arguing systematically that Presbyterianism rather than the Episcopal system is the one prescribed in the gospel.[29] Haller, too, suggests that Milton writes for the most part as one committed to the Presbyterian point of view, and that his basic argument supports this system of church government as "the one right discipline divinely ordered

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[27]Ibid., p. 14.

[28]Hanford, A Milton Handbook, pp. 84-85.

[29]Hanford, John Milton, Englishman, p. 108.

and prescribed by scripture."[30]

There appears to be little doubt Milton undertook the Puritan Root and Branch cause, and it is probable he would have agreed on a democratic presbyterian form of church government if it had separated church and state and had granted toleration to sects and schisms. It is even possible that this form of church government might have been called presbyterian, though in a sense very different from the meaning usually conveyed by the seventeenth century term. However, that Milton advocated a form of church government similar to the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland and later accepted Scottish Presbyterianism as proposed by the Westminster Assembly, we are not certain, since the anti-Episcopal pamphlets reveal evidence to conclude that Milton would have opposed the Solemn League and Covenant and Scottish Presbyterianism long before it had been debated by the Assembly and adopted by the Long Parliament.

In writing the anti-Episcopal tracts Milton did not regard himself as a member of any sect or schism. His point of view was not entirely objective but his faith was individualistically deduced from Scripture. Milton's reason for church government was that "God hath so commanded" and he declared the question of church government "whether it ought to be Presbyterian or Prelatical."[31] Which of these, the democratic or hierarchical constitution of church government, can prove itself to be supported by God's command? He does not declare the question of church government to be specifically one between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism

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[30]William Haller, Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution (New York, 1934), IV, 109.

[31]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 182.

as Masson and others have us believe when they misinterpret Milton as writing "whether it ought to be Presbyterian or Prelatical." Milton stated the ordinances of a democratic church as outlined in the Bible and in expressing his form of church government, although he used the Episcopacy as a definite singular comparison, he did not restrict himself to advocating Presbyterianism. He expressed the hope that the form of church government that replaced the Episcopacy would not continue in its footsteps.

In the Episcopal form of church government the archbishop was appointed by the King, who in turn appointed bishops, they in turn governing both the church and state. In the Episcopal Church the presbyter was a minister of the second order, being one of a number of officers who had the oversight and management of the affairs of a local church or congregation. The bishops, or prelates, were an order in the church above the presbyters, or ministers. Milton writes that there was no "difference between a bishop and a presbyter, save that they be two names to signify the same order."[32] This point of view is supported by religious authorities and The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles; in the language of the New Testament the same officer in the church is called indifferently 'Bishop' and 'Elder' and 'Presbyter.' However, as a result of tradition and dogma, the bishops had been placed in an order above the presbyters, and in his argument Milton stated not that church government should be Presbyterian, but that church government should be presbyterian, "between the hands of the ministers."[33]

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[32] Of Prelatical Episcopacy, III, 81.

[33] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 188.

In avowing his preference for the democratic over the hierarchical constitution of church government, Masson regards Milton as declaring for Presbyterianism and contributing to the formation of a Presbyterian church that would unite England and Scotland. In so doing, Masson assumed Milton's form of church government was Presbyterian and that the Scottish Presbyterians would have accepted it, for Masson tells us:

> This was a writer (Milton) at whom the Scottish Presbyterian leaders, Henderson, Baillie, Rutherford, and Gillespie, might look with interest. Might they not think of him as likely to aid them in the task which they had so much at heart and on behalf of which they too, were printing pamphlets in London.[34]

Masson overlooks the fact that Milton's form of church government was essentially Congregationalism and that if The Reason of Church Government had appeared simultaneously with the Solemn League and Covenant, there would have been a devastating conflict.

In examining Milton's alleged Presbyterianism Masson states that Milton thought General Assemblies should be the courts of last resort in cases of church dispute, and that such assemblies would be led up to by the smaller and local bodies, the Session, the Presbytery, and the Provincial Synod, each acting on the principle of free debate and vote. Milton does advocate councils to settle disputes within the congregation and he does mention General Assemblies, but he does not mention the two intermediate assemblies, the Presbytery and the Provincial Synod, the most important in the Presbyterian form of church government. Each parish would in itself be the unit of organization with the parishes, when necessary, organizing themselves into a General Assembly.

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[34]Masson, II, 382.

> Of such a council as this every parochial consistory is a right homogeneous and constituting part, being in itself, as it were, a little synod, and towards a general assembly moving upon her own basis in an even and firm progression, as those smaller squares in battle unite in one great cube, the main phalanx an emblem of truth and steadfastness.[35]

Milton significantly omits the intermediate assemblies and, according to Wolfe, this omission is indicative of Milton's distrust of any hierarchy and of the Scottish Presbyterian form of church government.[36]

Since Milton did not imply he was not contemplating the intermediate assemblies, Masson suggests, "from his language it may indeed be construed to imply that he had such in his mind."[37] Milton's proposal, however, appears to be more Congregationalism than Presbyterianism, and from his language it may be construed to imply Milton was not contemplating these assemblies.

Masson takes pride occasionally in pointing out that Milton in his discussion of church government makes use of the same terms as do the Scottish Presbyterians, but it is also Masson who ascertains the fact that the Presbyterians and the Independents were quite agreed on the terms used in church government.[38] The essential difference between Presbyterianism and Independency was the Independent belief that the church was an independent organization of voluntary believers, and while each congregation was independent, they were willing to hold assemblies

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[35] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 217.

[36] Wolfe, Milton, p. 52.

[37] Masson, II, 378.

[38] Ibid., II, 535.

with neighboring churches in order to profit by collective advice.[39] The Presbyterians argued with this system, saying that it did away with the parochial system with its order and effective administration, and the Presbyterians no doubt would argue with Milton's system for much the same reason, since he omitted the two assemblies that would give a system of church government order and effective administration.

It seems doubtful that Milton would have resolved upon a Presbyterian system of church government (the Session, Presbytery, Provincial Synod, and General Assembly) with its complicated authority and administrative courts, and if Milton had been familiar with the Presbyterian system in 1641 as he had been with the Episcopacy, he might have described it much in the same manner as he described Episcopacy in The Reason of Church Government, for Toland tells us:

> His (Milton's) former writings against their Enemies the Bishops, tho, to speak the Truth, this was only a service to the Presbyterians by accident, for as we shall see hereafter he never intended by humbling the Hierarchy to set up the Consistorian Tribunal in the Room of it.

In presenting his theory of church government, Milton refers to discipline as of first importance, and as church government is not left to the invention of men, church discipline is "beyond the faculty of men to frame." Masson states that in recognizing the importance and necessity for church discipline, Milton advocated a spiritual or ecclesiastical censure, the Parochial Consistory. This Parochial Consistory would consist of the minister, with the lay-elders of each congregation assisting the minister in exercising church discipline.

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[39] Ibid., II, 530.

Milton does not, however, advocate an ecclesiastical censure:

> Jurisdictive power in the church there ought to be none at all. It cannot be conceived that what men now call jurisdiction in the church, should be other thing than a Christian censorship; and therefore it is most commonly and truly named ecclesiastical censure.[40]

He explains that such a censorship would only prove tedious and contentious to the discipline of the church, hindering the work of the minister. According to Milton, in order to maintain discipline within a congregation it was first necessary to have a democratic church government with reason, rather than a church tyranny without reason. This democratic church government would be a council or assembly where the Parochial Consistory, the minister, and lay-elders, merged into the congregation to settle arguments and disputes. This democratic action alone would remove disorder and it would not be necessary for any authority to administer spiritual assistance or to have an ecclesiastical censure.

Wolfe writes that Milton's early pamphlets declared "flatly for Presbyterian government." He does not hesitate to add, however, that while the form of church government outlined in the pamphlets does resemble Scottish Presbyterianism, it is not an identical form of church government.[41] The Presbyterians would have found many points on which to argue with Milton and certainly they would not have agreed with the establishment of this democratic presbyterian church government, its toleration of sects and schisms, and its complete separation of church

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[40] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 250.

[41] Wolfe, Milton, p. 51.

and state. Already Milton considered the three forms of liberty essential to the happiness of man as a member of society; religious, domestic and civil liberties were based on his democratic presbyterian church government. They are his basic principles and they never changed; Scottish Presbyterianism stood in direct contrast with them and the conflict that followed was inevitable.

The specific evidence presented by Masson concerning Milton's alleged Presbyterianism is confined to Milton's form of church government as expressed in the anti-Episcopal pamphlets and Milton's frequent references that expressed the desire that the English church be brought into unity with the reformed churchs of Europe. Twentieth century writers have followed Masson's analysis of Milton's form of church discipline and rely completely on conclusions reached by the biographer in 1859-1880. The value of Masson's evidence, however, cannot be overestimated. While contemporary scholars do not offer any reliable specific evidence to prove that John Milton held Presbyterian views, it appears that the material presented by Masson is of more value, since had it not been for Masson's scholarship, Milton would probably still be regarded as an orthodox Protestant of the Calvinistic faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDEPENDENCY

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce; Restored to the Order of Both Sexes, the first of Milton's divorce pamphlets, was written and published during the summer of 1643. It has been suggested by Hanford that the pamphlet was published in defiance of the Licensing Ordinance of June, 1643;[1] however, as a result of the pamphlet's content and not a result of its defiance of the ordinance, the pamphlet met with a storm of adverse criticism. The criticism continued and the following year Milton published The Judgement of Martin Bucer, Concerning Divorce. This pamphlet, too, was the subject of adverse criticism, despite the fact it was PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY. It is not the purpose of this thesis to examine the divorce pamphlets or the criticism, but rather to examine the results of this experience since it was the Licensing Ordinance of June, 1643, that prompted Milton to write the Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing in November, 1644. Many points in the Areopagitica are of interest for the purpose of this study. Primary, however, is the fact that the pamphlet reveals evidence to conclude Milton was slowly completing his understanding of Scottish

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[1]Hanford, John Milton, Englishman, p. 121.

Presbyterianism, thus pointing to "On the new forcers of Conscience under the Long PARLIAMENT" in 1647.

During the years that followed the First Civil War, the English Church, step by step, was greatly transformed. Presbyterianism, with its local basis and its hierarchy of authorities, became the National Church of England. After the Second Civil War, and especially after the battles of Marston Moor in 1644 and Naseby in 1645, the importance of Scottish Presbyterianism was greatly diminished. There was at this time a general wave of dissatisfaction with the methods of the Presbyterian Parliament and the Westminster Assembly in their attempt to establish Presbyterianism as the National Church. The work of the Westminster Assembly was still incomplete, but when completed there would be but one essential difference between the Presbyterian Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In Scotland the church was dependent upon no one; in England it would be dependent upon Parliament.[2] Presbyterianism, in its inability to reorganize in a relatively short period of time, met with extreme difficulty. It had argued that it was so satisfactory a system of church government, keeping its members in such a strong grip, that toleration would be unnecessary since it left little to tolerate. In order to initiate the almost complete reformation necessary in both doctrine and discipline, measures would have to be taken to silence the smaller sects and schisms. The purpose of the Licensing Ordinance of June, 1643, was to suppress these sects and schisms.

The critical reception of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce no doubt disturbed Milton. His answer to this criticism appeared in the

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[2]Firth, Oliver Cromwell, p. 143.

second divorce pamphlet, The Judgement of Martin Bucer:

> Bucer is more large than to be ready by over-busied men; and too high to be easily understood by unattentive men, and of a low capacity.[3]

The purpose of this pamphlet was to confirm and justify The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce by no greater authority than Martin Bucer. More important than this, however, was the action taken by the Stationer's Company in circulating two petitions for the punishment of Milton for not having the first divorce pamphlet licensed. The second pamphlet was PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY and by no lesser authority than Edward VI.[4] The Licensing Ordinance certainly caused Milton more anguish and pain than did the adverse criticism. Such an order violated civil liberty and hindered any further attempt at Reformation. This Milton proclaims in Areopagitica:

> He who thinks we are to pitch our tent here, and have attained the utmost prospect of reformation that the mortal glass wherein we contemplate can show us, till we come to beatific vision, that man by this very opinion declares that he is yet far short of truth.[5]

Not only did it hinder further Reformation, but such an order was a "nursing mother" to sects and schisms and instead of suppressing them "it raises them and invests them with a reputation."

The Episcopacy, through a decree of the Star Chamber in 1637 and again through the Licensing Ordinance of January, 1641, had attempted

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[3]The Judgement of Martin Bucer, Columbia, IV, 1.

[4]Cf. Title page Facsimile, Columbia, IV, 1.

[5]Areopagitica, Columbia, IV, 336.

to regulate all printing. Milton considered the ordinance a continuation of the tyranny established by the hated prelates at the Council of Trent. Certainly grievances would arise, but when such grievances "are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed" the utmost expectations of civil liberty have been met. This was not the Presbyterian policy. The aim of the Presbyterians was to make King and Church responsible to Parliament, proclaiming the sovereignty of Parliament by historical precedent. Whatever the Westminster Assembly might decide in matters of doctrine and discipline was established only by authority of Parliament.[6] Parliament might revise its conclusions, criticise its actions and even limit its functions as it saw fit. Thus, Presbyterianism, like the Episcopacy, was primarily a political party rather than a religious sect. It had little regard for systems that denied its theory of church and state and attacked the fundamentals of its creed. The diversity of doctrines and multitude of sects and schisms were a natural consequence; but they were dangerous, and the Licensing Ordinance of 1643, like those used earlier by the Episcopacy, was Parliament's method to protect the subordinate established church.

The Episcopacy proved to be violating the three basic principles necessary to begin the complete Reformation needed in England. Reviewing his career later in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates Milton perceived the three species of liberty necessary to the happiness of social life: civil, religious, and domestic. Presbyterianism, too, proved to violate these basic principles; the Presbyterian form of church government would not be democratic despite all implications to the

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[6]Firth, Oliver Cromwell, pp. 143-144.

contrary; the Presbyterian clergy established by the Westminster Assembly were as high in their claim to authority as the English bishops, and had no more thought of toleration than Archbishop Laud himself; and Parliament still controlled the Established Church. Milton had denounced the Episcopacy for these very reasons in the earlier pamphlets, and although he used the Episcopacy as a definite singular example, he did not by denouncing Episcopacy advocate Presbyterianism. He expressed definite hope that the form of church government that replaced the Episcopacy would not continue in its footsteps. In 1644 Presbyterianism was proving to be doing just that, and Milton did not hesitate to announce to the readers of the Areopagitica:

> This is not the covenants and protestations that we have made! This is not to put down prelacy; this is but to chop (exchange) an episcopacy; this is but to translate the palace metropolitan from one kind of dominion into another; this is but an old canonical sleight of commuting our penance.[7]

and,

> But now the bishops abrogated and voided out of the church, as if our reformation sought no more, but to make room for others into their seats under another name; the episcopal arts begin to bud again.[8]

Four years later, in 1648, when Presbyterianism had proven itself to be another Reign of Thorough, Milton again did not hesitate to write to verify his earlier suspicions.

The Areopagitica burns with a passion for liberty. Rose Macaulay

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[7]Areopagitica, Columbia, IV, 331.

[8]Ibid., IV, 332.

writes that this passion for liberty was intensified by the censoring of the divorce pamphlets, and the still reverberating attacks on the pamphlets in 1647 finally disgusted Milton with the Presbyterians.[9] Tetrachordon and Colasterion were published in March, 1645, and like the earlier divorce pamphlets were greeted by a storm of reprobation. Although the act requiring the licensing of all books by an appointed official had been passed in 1643, Parliament remained silent throughout the divorce controversy. This silence alone, no doubt, caused Milton more anguish and pain than all the adverse criticism combined; Parliament was Milton's one hope in his crusade against the established divorce laws. In no other instance is the aristocratic element of Milton's thought [10] more evident. The divorce pamphlets had been directed to Parliament and his one hope refused to respond. Others, however, did not refuse, but these voices were of little importance since it was Parliament, and only Parliament, who could alter the divorce laws. It was inevitable that Milton was to issue a poetical farewell to the divorce controversy.

XI

A Book was writ of late call'd Tetrachordon;
And wov'n close, both matter, form and stile;
The Subject new: it walk'd the Town a while,
Numbring good intellects; now seldom por'd on.
Cries the stall-reader, bless us! what a word on
A title page is this! and some in file
Stand spelling fals, while one might walk to Mile-
End Green. Why is it harder Sirs then Gordon,

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[9]Rose Macaulay, Milton (New York, 1935), pp. 94-96.

[10]A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Milton, Puritanism, and Liberty", University of Toronto Quarterly, IV (No. 4), 496. Cf. also Belloc, Milton, Introduction.

Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp?
Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek
That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp.
Thy age, like ours, O Soul of Sir John Cheek,
Hated not Learning wors then Toad or Asp;
When thou taught'st Cambridge, and King Edward Greek.

XII

I did but prompt the age to quit their cloggs
By the known rules of antient libertie,
When strait a barbarous noise environs me
Of Owles and Cuckoes, Asses, Apes and Doggs.
As when those Hinds that were transform'd to Froggs
Raild at Latona's twin-born progenie
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.
But this is got by casting Pearl to Hoggs;
That Bawle for freedom in their senceless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry libertie:
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they roave we see
For all this wast of wealth, and loss of blood.

Certainly Milton's anger had been excited against those who had criticised his views on marriage and divorce. The divorce pamphlets were definitely a failure, but Milton's anger in these sonnets does not appear to be pathetic.[11] It is more of a disappointment directed against those of the middle class who had failed to comprehend the complete meaning of the divorce theory. Ross, like Woodhouse and Belloc, sees Milton's identification with the overall revolutionary cause as an alliance with "the middle sort of men"[12] and that Milton tried to understand the bourgeois revolution in his own aristocratic terms.[13] If this be true, and

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[11]Macaulay, Milton, p. 87.

[12]Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, Milton's Royalism; A Study of the Conflict of Symbol and Idea in the Poems (Cornell University Press, 1943), p. 58.

[13]Ibid., p. 61.

it must be given consideration, it cannot be better exemplified than in this instance.

Masson, as might be expected, convincingly identifies 'Gordon, Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp' of Sonnet XI as a Scottish Presbyterian aristocrat who had very little to do with the English Church controversy.[14] However, Milton does not appear to be attacking the Presbyterians. Certainly the names of the Scottish Presbyterian pamphleteers were a vulgar harshness to his delicate ears and he centered his attack on the illiterate stall-reader who had greater difficulty in calling out the Greek title of his last pamphlet, Tetrachordon, than the authors of Presbyterian propaganda. In Sonnet XII Milton centered his attack on the ignorant masses, the various degrees of animal life that walked the streets of London voicing adverse criticism, "a barbarous noise" that encircled Milton's high ideals with disappointment and regret. Tillyard writes that this is Milton's earliest reference to the big disappointment he had in his countrymen,[15] and Wolfe adds that after this experience Milton distrusted the masses to the end of his life.[16] It is only in the concluding lines of Sonnet XII that Milton attacked the Presbyterians:

> Licence they mean when they cry libertie;
> For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
> But from that mark how far they roave we see
> For all this wast of wealth, and loss of blood.

The reference, however, is merely a poetical continuation of the general

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[14]Masson, III, 462.

[15]Tillyard, Milton, p. 167.

[16]Wolfe, Milton, p. 265.

attack on the Presbyterians that was begun in the Areopagitica and there is absolutely no indication that it was motivated by the Presbyterian attack on the divorce pamphlets. Certainly he included those who had insulted him on the divorce issue just as he did in 1647 when he wrote:

> Men whose Life, Learning, Faith, and pure intent
> Would have been held in high esteem with Paul
> Must now be nam'd and printed Hereticks
> By shallow Edwards and Scotch what d'ye call:

However, while Milton does include Edwards and Baillie in his attack against those who had insulted him,[17] the references appear to be more of a general attack on the Presbyterians and a specific defense of those Independents who still engaged themselves in writing pamphlets despite the Licensing Ordinance of 1643.

In 1647 Milton had arrived at a point where he completely understood Scottish Presbyterianism. Those Presbyterians were no better than the bishops, and as he denounced the Episcopacy, he now denounced the Presbyterians. There was no longer any hope in Presbyterianism. The new forcers of conscience were the enemies of toleration who had denounced the Episcopacy only to establish a Presbyterian hierarchy.

> On the new forcers of Conscience under the
> Long PARLIAMENT.
>
> Because you have thrown of your Prelate Lord,
> And with stiff Vowes renounc'd his Liturgie
> To seise the widdow's whore Pluralitie
> From them whose sin ye envi'd, not abhor'd,
> Dare ye for this adjure the Civill Sword
> To force our Consciences that Christ set free,
> And ride us with a classic Hierarchy
> Taught ye by meer A. S. and Rotherford?
> Men whose Life, Learning, Faith and pure intent

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[17] Hanford, John Milton, Englishman, pp. 127-128.

> Would have been held in high esteem with Paul
> Must now be nam'd and printed Heretics
> By shallow Edwards and Scotch what d'ye call:
> But we do hope to find out all your tricks,
> Your plots and packing wors then those of Trent,
> That so the Parliament
> May with their wholsom and preventive Shears
> Clip your Phylacteries, though bauk your Ears,
> And succour our just Fears
> When they shall read this clearly in your charge
> New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large.

The divorce controversy must be considered in Milton's attack on the Presbyterians. However, if definite reasons must be attributed to Milton's attack on the Presbyterians, these reasons would be identical with those voiced against the Episcopacy in 1641, and the divorce controversy would only be of secondary importance.

Mark Pattison's opinion that Milton's prose had no notable influence on the current events is plausible.[18] The pamphlets, Milton's personal and public spirit, in the Root and Branch attack, did not meet with complete indifference, but his theories of Reformation, particularly church discipline, were almost completely ignored. He no doubt looked, with all his pride and egotism, for the cause of the Root and Branch failure. He found it in the ambition and avarice of the Presbyterians.

> As for the party called Presbyterian of whom I believe very many to be good and faithful Christians, though misled by some of turbulent spirit, I wish them, earnestly and calmly, not to fall off from their first principles, not to effect rigor and superiority over men not under them; not to compel unforcible things, in religion especially, which if not voluntary, becomes a sin; nor to assist the clamor and malicious drifts of men whom they themselves have judged to be the worst of men, the obdurate enemies of God and his church: nor to dart against the actions of their brethren, for want of other argument, those wrested laws and scriptures

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[18]Pattison, Milton, p. 31.

> thrown by prelates and maglignants against their own side, which though they hurt not otherwise, yet taken up by them to the condemnation of their own doings, give scandal to all men, and discover in themselves either extreme passion or apostacy.[19]

In August or September, 1648, Milton turned to celebrate the victories of Lord Fairfax in the Second Civil War

> On the Lord Gen. Fairfax at the seige of Colchester
>
> Fairfax, whose name in armes through Europe rings
> Filling each mouth with envy, or with praise,
> And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
> And rumors loud, that daunt remotest kings,
> Thy firm unshak'n vertue ever brings
> Victory home, though new rebellions raise
> Their Hydra heads, & the fals North displaies
> Her brok'n league, to imp their serpent wings,
> O yet a nobler task awaites thy hand;
> For what can Warr, but endless warr still breed,
> Till Truth, & Right from Violence be freed,
> And Public Faith cleared from the shamefull brand
> Of Public Fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed
> While Avarice, & Rapine share the land.

The military praise is sincere, but Milton is more interested in the possibility of Fairfax becoming a leader in the religious controversy. Two years previously in "On the New Forcers of Conscience" Milton had called upon Parliament to control Presbyterian discipline, but now he was thoroughly disgusted with the Presbyterian Party, its disorder and its corruption.[20] He saw now that Parliament, as well as the Established Church, was Presbyterian controlled and he called upon the victorious Fairfax to lead the Independent Party to provide freedom of conscience and effective civil government.

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[19] The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Columbia, V, 42-43.

[20] Wolfe, Milton, p. 285.

In December the army, encouraged by the Independent minority in Parliament, occupied London, expelled the Presbyterian members of Parliament, and forced the remaining members of Parliament to execute the King. Cromwell, as head of the army, now assumed military dictatorship of England. Cromwell attempted to give religious freedom to the sects and schisms, so far as they were not suspected of disloyalty to the government, and any churchman in England was eligible for the pastorates of the churches, so long as he was loyal and intellectually and morally qualified and was wanted by the church.

In spite of the liberality and comprehensiveness of Cromwell's ecclesiastical policy, he was of the opinion that a national church should be established. Since the abolition of Episcopacy two fundamentally opposed concepts regarding society and liberty had developed. On the one hand there was the ancient concept of society organized as a church with large powers over moral and intellectual life. On the other hand there was a new way of regarding society as a secular nationalistic state, composed of individuals bound only to civil obedience, but otherwise free.

The majority of Independents opposed any established church and denied that the State ought in any way to meddle with religious matters. Milton had long held the opinion that liberty was conceived first as religious, and pertaining especially to the church. The civil magistrate, Milton said, had no coercive power at all in matters of religion, his only duty being simply to defend the church. He attacked the Episcopacy in the early pamphlets for this very reason and again, later, the Presbyterians.

Dare ye for this adjure the civill Sword
To force our consciences that Christ set free,

Milton did not share Cromwell's belief in the necessity of an established church,[21] and he attempted to influence Cromwell's decision regarding the state support of the clergy:

To the Lord General Cromwell May 1652.
On the proposalls of certaine ministers
at the Committee for Propagation of the
Gospell.

Cromwell, our cheif of men, who through a cloud
Not of warr onely, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith & matchless Fortitude
To peace & truth thy glorious way hast plough'd,
And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
Hast reard Gods Trophied, & his work pursu'd,
While Darwen stream with blood of Scotts imbru'd,
And Dunbarr feild resounds thy praises loud,
And Worsters laureat wreath; yet much remaines
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renownd then warr, new foes aries
Threatning to bind our soules with secular chaines:
Helpe us to save free Conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves whose Gospell is their maw.

Milton praised Cromwell, too, for his military exploits; however, the purpose of the sonnet was to influence Cromwell regarding the proposals that would have limited religious freedom. The Presbyterians did not approve of Cromwell's religious doctrines, and he was considered the champion of toleration; Milton had every reason to believe that Cromwell would maintain a complete separation of church and state. Fairfax had since fallen into obscurity and Milton now called upon Cromwell to protect England from the "secular chaines." The dictator, however, failed to adhere to Milton's appeal and voted for the state support of the clergy. Shortly thereafter it was Vane, and not Cromwell, whom Milton praised as the statesman who knew the true bounds of religious discipline

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[21]Firth, Oliver Cromwell, p. 53.

and civil government, and who learned long ago what separated spiritual power from civil power.

To Sr Henry Vane the younger.

Vane, young in yeares, but in sage counsell old,
Then whome a better Senatour nere held
The helme of Rome, when gowns not armes repelld
The feirce Epeirot & the African bold,
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow states, hard to be spelld,
Then to advise how warr may best, upheld,
Move by her two maine nerves, Iron & Gold
In all her equipage; besides to know
Both spirituall powre & civill, what each meanes
What severs each thou 'hast learnt, which few have don.
The bounds of either sword to thee wee ow.
Therefore on thy firme hand religion leanes
In peace, & reck'ns thee her eldest son.

In March, 1653, the Rump Parliament passed resolutions for the maintenance of a modified state church as proposed by Cromwell and the ministerial committee. The church controversy, although certainly incomplete, became secondary to the more important political problems then facing England. Underlying it all, of course, was the religio-politico problem. Later, in 1649, Milton was to realize that this was the basic problem as early as 1640 and his fundamentals were relatively the same as they were then.

In The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates Milton attacks the Presbyterians both in Parliament and the Westminster Assembly:

> For how can that pretended counsel be either sound or faithful, when they that give it see not, for madness and vexation of their ends lost, that those statues and scriptures which both falsely and scandalously they wrest against their friends and associates would, by sentence of the common adversary, fall first and heaviest upon their own heads?[22]

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[22]The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Columbia, V, 9.

The question of government of the future church in England was bitterly contested in the Westminster Assembly. The majority of the Divines in the Assembly, under the influence of the Scots, were proposing that the disciplinary powers of the church and the all important authority to ordain ministers and license preachers to be vested in the Classis made up of representatives from the various parishes of a given district.[23] Milton did not approve the revision of doctrine and discipline, nor did he approve of the Westminster Assembly.

> I have something also to the divines though brief to what were needful; not to be disturbers of the civil affairs, being in hands better able and more belonging to manage them; but to study harder, and to attend the office of good pastors, knowing that he, whose flock is least among them, hath a dreadful charge, not preformed by mounting twice into the chair with a formal preachment huddled up at the odd hours of a whole lazy week, but by incessant pains and watching, in season and out of season, from house to house, over the souls of whom they have to feed.[24]

The Presbyterians maintained throughout the Westminster Assembly the authority of Presbyterian discipline. The Independents, too, claimed Scriptural sanction for their system of direct rule by the members of the church. Led by the five "dissenting brethren," Nye, Simpson, Burroughes, Bridge, and Goodwin, the Independents protested against the ecclesiastical tyranny which they believed the Presbyterians would introduce. The Independents were afraid the authority of the Classis would be used unwarrantedly against the individual congregation and they contended that

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[23]William Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution (New York, 1955), p. 113.

[24]The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Columbia, V, 50.

discipline would be sufficiently maintained if the church were left free to admonish, and if necessary, break communion with offending churches.

The Independents, therefore, proposed a simple theory that the church go on in the manner and direction which the Puritans had been following all along.[25] After the Second Bishops War in 1641, the Puritan Parliament had rejects a provision made by Scotland in "Demands Toward a Treaty" to uniform religion in the two countries.[26] The Puritans were not interested in Presbyterianism in 1641, but as a result of the Solemn League and Covenant were now intent on establishing the Presbyterian form of church government. This group of Puritans, the English Presbyterians, seemed to have forgotten that they had risen to their present position through the opportunities that formerly allowed them to enlist the support of converts and followers regardless of parish boundries and independently of any official authority. Every Puritan group, which at any time joined together to engage in worship to become a gathered church, centered in its minister, and self-limited in membership to the minister's personal followers, was an independent religious organization, without any official authority.[27] Archbishop Laud's earlier effort to repress this Puritan tendency had merely served to intensify it, and the downfall of Episcopacy had set it forth to run its course unchecked for almost three years. The Independents in the Assembly and

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[25]Haller, Liberty and Reformation, p. 115.

[26]Woods, Presbyterian Controversy, p. 125.

[27]Haller, Liberty and Reformation, p. 114.

an increasing number of ministers and congregations looked with distrust on the proposal to curtail the liberty they had formerly enjoyed, in order that a limiting power such as Parliament had only just revoked might be reestablished over them in favor of Presbyterianism.

The tide drifted against the Independents, both in Parliament and in the Assembly, and it became necessary that they ask for toleration as a mere favor.[28] This, however, was stoutly refused by the Presbyterians. Milton's antipathy toward the Presbyterians was manifested not so much in the adverse criticism directed against the divorce pamphlets as it was in those members of the Puritan Root and Branch Party who, having abolished Episcopacy, now sought to establish Presbyterian discipline. The English Presbyterians found themselves more concerned for the interests of their ministerial order and the unity of the church than for the liberty of the individual. Milton had attacked the Episcopacy in 1637 for these very same reasons and he did not hesitate to denounce the Presbyterians.

> As for the party called Presbyterian of whom I believe very many to be good and faithful Christians, though misled by some of turbulent spirit, I wish them, earnestly and calmly, not to fall off from their first principles, not to effect rigor and superiority over men not under them; not to compel unforcible things, in religion expecially, which if not voluntary, becomes a sin; nor to assist the clamor and malicious drifts of men whom they themselves have judged to be the worst of men, the obdurate enemies of God and his church: nor to dart against the actions of their brethren, for want of other argument, those wrested laws and scriptures thrown by prelates and maglignants against their own side, which though they hurt not otherwise, yet taken up by them to the condemnation of their

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[28] J. B. Marsden, Dictionary of Christian Churches and Sects (London, 1854), p. 449.

> own doings, give scandal to all men, and discover in themselves either extreme passion or apostacy.[29]

And again:

> Let them be sorry, that, being called to assemble about reforming the church, they fell to progging and soliciting the parliament, though they had renounced the name of priests, for a new settling of their tithes and oblations; and doublelined themselves with spiritual places of commodity beyond the possible discharge of their duty. Let them assemble in consistory with their elders and deacons, according to ancient ecclesiastical rule, to the preserving of church discipline, each in his several charge, and not a pack of clergymen by themselves to bellycheer in their presumptuous Sion, or to promote designs, abuse and gull the simple laity, and stir up tumult, as the prelates did, for the maintenance of their pride and avarice.[30]

In 1643 it seemed the Long Parliament and the Westminster Assembly would have established a presbyterial form of church government that would have enabled all orthodox religious sects to maintain churches and congregations in England. The Assembly, as a result of the Solemn League and Covenant, however, was drawn away from other matters to settle upon a government for the church. During the months of October, November, and December, 1643, the Assembly, under the direction of the Scottish Commissioners, formulated the "Propositions Concerning Church Government." The English Presbyterians in the Assembly separated themselves from the Puritan Root and Branch Party by failing to grant toleration to the independent religious groups. Milton's anger and bitter contempt for the Presbyterians appears to have been manifested at

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[29]The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Columbia, V, 42-43.

[30]Ibid., V, 53-54.

this time, and his contempt was not only directed against Presbyterian discipline but also against those members of the Root and Branch Party who now attempted to establish Presbyterianism in opposition to their Puritan brethren.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCIPLINE

In The Reason of Church Government we find this statement:

> That I may not follow a chase rather than an argument, that one of these two, and none other, is of God's ordaining; and if it be that ordinance must be evident in the Gospel.[1]

The chase rather than an argument informs the reader that Milton was not chasing a specific religion, but that the pamphlet approached the question of church government with an objective and impersonal argument, substantiating such argument with evidence found in the Scriptures. It is also in the Preface that Milton informed the reader that such a church government was presbyterial and that he desired:

> England shortly is to belong to the faithful feeding and disciplining of the ministerial order...presbyters and deacons.[2]

and that every such minister

> ...sustains the person of Christ in his highest works of communicating to us the mysteries of our salvation, and hath the power of binding and absolving.[3]

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[1]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 195.

[2]Ibid., III, 183.

[3]Ibid., III, 201.

An analysis of the church government advocated by Milton reveals that England would have a multitude of general independent presbyteries. He placed great emphasis on each congregation and the individual minister of the respective congregation, and there appears to be little doubt that he devoted most of his time expounding a theory of church government that is basically Congregationalism.

In his description of church government Milton mentioned discipline as of first importance in the life of man.

> There is no sociable perfection in this life, civil or sacred, that can be above discipline.[4]

It is extremely important to understand that while Milton recognized civil and religious authority, he considered it more important that the two authorities be separated. This principle had first been expounded in Of Reformation and The Reason of Church Government. He writes that the importance of the civil magistrate in the administration of civil justice cannot be denied, expressing the belief that their authority was "of God's giving and ought to be obeyed as vicegerent,"[5] but he also realized that the civil magistrate had no authority whatsoever pertaining to ecclesiastical matters. This was expressed again in De Doctrina Christiana:

> Everyman is subject to the civil power; that is to say, in matters properly civil. On the contrary none but the members of the church are subject to ecclesiastical power alone.[6]

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[4]Ibid., III, 185.

[5]Ibid., III, 196.

[6]De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XVI, 333.

The separation of church and state had long been a Puritan manifesto. Thomas Cartwright expressed this principle in his series of lectures on the Acts of the Apostles in 1570, and Walter Travers in his book A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiasticall Discipline Out off the Word off God in 1574. Certainly Cartwright and Travers were English disciples of Calvin,[7] but this principle was one held by almost all non-conforming Puritans and expressed throughout the seventeenth century. A non-conforming Puritan who held this principle was not necessarily a Calvinist. Milton held this principle important throughout his life, even when he denounced the more profound Calvinistic doctrine, and at a time when his unorthodox views would have been under attack from most Puritans.

Having separated church and state, Milton continued his theory of church government. Church discipline should be only as commanded by the minister, "whether it be all one with doctrine, or the particular application thereof to this or that person."[8] Basically, the discipline of the church was the preaching and teaching of the Bible by the Spiritual deputy, the minister of each congregation. Therefore, according to Milton, an ecclesiastical censure was not necessary in any form of church government, and he asserted that with such a censor in the church "the greatness of this authority and honor, armed with jurisdiction might step with ease into a tyranny."[9]

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[7]Cremeans, Calvinistic Thought, p. 86.

[8]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 194.

[9]Ibid., III, 251.

The Presbyterians, too, felt discipline of first importance. They had long argued with the Independents that their form of church government was so satisfactory a system, keeping its members in such a strong grip, that toleration would be unnecessary, since it left so little to tolerate.[10] The first unit of church government, the Congregational Presbytery, was made up of one large congregation or two or three smaller associated congregations. The second unit, the Classis, consisted of approximately twelve congregations; followed by the third unit, the Province, composed of approximately twelve Classis; and finally, the fourth unit, the Nation. Elders from each congregation were to meet in Congregational Presbytery once a week and in Classis once a month. Twice a year two ministers and four elders, selected by the Classis, were to meet in a General Assembly as often as Parliament should decide.[11] The decisions of the various assemblies were to be binding on members within their jurisdiction.

Milton significantly omitted the two intermediate assemblies just as did most Independents. The Presbyterians had long argued with the Independents that an omission of the Classis and the Province destroyed the unit of church government and left the door open to the multitude of sects and schisms. As we have noted before, Masson wrote that while Milton did not include the two intermediate assemblies, it might be construed to imply that he did have the assemblies in mind.[12] However,

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[10]Masson, III, 108.

[11]Wolfe, Milton, p. 52.

[12]Masson, II, 378.

this and the principle of toleration were important issues between the Independents and the Presbyterians. To allow an omission of the Classis and the Province was to allow some degree of toleration, and the Presbyterians were not in favor of any form of church government that did not have a firm grip on its members.

Any association of Christians, according to Milton's theory of church government, would be considered a Presbytery, a completely independent congregation under democratic government, electing its own church officers and managing its own affairs. The minister and lay-elders would be the only church officers and would constitute the Parochial Consistory, the governing body of each church. The Parochial Consistory would have complete authority in discipline and doctrine,

> ...to the faithful feeding and disciplining of that ministerial order, which the blessed apostles constituted throughout the church...presbyters and deacons.[13]

and Milton begged that obedience be given to them as to the Almighty Hand of God.

The Presbyterians would have agreed with this, but while they felt that one large congregation or two or three smaller associated congregations constituted the Congregational Presbytery, Milton felt that each congregation was an independent ecclesiastical organism. Therefore, any action of nearby or surrounding congregations upon any other congregation would be a matter of observation without any power of jurisdiction. Then, too, any united action on the part of the independent congregations would be completely voluntary and again without jurisdiction over any individual

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[13] The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 183.

congregation. Thus we find that there would be no succeeding units of organization gradually ascending in jurisdiction over a specific number of congregations until the fourth unit, the General Assembly, guided by Parliament, governing the nation. Milton omitted the Classis and the Province, or any intermediate organizations, that would have given the Presbyterian system strength and unity, and jurisdiction over every congregation in England.

There appears to be little doubt Milton considered discipline as the most important factor in church government. He wrote again in De Doctrina Christiana:

> The bond by which a particular church is held together is its discipline. Church discipline consists in a mutual agreement among the members of the church to fashion their lives according to Christian doctrine, and to regulate everything in their public meetings decently and with order.[14]

He theorized that a preventive method was more important than any corrective method; however, both were necessary to cope with the discipline problems of the individual church. The Presbyterians, too, considered discipline of great importance. Milton's "particular discipline" was confined to the individual church. The Presbyterians thought its "general discipline," maintained through its ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Congregational Presbytery, the Classis, the Province, and the General Assembly, was such a strong preventive method that any discipline problem that developed would be a serious one and strong corrective methods from some higher authority other than the congregation would be necessary to cope with the problem.

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[14] De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XVI, 321.

As we have noted before, Milton placed great emphasis on the individual minister of each independent Presbyter. Spiritual discipline and guidance was the sole responsibility of each minister since he was

> ...best acquainted with his own flock, hath best reason to know all the secretest diseases likely to be there.[15]

The minister, in order to maintain discipline and guidance, was "to preach the gospel abundantly and powerfully...to instruct the youth religiously and to endeavor how the Scriptures may be easiest understood by all men."[16] The parishioners, on uniting themselves to a particular church, and under the discipline and guidance of the minister, would enter into a solemn covenant with God and the church, "to conduct himself in all respects, both towards the one and the other, as to promote his own edification and that of his brethren."[17] This covenant would take place at baptism, this being the rite appointed for the admission of all adults into the church. Should a parishioner transfer from one particular church to another it would be necessary to repeat the solemn covenant unless the parishioner was provided with "the most satisfactory testimonials from some other orthodox church."[18] Concluding, Milton wrote that this was

> ...the only means by which discipline can be adequately maintained, or prevented from sinking

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[15]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 257.

[16]Ibid., III, 219.

[17]De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XVI, 323.

[18]Ibid., XVI, 323.

into gradual decline and dissolution.[19]

Milton realized, however, that disorder within the church was inevitable and he classified the inevitable disorders as two types, outlining a general policy for each type. The first type of disorder would be concerning moral conduct. Should a member of the congregation be guilty of any immorality, it would not be the duty of the minister to undertake the part of a disciplinarian or an ecclesiastical censor, but it would become the duty of the Parochial Consistory to act as a congregational board in order that the member be reprimanded. The Parochial Consistory would have complete authority to exercise the powers of admonition and excommunication. The second type of disorder would be concerning schism. Should disputes arise in the congregation concerning doctrine, General Councils would be called to hear the disputant. During a General Council the Parochial Consistory, the minister and lay-elders, of each congregation would merge into their respective presbyteries. The presbytery organization would be as complete as a little Synod and the doctrinal disputes would be settled with democratic procedure. It was at this point Milton stressed his principle of toleration. Any person or a minister of any sect or schism who departed from the established doctrine would have as free a vote in the General Council as before he departed from the congregation. Since each congregational presbytery was completely independent, there would be no absolute force, either civil or religious, that could exert authority in either the Parochial Consistory or the General Council. It must be kept in mind that the Parochial Consistory and the General Council were the second means of preventing disorder,

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[19]Ibid., XVI, 323.

the first being, of course, the preaching and teaching of the Gospel by the minister.

In De Doctrina Christiana Milton departed somewhat from this system. The administration of discipline therein was a power committed "to the whole particular church collectively, of whatever number of members composed."[20] He did not include, or even mention, the Parochial Consistory. The General Council, the congregation, would administer all discipline, consisting of,

> First, in receiving and treating with gentleness the weak or lapsed members of the church. Secondly, in composing differences between the brethren. Thirdly, in admonishing or openly rebuking grievous offenders. Fourthly, in separating the disobedient from the communion of the church, or even, lastly in ejecting them from the church; not however for their destruction, but rather for their preservation, if so they may be induced to repent; as was done in the Ancient Synagogue. There are some, however, who may justly be considered irrecoverable.[21]

Milton did not discuss the General Council and the General Assembly as highly complicated gatherings of church dignitaries who met at appointed dates throughout the year to govern a determined number of congregations. The General Council would consist of the congregation, including the Parochial Consistory, the church officers, and would meet only when occasional disputes demanded. The General Assembly, on the other hand, would be a voluntary parliamentary meeting of independent congregations or of the Parochial Consistories of the independent congregations. The meetings would be held once or twice a year in order that mutual problems might be discussed. Each congregation, or the

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[20] Ibid., XVI, 327.

[21] Ibid., XVI, 331.

Parochial Consistory of each congregation, would be a homogeneous and constituting part of the General Assembly as if it were a little Synod in itself, and would move toward the General Assembly "upon her own basis in an even and firm progression, as those smaller squares in battle unite in one great cube, the main phalanx, an emblem of truth and steadfastness."[22]

To emphasize this theory of church government in The Reason of Church Government, Milton compared it with Episcopacy, "a gradual monarchy from bishop to archbishop ... to primate ... to patriarch, and so to pope."[23] Thus, Episcopacy ascended in a continual pyramid under the pretence of perfecting the church's unit. No doubt Milton would have considered Presbyterianism, too, as a gradual monarchy ascending in a continual pyramid from Congregational Presbytery to Classis, to Provincial Synod, and, finally to the General Assembly. Concluding his opinion of General Assemblies, Milton wrote in De Doctrina Christiana:

> The custom of holding assemblies is to be maintained, not after the present Mode, but according to the Apostolical institution, which did not ordain that an individual, and he a stipendiary, should have the sole right of speaking from a higher place, but that each believer in turn should be authorized to speak, or prophesy, or to teach, or exhort, according to his gifts; insomuch that even the weakest among the breathren had the privilege of asking questions, and consulting the elders and more experienced members of the congregation.[24]

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[22]The Reason of Church Government, Columbia, III, 217.

[23]Ibid., III, 217.

[24]De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XVI, 323.

Then, too, the General Assembly in the Presbyterian system would have been under the jurisdiction of Parliament, and any unit of the system would have had authority to enforce the established doctrine by calling in the civil magistrate. Bringing to a close Chapter XXXII "Of Church Discipline" in De Doctrina Christiana Milton wrote:

> The power of the church against those who despise her discipline is exceeding great and extensive. It is therefore highly derogatory to the power of the church as well as an utter want of faith, to suppose that her government cannot be properly administered without the intervention of the civil magistrate.[25]

In The Reason of Church Government Milton expounded a theory of church government that was in most respects Congregationalism. It must be assumed that he considered this the most important form of church discipline. Later, in De Doctrina Christiana, he supported this theory of church government with only minor alterations. However far his religious views altered in later life, we are certain that his theory of church government remained relatively the same throughout his life. Generally, and briefly reviewing, the common preventive method for the two types of disorder was the teaching and preaching of the Gospel by the minister of each congregation, while there would be two corrective methods: the Parochial Consistory for moral violations and the General Council for disputes concerning doctrine.

This appears to be the extent of Milton's interpretation of church government. It is vague; when it is not vague it is too brief. Much has been left to conjecture. If Milton entered the controversy full of

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[25] Ibid., XVI, 337.

the dream of a godly Utopia,[26] as Haller has suggested, we are certain that his theory of church government was complete within his own mind. Later Haller suggested that this was merely a Miltonic way of stating a theory of church government Milton himself actually knew little about and would have been one of the first to reject in practice.[27] If this be true, Milton's theory of church government as presented in this paper, in comparison with the Presbyterian discipline, might have been rejected by Milton, but it is certain that he would have rejected the Presbyterian theory with a stronger violence.

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[26]William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1938), p. 339.

[27]Haller, Liberty and Reformation, p. 56.

CHAPTER SIX

DOCTRINE

Despite the fact that Milton's theory of church government was basically Congregationalism, no individual religious sect would have found his doctrinal beliefs congenial to their own, and he no doubt would have been considered a heretic by most denominations then established in England. In the preface to De Doctrina Christiana he made it clear that his religious views underwent a continual process of revision throughout his life, and that at no time did he follow any religious sect. Prior to the discovery of De Doctrina Christiana, however, Milton was considered an orthodox Protestant of the Calvinistic faith. Since the discovery of the treatise scholars have proven discrepancies in Milton's religious tenets. Several scholars have termed these discrepancies 'peculiarities,'[1] while others feel the discrepancies reveal evidence to conclude that Milton held unorthodox views in later life.[2] Most scholars now agree that it was before his mind reached maturity

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[1]William Carlos Martyn, Life and Times of John Milton (New York, 1866), p. 292.

[2]John H. Hanford, "The Date of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana," Studies in Philology, XVII (1920), p. 309-319. Hanford places the date of composition between 1655-1660.

that his religious views were those of an orthodox Protestant of the Calvinistic faith. Thus, we find that his later views not only separated him from orthodoxy but also separated him from Calvinism. The agreement, then, is that Milton's Protestantism in early life was not only orthodox but also Calvinistic, Calvinistic in both discipline and doctrine.

It is of basic importance that we first reconsider the more profound orthodox and heterodox views as expressed in Milton's later works and compare these views with a universal consensus of creeds which all orthodox churches hold.[3]

ORTHODOX DOCTRINE

I. RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

The Divine inspiration and authority of the Canonical Scriptures in matters of faith and morals.

> The Christian Doctrine is that divine revelation disclosed in various ages by Christ (though he was not known under that name in the beginning) concerning the nature and worship of the Deity, for the promotion of the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind.[4]
>
> No one, however, can have right thoughts of God, with nature or reason alone as his guide, independent of the word, or message of God.[5]
>
> If there were no God, there would be no distinction between right and wrong; the estimate of

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[3]Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes (New York, 1881), I (Rev. Ed., 1919), 919-921.

[4]De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XIV, 17.

[5]Ibid., XIV, 21.

virtue and vice would entirely depend on the blind opinion of men;[6]

II. THEOLOGY

The Divine perfections.[7]

The Unity of the Divine essence as opposed to Atheism, Dualism and Polytheism.

> The ninth attribute, or the Unity of God, may be considered as proceeding necessarily from all the foregoing attributes.[8]

Government of the world by Divine Providence.

> This government (of the whole creation) is either general or special. His general government is that whereby God the Father regards, preserves, and governs the whole of creation with infinite wisdom and holiness according to the conditions of his decree.[9]
>
> The special government is that which embraces with peculiar regard angels and men as beings far superior to the rest of the creation.[10]

III. ANTHROPOLOGY

Original innocence. Man made in the image of God, with Reason and Freedom, pure and Holy; yet needing probation, and liable to fall.

Fall.

> ...the fall of man was not necessary...[11]

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[6] Ibid., XIV, 29.

[7] Ibid., XVI. See the nine attributes pertaining to the nature of God and the three attributes pertaining to His Divine Power and Excellence, pp. 41-61.

[8] Ibid., XIV, 29.

[9] Ibid., XV, 55.

[10] Ibid., XV, 97.

[11] Ibid., XVI, 101.

Sin.

> The sin which is common to all men is that which our first parents, and in them all their posterity committed, when, casting off their obedience to God, they tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree.[12]

> The personal sin of each individual is that which each in his own person has committed, independently of the sin which is common to all.[13]

Possibility of Salvation.

> God in pity to mankind...predestinated to eternal salvation before the foundation of the world those who should believe and continue in the faith; for a manifestation of the glory of his mercy, grace, and wisdom, according to his purpose in Christ.[14]

Redemption by Christ.

> The humiliation of Christ is that state in which under his character of God-man he voluntarily submitted himself to the divine justice, as well in life as in death, for the purpose of undergoing all things requisite to accomplish our redemption.[15]

IV. CHRISTOLOGY

Divine-Human constitution of the Person of Christ.

> Two points are to be considered in relation to Christ's character as Redeemer; his nature and office. His nature is twofold; divine and human.[16]

> Hence the union of two natures in Christ must be considered as the mutual hypostatic union of two essences; for where there is a perfect substantial

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[12] Ibid., XV, 181.

[13] Ibid., XV, 193.

[14] Ibid., XVI, 91.

[15] Ibid., XV, 303.

[16] Ibid., XV, 259.

> essence, there must also be an hypostasis or subsistence, inasmuch as they are the same thing; so that one Christ, one ens, one person, is formed of this mutual hypostatic union of two natures or essences.[17]

The Life of Christ.

> The exaltation of Christ is that by which, having triumphed over death, and laid aside the form of a servant, he was exalted by God the Father to a state of immortality and of the highest glory, partly by his own merits, partly by the gift of the Father, for the benefit of mankind; wherefore he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.[18]

Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King forever.

> In treating of the office of the Mediator, we are to consider his three-fold functions as prophet, priest and king...[19]

> The kingdom of Christ...is...eternal...it will endure as long as the world shall last, and as long as there shall be occasion for his mediatorial office.[20]

The mediatorial work of Christ or the Atonement.

> The mediatorial office of Christ is that whereby, at the special appointment of God the Father, he voluntarily performed, and continues to perform, on behalf of man, whatever is requisite for obtaining reconciliation with God, and eternal salvation.[21]

V. PNEUMATOLOGY

His historic mission by the Father and the Son.

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[17] Ibid., XV, 269-270.

[18] Ibid., XV, 309-310.

[19] Ibid., XV, 285.

[20] Ibid., XV, 303.

[21] Ibid., XV, 285.

> The power of the Father is inherent in himself, that of the Son and the Spirit is received from the Father; for it has been already proved on the authority of the Son, that the Son does everything in the name of the Father, and the Spirit every thing in the name of the Father and the Son...[22]

His Divine work of regeneration and sanctification.

> Regeneration is that change operated by the Word and the Spirit, whereby the old man being destroyed, the inward man is regenerated by God after his own image, in all the faculties of his mind, insomuch that he becomes as it were a new creature, and the whole man is sanctified both in body and soul, for the service of God, and the performance of good works.[23]

VI. SOTERIOLOGY

Eternal predestination or the election of believers to Salvation.

> Predestination, therefore, must always be understood with reference to election, and seems often to be used instead of the latter term.[24]

> It seems, then, that there is no particular predestination or election, but only general,—or in other words, that the privilege belongs to all who heartily believe and continue in their belief,— that none are predestinated or elected irrespectively...[25]

Call by the Gospel.

> The Gospel is the new dispensation of the covenent of grace, far more excellent and perfect than the law, announced first obscurely by Moses and the prophets, afterwards in the clearest terms by Christ Himself, and his apostles and evangelists, written since by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and ordained to continue even to the end of the world, containing a promise of eternal life to all in every nation who shall believe in Christ

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[22] Ibid., XIV, 393.

[23] Ibid., XV, 367.

[24] Ibid., XIV, 97.

[25] Ibid., XIV, 107.

> when revealed to them, and a threat of eternal death to such as shall not believe.[26]

Regeneration and conversion. The necessity of Repentance and Faith.

> Regeneration is that change operated by the Word and the Spirit, whereby the old man being destroyed, the inward man is regenerated by God after his own image, in all the faculties of his mind, insomuch that he becomes as it were a new creature, and the whole man is sanctified both in body and soul, for the service of God, and the performance of good works.[27]

Justification and sanctification. The Forgiveness of sins and the necessity of a Holy Life.

> Justification is the gratuitous purpose of God, whereby those who are regenerated and ingrafted in Christ are absolved from sin and death through his most perfect satisfaction, and accounted just in the sight of God, not by the works of the law, but through faith.[28]

Glorification of believers.

> Imperfect glorification is that state wherein, being justified and adopted by God the Father, we are filled with a consciousness of present grace and excellency, as well as with an expectation of future glory, insomuch that our blessedness is in a manner already begun.[29]

VII. ECCLESIOLOGY

Divine origin and constitution of the Catholic Church of Christ.

> For inasmuch as may others confessed no less explicitly than Peter that Christ was the Son of God (as is clear from the narrative of the evangelists), the answer of Christ is not, upon thee Peter, but

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[26] Ibid., XVI, 113.

[27] Ibid., XV, 367.

[28] Ibid., XVI, 25.

[29] Ibid., XVI, 65-66.

> upon this rock I will build my church, that is, upon this faith which thou hast in common with other believers, not upon thee as an individual; seeing that, in the personal sense of the word, the true rock is Christ, nor is there any other foundation, whence also faith in Christ is called the foundation.[30]

The essential attributes of the Church Universal. Unity, catholicity, holiness, and indestructibility of the Church.

> The universal visible church is the whole multitude of those who are called in every part of the world, and who openly worship God the Father through Christ in any place whatever, either individually, or in conjunction with others.[31]

Sacraments. Visible signs, seals, and means of grace.

> A Sacrament is a visible sign ordained by God, whereby he sets his seal on believers in token of his saving grace, or of the satisfaction of Christ; and whereby we on our part testify our faith and obedience to God with a sincere heart and a grateful remembrance.[32]

Baptism for the remission of sins.

> 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 their union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.[33]

The Lord's Supper for the commemoration of the atoning death of Christ.

> The Lord's Supper is a solemnity in which the death of Christ is commemorated by the breaking of bread and pouring out of wine, both of which elements are tasted by each individual communicant, and the

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[30]Ibid., XVI, 231.

[31]Ibid., XVI, 233.

[32]Ibid., XVI, 165.

[33]Ibid., XVI, 169.

benefits of his death thereby sealed to believers.[34]

VIII. ESCHATOLOGY.

Death in consequence of sin.

> After sin came death, as the calamity or punishment consequent upon it. Under the head of death, in Scripture, all evils whatever, together with every thing which in its consequence tends to death, must be understood as comprehended...[35]

The final coming of Christ.

> The coming of the Lord to judgment, when he shall judge the world with his holy angels, was predicted, first, by Enoch and the prophets; afterwards by Christ himself and his apostles. The day and hour of Christ's coming are known to the Father only.[36]

General resurrection.

> The restoration of Man is the act whereby man, being delivered from sin and death by God the Father through Jesus Christ, is raised to a far more excellent state of grace and glory than that from which he had fallen. In this restoration are comprised the redemption and renovation of man.[37]

God all in all.

> In like manner as a period is assigned to his priestly office (although that also is called eternal) as well as to his prophetical office, that God may be all in all.[38]

The Judgement of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

> The last judgment is that wherein Christ with the saints, arrayed in the glory and power of the

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[34]Ibid., XVI, 191.

[35]Ibid., XV, 203.

[36]Ibid., XVI, 339.

[37]Ibid., XV, 251.

[38]Ibid., XV, 303.

> Father, shall judge the evil angels, and the whole race of mankind.[39]

Heaven and Hell. The eternal blessedness of Saints and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

> Our glorification will be accomplished by the renovation of heaven and earth, and of all things therein adapted to our service or delight, to be possessed by us in perpetuity.[40]

> The place of punishment is called HELL...[41]

HETERODOX DOCTRINE

I. THEOLOGY

The Trinity of the Divine Persons.

> ...there is in reality nothing which implies either divinity or unity of essence.[42]

> ...it does not follow...that the Son is co-essential with the Father, for then the title of Son would be least of all applicable to him, since he who is properly the Son is not coeval with the Father, much less of the same numerical essence, otherwise the Father and the Son would be one person; nor did the Father beget him from any natural necessity, but of his own free will...[43]

> ...if...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 Spirit he is, (except on certain strange and absurd hypotheses, which have no foundation in Holy Scripture, but were devised by human ingenuity,

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[39] Ibid., XVI, 335.

[40] Ibid., XVI, 379.

[41] Ibid., XVI, 373.

[42] Ibid., XIV, 399.

[43] Ibid., XIV, 187.

> for the sole purpose of supporting this particular doctrine)...[44]

Creation of the world by the will of God out of nothing for his glory and the happiness of his creatures.

> It is clear then that the world was framed out of matter of some kind or other. For since action and passion are relative terms, and since, consequently, no agent can act externally, unless there be some patient, such as matter, 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.[45]

> Inasmuch then as God is the primary, and absolute, and sole cause of all things, there can be no doubt but that he comprehends and embraces within himself all the causes above mentioned. Therefore, the material cause must be either God, or nothing. Now nothing is no cause at all; and yet it is contended that forms, and above all, that human forms, were created out of nothing. But matter and form, considered as internal causes, constitute the thing itself; so that either all things must have had two causes only, and those external, or God will not have been the perfect and absolute cause of every thing.[46]

II. ANTHROPOLOGY

The Fall. Natural depravity, guilt, and necessity.

> ...God decreed nothing absolutely, which he left in the power of free agents...[47]

> ...the apostasy of the first man was not decreed, but only foreknown by the infinite wisdom of God, it follows that predestination was not an absolute

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[44] Ibid., XIV, 379.

[45] Ibid., XV, 19.

[46] Ibid., XV, 21.

[47] Ibid., XIV, 931.

> decree before the fall of man; and even after his fall, it ought always to be considered and defined as arising, not so much from a decree itself, as from the immutable condition of a decree.[48]

> It was not simply man as a being who was to be created, but man as a being who was to fall of his accord, that was the matter or object of predestination; for that manifestation of divine grace and mercy which God designed as the ultimate purpose of predestination, presupposes the existence of sin and misery in man, originating from himself alone.[49]

> ...it is sufficiently evident, that free causes are not impeded by any law of necessity arising from the decrees or prescience of God.[50]

Death.

> The death of the body is the loss or extinction of life. The common definition, which supposes it to consist in the separation of soul and body, is inadmissible. For what part of man is it that dies when this separation takes place? Is it the sould? This will not be admitted by the supporters of the above definition. Is it then the body? But how can that be said to die, which never had any life of itself? Therefore the separation of soul and body cannot be called the death of man.[51]

III. CHRISTOLOGY

The Incarnation of the eternal Logos or the Second Person of the Trinity.

> The Son likewise teaches that the attributes of divinity belong to the Father alone, to the exclusion even of himself.[52]

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[48] Ibid., XIV, 103.

[49] Ibid., XIV, 101.

[50] Ibid., XIV, 87.

[51] Ibid., XV, 217-218.

[52] Ibid., XIV, 227.

IV. PNEUMATOLOGY

The Divine Personality of the Holy Spirit.

> ...the Spirit signifies a divine impulse, or light, or voice, or word, transmitted from above either through Christ, who is the Word of God, or by some other channel. It appears to me, that these and similar passaged cannot be considered as referring to the express person of the Spirit, both because the Spirit was not yet given, and because Christ alone, as has been said before, is, properly speaking, and in a primary sense, the Word of God, and the prophet of the Church...[53]

> Undoubtedly neither David, nor any other Hebrew, under the old covenant, believed in the personality of that good and Holy Spirit, unless perhaps as an angel. More particularly, it implies that light which was shed on Christ himself. It is also used to signify the spiritual gifts conferred by God on individuals, and the act of gift itself.[54]

His eternal procession from the Father.

> ...inasmuch as this latter (Holy Spirit) is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son. With regard to the nature of the Spirit, in what manner it exists, or whence it arose, Scripture is silent...[55]

V. ECCLESIOLOGY AND SACRAMENTOLOGY

The ministry and preaching of the Gospel.

> Extraordinary ministers are persons inspired and sent on a special mission by God, for the purpose of planting the church where it did not before exist, or of reforming its corruptions, either through the medium of preachingor of writing. To this class belong the prophets, apostles, evangelists and the like.[56]

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[53] Ibid., XVI, 367.

[54] Ibid., XVI, 363.

[55] Ibid., XVI, 357.

[56] Ibid., XVI, 239.

> Any believer is competent to act as an ordinary minister, according as convenience may require, supposing him to be endowed with the necessary gifts; these gifts constituting his mission.[57]

VI. ESCHATOLOGY

Immortality of the Soul.

> ...this proves rather that the soul enters the grave with the body, as was shown above, from whence it needs to be redeemed, namely at the resurrection, when God shall receive it...[58]

> Nor do we anywhere read that the souls assemble, or are summoned to judgment, from heaven or from hell, but that they are all called out of the tomb, or at least that they were previously in the state of the dead.[59]

Milton's principal error, if it may be termed that, was an unorthodox view of the Trinity, tending somewhat toward Arianism. More important, however, is the fact that Milton's Arianism influenced even his orthodox doctrine and we find a strange coloring given to some of the important concepts included in Christology, Pneumatology, and Soteriology. The problem becomes more intricate when we consider Paradise Lost. Arthur Sewell was one of the first to contend that the disagreements in doctrine between De Doctrina Christiana and Paradise Lost were so important that it seemed unlikely the treatise was completed in time to serve as a doctrinal guide in the composition of the poem.[60] Shortly thereafter, McDill wrote that it would be best to drop the discussion of the anti-Trinitarian views in Paradise Lost since scholars

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[57] Ibid., XVI, 239.

[58] Ibid., XV, 237.

[59] Ibid., XV, 231.

[60] Arthur Sewell, A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine (New York, 1939), p. 9.

were in no position to make a positive assertion for either side.[61] In 1941 Maurice Kelley proved that while there were some disagreements between De Doctrina Christiana and Paradise Lost, the treatise could be used as an intermediary in reading the epic poem.[62]

It is not the purpose of this thesis to argue the anti-Trinitarian views in De Doctrina Christiana and Paradise Lost. However, brief mention should be made concerning the earliest possible date Milton held Arian views. In Paul Best's Mysteries Discovered, 1647, there occurs an extensive manuscript note in Latin similar to the Arian views contained in Milton's De Doctrina Christiana. R. Brook Aspland, who discovered this note, attributed it to Milton on grounds of stype and script. The editors of the Columbia University edition of Milton's works express the opinion that the handwriting is identical with that of the writer of the letter to the Senate of the city of Hamburg, which was returned undelivered and known to be that of John Milton.[63] H. John McLachlan has also compared the handwriting on the pamphlet with facsimiles of Milton's autograph in his Family Bible, Commonplace Book, the 1647 letter to Charles Diodati, and the sonnets in "Milton's Juvenile Poems, & c." McLachlan, too, is convinced that Mysteries Discovered bears a genuine Milton autograph.[64]

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[61] J. M. McDill, Milton and the Pattern of Calvinism (Nashville, Tenn., 1942), p. 281.

[62] Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument; A Study of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss upon Paradise Lost (Princeton University Press, 1941).

[63] H. John McLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England (London, 1957), p. 158.

[64] Ibid., p. 160.

The possibilities of Milton having held Arian views in 1647 are good. It is interesting to note that in the previous year, April, 1646, the Commons had promised due consideration for sects and schisms providing only that they differed not in any fundaments of religion. In September, however, the House passed the second reading of a bill which punished those who denied doctrines relating to the Trinity and the Incarnation, the punishment being death, and life imprisonment for those who opposed Infant Baptism and other less important doctrines.[65] Thus, if Milton held Arian views, as expressed in the Latin note in Paul Best's Mysteries Discovered, and if the note is that of John Milton, such views no doubt he kept to himself for obvious reasons.

In The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, 1643, Milton attempted to prove that God could not permit divorce under the Mosaic Law if divorce were evil and sinful. To hold this view would be to make God the author of sin. Most scholars are of the opinion that this pamphlet reveals Milton's orthodox Calvinistic views of predestination and that in the following year in Areopagitica he definitely adopted the doctrine of free will, thus emancipating himself from Calvinism.[66] Milton's unorthodox views have been presented, but these views separated Milton from all orthodox creeds and not Calvinism alone. It is only Milton's peculiar views of predestination that separated him from Calvinism. However, references to God's will and predestination in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce and later Areopagitica may be

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[65]Firth, Oliver Cromwell, p. 153.

[66]E. M. W. Tillyard, Studies in Milton (London, 1951), p. 159; Alden Sampson, Studies in Milton and An Essay on Poetry (New York, 1913), p. 209-210; Saurat, Milton, p. 62; Wolfe, Milton, p. 63; Sewell, A Study, p. 48; and Patterson, Milton, p. 152.

interpreted as Calvinistic, but there appears to be only fundamental differences in these views and those expressed in De Doctrina Christiana. A more thorough explanation of predestination in the treatise proved to separate Milton not only from Calvinism, but also from other orthodox creeds on minor points of doctrine.

The idea of the corruption of man's reason and moral sense after the fall of Adam was very general in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England. It was conceived that the human race had fallen into sin by its own free and avoidable self-decision. This was not an exclusive Calvinistic idea, but it was of basic importance in the Calvinistic system of thought and was partially responsible for the moral and spiritual vigor characteristic of Calvinism.[67] Moreover, according to the Calvinist, God, conceiving the human race as fallen, decreed to condemn the whole race for its sin. Reason, which was a part of God's first revelation of himself to man, was entitled to speak concerning the general plan of the divine government and to deduce inferences from it in regard to God's eternal purposes as manifested. The faculty which presumed to sit in judgement upon the problem of sin, and its relation to the divine government had itself been seriously affected by the moral revolution which had taken place. It was, therefore, incompetent to assume the functions of a judge. Out of His mercy and according to His sovereign will, He decreed to save some of the fallen and sinful mass who were thus contemplated as justly condemned. The rest, consequently, were passed by and ordained to continue under just condemnation. So finally, with the doctrine of original sin, depravity, according to the

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[67]Cremeans, Calvinistic Thought, p. 81.

Calvinist, was complete. It admitted no possibility of spiritual good.

In The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Milton denied that God has two wills.

> If it be affirmed, that God, as being Lord may do what he will, yet we must know, that God hath not two wills, but one will, much less two contrary.[68]

Sewell writes that in doing this Milton took an orthodox Calvinistic view. However, according to Sewell, Milton admitted that God's singular will is twofold.

> The hidden ways of his providence we adore and search not, but the law is his revealed will, his complete, his evident and certain will.[69]

and again,

> 'Tis wonder'd how there can be in God a secret, and reveal'd will; and yet what wonder, if there be in man two answerable causes. But here there must be two revealed wills grappling in a fraternall warre with one another without any reasonable cause apprehended.[70]

God's will, then, being twofold, there must be answerable causes in man. Sewell answers interpretively; first, man's own propensity to sin, and secondly, that divine necessity working on man by which God has predestined or predetermined all things. Thus, man, created free, is led by the revealed will of God, but not absolutely free, since God's hidden will decrees how man shall not act.[71]

Later in De Doctrina Christiana Milton came to the conclusion that

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[68]The Doctrine of Discipline of Divorce, Columbia, III, 443.

[69]Ibid., III, 443.

[70]Ibid., III, 443.

[71]Sewell, A Study, pp. 49-50.

to attribute to God a twofold will was too much the same as to attribute to God two distinct wills, whereof one is in direct contradiction to the other.

> ...the scholastic distinction which ascribes a twofold will to God; his revealed will, whereby he prescribes the way in which he desires us to act, and his hidden will, whereby he decrees that we shall never so act; which is much the same as to attribute to the Deity two distinct wills, whereof one is in direct contradiction to the other.[72]

Milton's view here is that God does not exert power in things which imply a contradiction, and this view is in complete harmony with his earlier statement in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce: "God hath not two wills, but one will, much less two contrary." He exemplifies:

> If he once willed adultery should be sinful, and to be punished by death, all his omnipotence will not allow him to will the allowance that his holiest people might, as it were, by his own antinomy, or counterstatute, live unreproved in the same fact as he himself esteemed it, according to our common explainers.[73]

God has but one will. To attribute to God two distinct wills or a twofold will would have man in a conditional position, with God having decreed or predestined all future events. Milton's position here is that God has created a condition within man whereby it is necessary for man to exert reason in his principle of free will. There are two revealed wills "grappling in a fraternall warre" within the mind of man: Passion and Reason. God's divine law has been revealed and man must act.

At the time of the Remonstrant Controversy the argument swung

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[72]De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XIV, 109.

[73]The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Columbia, III, 440.

between Supralapsarianism and Sublapsarianism. While the Synod of Dort was Sublapsarian, it so happened that the chief opponents of the Remonstrants were pronounced Supralapsarians. The natural result was that type of doctrine which the Arminians felt called upon to attack at this time: Supralapsarianism. The objections urged by the Arminians against Calvinistic doctrine of decrees were mainly directed against the Supralapsarian theory. Milton attacked them for their misconception.

> The Jesuits, and that sect among us which is named of Arminius, are wont to charge us of making God the author of sin, in two degrees especially, not to speak of his permission: 1. Because we hold, that he hath decreed some to damnation, and consequently to sin, say they; next, Because those means which are of saving knowledge to others, he makes to them on occasion of greater sin.[74]

Milton disagreed with this Supralapsarian view of the divine decrees and should be considered Sublapsarian. His purpose in writing The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce was to try to show that God could not permit divorce under the Mosaic Law, if divorce was indeed evil and sinful, and to hold such a view would be to make God the author of sin.

The Supralapsarian view tended to minimize man's part in salvation and to attribute everything to the grace of God, who had determined from all eternity the role of the damned and the elect. God alone determines these matters, they held, and man alone is powerless to co-operate in the salvation of his own soul. To the Supralapsarian the decrees of God were absolute; to Milton, however, these decrees were conditional.

> Yet considering the perfection wherein man was created, and might have stood, no decree necessitating his free will, but subsequent; though not

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[74] The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Columbia, III, 440-441.

> in time, yet in order to causes, which, were in his own power; they might methinks be persuaded to absolve both God and us.[75]

Milton's two points are now clear. First, man was created perfect and fell of his own choice, no decree necessitating his fall. Secondly, the decree of free will is subsequent in order of both time and causes which were in man's own power, having been born free. He again attacked the Supralapsarian view in Areopagitica.

> Many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgression. Foolish tongues! When God gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions.[76]

And once again in De Doctrina Christiana,

> Since then the apostasy of the first man was not decreed, but only foreknown by the infinite wisdom of God, it follows that predestination was not an absolute decree before the fall of man.[77]

Milton held that the Atonement was universal, and that depravity was a bias which left the will completely free and man responsible for his own destiny through the choice of faith or unbelief. This made the salvation of all men possible, the result in each case being conditioned by faith, which lay within the will of each individual. To him, election and reprobation both depended upon man's co-operation. He argued that God elects men to everlasting life on the condition of faith and repentance, and rejects only those who in the end refuse to believe and

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[75] Ibid., III, 441.

[76] Areopagitica, Columbia, IV, 319.

[77] De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XIV, 103.

repent. Thus, in later life Milton rejected the extreme doctrine of predestination and urged that some degree of efficacy for salvation lay in the effort of the individual reason to attain truth and of the individual will to pursue righteousness.

The Arian and Arminian views Milton adopted influenced his entire system of theology. They were the basis of his unorthodoxy and they were certainly his most serious offence against the orthodox Protestant creed. Milton adhered to no particular religious sect.* Calvinism was by far the most prominent religious group in England during the seventeenth century and no doubt influenced orthodox Protestantism more than any other religion. However, Milton's unorthodox views, either Arianism or Arminianism, would have separated him from orthodox Protestantism; thus we find modern scholarship at the present time unable to trace the development of either the Arianism or the peculiar view of predestination.

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*See Appendix B.

APPENDIX A

MINOR POINTS OF HETERODOX DOCTRINE

No definite place for church worship.

> Public worship, previously to the law of Moses, was not confined to any definite place; under the law it took place partly in the synagogues and partly in the temple; under the gospel any convenient place is proper.[1]

No particular day set aside for church worship.

> The law of the Sabbath being thus repealed, that no particular day of worship has been appointed in its place, is evident from the same apostle, Rom. xiv. 5. For since, as was observed above, no particular place is designated under the gospel for the public worship of God, there seems no reason why time, the other circumstance of worship, should be more defined.[2]

View of baptism.

> 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 their union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.[3]

No tithing or the endowment of churches.

> Hence to exact or bargain for tithes or other stipendiary payments under the gospel, to extort them from the flock under the alleged authority of civil edicts, or to have recourse to civil actions and

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[1] De Doctrina Christiana, Columbia, XVII, 167-168.

[2] Ibid., XVII, 179.

[3] Ibid., XVI, 169.

> legal processes for the recovery of allowances purely ecclesiastical, is the part of wolves rather than of ministers of the gospel.[4]

Views of marriage.

> With regard to marriage, inasmuch as it is not an institution peculiar to Christian nations, but common to them all by the universal law of mankind, (unless it be meant to restrict the word to the union of believers properly so called,) it is not even a religious ceremony, still less a sacrament, but a compact purely civil; nor does its celebration belong in any manner to the ministers of the church.[5]

Views of divorce.

> Marriage, by its definition, is an union of the most intimate nature; but not indissoluble or indivisible, as some contend on the ground of its being subjoined, Matt. xix. 5. "they two shall be one flesh." These words, properly considered, do not imply that marriage is absolutely indissoluble, but only that it ought not be lightly dissolved.[6]

Polygamy sanctified by Scripture.

> It appears to me sufficiently established...that polygamy is allowed by the law of God: lest however any doubt should remain, I will subjoin abundant examples of men whose holiness renders them fit patterns for imitation, and who are among the lights of our faith.[7]

Subjection of women in the church.

> Women, however, are enjoined to keep silence in the

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[4]Ibid., XVI, 301.

[5]Ibid., XVI, 217.

[6]Ibid., XV, 155-156.

[7]Ibid., XV, 147.

church...and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.[8]

[8] Ibid., XVII, 327.

APPENDIX B

SECTS WITH WHICH MILTON AGREED OR DISAGREED

It is almost impossible to place Milton with any particular religious sect. Certainly he was in agreement with many religious sects; however, one cannot help but feel that Milton the individualist would not have stayed long with any particular group, or that they in turn would have tolerated either his major or his minor points of heterodox doctrine.

He was a Congregationalist:

1) The conception of a Christian congregation or local church; a self governing body of converted believers voluntarily associated for spiritual ends.

2) Independence of such a church of foreign jurisdiction.

3) Duty of voluntary fellowship with other churches.

and a Baptist:

1) The conception of a Christian congregation or local church; a self governing body of converted believers voluntarily associated for spiritual ends.

2) Baptism:
   a) Its subjects: only responsible converts on the ground of a voluntary profession of their faith.
   b) Its method: total immersion of the body.

3) Universal liberty of conscience as a sphere which civil government cannot control.

An agreement or any connection with either the Congregationalist or

the Baptist would have been primarily church discipline.

In doctrine he would have found the Quakers more congenial:

1) Universal diffusion of the inner light for the salvation of men.

2) Immediate revelation superior to, though concordant with, the outward testimony of the Scriptures.

3) The ministry of the Gospel depending on inspiration.

4) Worship is purely inward, and depends upon the immediate moving of the Holy Spirit.

5) Universal liberty.

6) The Sacraments are spiritual acts, not visible rites and ceremonies.

however, he would not have agreed with the Quakers on all points:

1) The ministry of the Gospel regardless of sex.

In addition, consideration must be given to the unorthodox religious sects. No doubt they would have given Milton solace in the declining years of his life on the more important points of his religious views. The Unitarians would have accepted Milton's unorthodox views of:

1) The Trinity.

2) The Incarnation and eternal Divinity of Christ.

3) Original sin and guilt.

4) The vicarious atonement.

and the Arminians would have accepted his unorthodox views of:

1) Conditional election.

2) Possible redemption for all men.

3) The resistible nature of faith and grace.

4) The possibility of total and final apostasy.

Milton probably knew all the religious sects in England during the seventeenth century. To place him with any sect would be to conjecture a point Milton himself made clear in De Doctrina Christiana: "I adhere to the Holy Scripture—I follow no heresy or sect." He had views in common with many sects, but they were a composite of personal religious beliefs, both orthodox and unorthodox, and we find that the religious beliefs which would have placed him with one sect would have separated him from other sects. Thus we conclude that John Milton was a religious independent—his Congregational and Baptist doctrines reveal explicit faith in church discipline; his Quaker doctrine, his deep individualism; and his Unitarian and Arminian doctrine, a profound and intricate theology.

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VITA

Allen Herbert Scott was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, 16 August 1928, and has spent most of his life living in the Old Dominion. Young Scott was educated in the elementary schools of Portsmouth and Norfolk County, Virginia, and received his secondary education at The Patterson School, Patterson, North Carolina, and Woodrow Wilson High School, Portsmouth, Virginia. He was graduated from the latter school with a Literary Academic diploma in February, 1949, but continued until June of that year in pursuit of the Post Graduate course for prospective college students.

In September, 1949, the graduate enrolled in Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia, in pursuit of the Liberal Arts degree. Having spent thirteen months in Japan with the Medical Corps, U. S. Army, in 1946-47, the student was unaware that after completing one year of college he would again find himself a soldier, this time in Korea for twelve months during the years 1950-51. He took an active part in this Police Action.

After discharge from the service the student returned to Bridgewater College where he completed his studies in English Literature and received the Bacholar of Arts degree in June, 1954. In August, 1954, Allen Scott married the former Margaret Jean Showalter, and the following September entered the Graduate School of the University of Richmond. Upon completing one year residence the candidate entered the teaching profession and has taught in the Richmond area two years while completing the requirements for the Master of Arts degree. The candidate desires to continue his graduate studies in Vanderbilt University within several years.