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# John Milton's theory of religious toleration

Roger Shade Wilson

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JOHN MILTON'S  
THEORY OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
University of Richmond

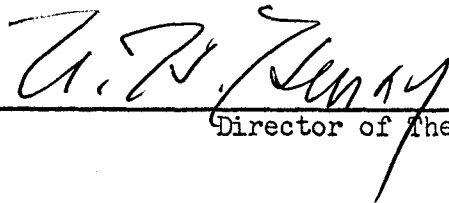
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Roger Shade Wilson  
August 1963

Approved for the  
Department of English  
and the Graduate School by

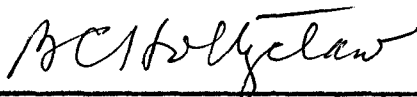


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## PREFACE

Toleration is a term generally misapplied to Milton and the seventeenth century because, all too frequently, people of later dates whose societies have what amounts to an equality of churches tend to equate their conception of religious toleration with that of Milton and the seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, toleration did not mean the same thing that it means in the twentieth century. In our present-day society, diverse religious groups have attained not only toleration but also complete legal equality. Contrary to desiring complete toleration of diverse religious groups, Milton and his contemporaries desired a toleration of people who were in possession of Christian liberty. The very fact that they specified "Christian" liberty automatically limits their conception of toleration to Christians only, and because of the universal fear and distrust of Roman Catholicism in seventeenth century England among the Puritans, their toleration is further limited to Protestant Christians.

The purpose of this study is to show that John Milton and his contemporaries (such as John Goodwin and Roger Williams) never had in mind a broad conception of religious toleration to be extended to persons of all faiths, whether they were Christians, Jews, Turks, or the like, but, because of their conceptions of Christian liberty, advocated a theory of religious toleration to be extended only to Protestant Christians who were entitled to Christian liberty--e.g., the regenerate. The basis Milton and his contemporaries used for drawing their conclusions developed logically from the gospel of Paul through St. Augustine,

Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin, to seventeenth century England.

This study of John Milton's theory of religious toleration is made necessary for two reasons: there is no separate study of Milton's theory of religious toleration;<sup>1</sup> and the few cursory treatments of Milton's ideas of religious liberty extant usually consider Milton's conception of religious liberty to be much more broad than it actually was. This study is an attempt to supply the lack stated in the above first reason and to show that the idea that Milton advocated a broad extension of religious liberty is an incorrect one.

The need for a study of Milton's theory of religious toleration is that in being able to understand what Milton meant by religious toleration one can more easily place Milton in the tradition of the struggle for religious liberty in England. All too often, Milton is considered to have made a much larger contribution to religious liberty than he actually did. The reason for this common misconception of Milton's contributions to religious liberty is that the doctrine of Christian liberty has not been fully explored and compared with the seventeenth century ideas of religious liberty.

By analyzing Milton's conception of Christian liberty and applying it to his conception of toleration, it can be seen immediately that Milton's conception of liberty was less exalted than it has normally been supposed. Even the Areopagitica, which is normally consid-

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<sup>1</sup>W. K. Jordan's consideration of Milton's part in the development of religious toleration--The Development of Religious Toleration in England (Cambridge, 1938-1940), IV, 210 ff.--cannot be considered to be an important exposition because of Jordan's obvious consternation over Milton's complete disregard of the necessity of logically developing a systematic theory of religious toleration.

ered to be an eloquent appeal for complete freedom of the press, can be seen, under closer scrutiny, to be a limited appeal, and to actually sanction book burning!

It is the contention of this student that Milton did not have a broad conception of religious liberty.<sup>2</sup> To show this more pointedly, an attempt has been made to sketch the historical situation (in its broad outlines), and the religious situation during the Puritan Revolution. With the historical and religious background in mind, Milton's place in the toleration struggle can be seen more clearly. Then to show Milton's ideas of Christian liberty, an attempt has been made to develop that doctrine from its source, Paul, through Milton himself.

In order to demonstrate lucidly Milton's theory of toleration from his prose writings, four divisions have been made which encompass the period of his prose activities: (1) his early thought, 1641-1643; (2) the Areopagitica, 1644;<sup>(3)</sup> the political pamphlets and the Christian Doctrine, 1645-1659; and (4) his thought immediately prior to, and during the Restoration period, 1659-1673. No attempt has been made to show any developing theory of toleration, but simply to state his treatment of toleration and Christian liberty (since the two terms should be considered together) as they are treated by Milton in each period:

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<sup>2</sup>Milton's views on toleration must be considered in seventeenth century terms, rather than in twentieth century terms, in order to understand the full implications of his seemingly intolerant (in twentieth century terms) views. Cf. N. H. Henry [in "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," in A Tribute to George Coffin Taylor, ed. Arnold Williams (Chapel Hill, 1952), pp. 197-210] has demonstrated that Milton's limited conception of toleration is not unusual with regard to the background of the period.

It will be necessary to discuss Milton's concept of Christian liberty rather fully for two reasons: an understanding of the concept of Christian liberty is necessary to fully comprehend the extent of Milton's theory of toleration; and Milton wrote more on the subject of Christian liberty than he did on toleration.

No attempt will be made to discuss various specialized topics, such as whether Milton was ever a Presbyterian, or what type of church government Milton advocated, or similar questions.

It will be seen that Milton did not treat toleration fully until his later ecclesiastical pamphlets, and that there is very little in the Areopagitica that relates to toleration.

Because of the complexity of the Puritan Revolution, so far as both political and religious events are concerned, the treatments of these two areas in this study must be recognized as being only brief resumes of the period. For the political and religious background, one must look at more comprehensive treatments than this study.<sup>3</sup> In addition to my recognition that this study has not given a fully detailed over-all story of the Puritan Revolution, it is also recognized that certain specific areas have had to be ignored for various exigencies. Paramount of these is the background of the struggle for the freedom

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<sup>3</sup>See Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe: Three Centuries of Predominantly Agricultural Society, 1500-1830 (New York, 1936), I; John Dykstra Eusden, Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England (New Haven, 1958); Edward, Earl of Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England (Oxford, 1826); Samuel R. Gardiner, History of the Great Civil War: 1642-1649 (London, 1894); and John Richard Green, A Short History of the English People (New York, 1899), II.



of the press, and the part that Milton's Areopagitica plays in its history.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See William M. Clyde, The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press: from Caxton to Cromwell (London, 1934); and F. S. Siebert, Freedom of the Press in England: 1476-1776 (Urbana, 1952). Shorter studies are Warner G. Rice, "A Note on Areopagitica," JEGP, XL (1941), 474-481; and Herschell Baker, "Where Liberty Lies: Freedom of Conscience in Milton's Day and in Ours," Southwest Review, XLI, pp. 1-13.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

I

The events of the period which encompasses the Puritan Revolution, 1640-1660, played an influential part in changing the traditional English thinking on religious, social, and political questions. The rise in power of Parliament marked the political beginning of Modern England. Whether the Puritan Revolution was an uprising caused by constitutional reasons; or the rise to prominence of a large, newly affluent middle class; or an outgrowth of religious reasons, will not concern us in this present study. But a comprehensive understanding of the questions at hand, however, will entail at least a cursory glance at the historical background.

II

In 1640, Charles called the Long Parliament because of his failures in the First Bishops' War (1639) and the Second Bishops' War (1640) against Scotland, and his need for money. The Long Parliament, however, which consisted of a body of men, primarily Puritan, who were united in their hostility against Charles, was less interested in Charles' problems than it was in having its grievances redressed against the policies by which, through Laud and the Earl of Stratford, Charles had attempted to force conformity of religion on the English and had attempted to establish the absolute power of the monarchy.

Its first actions, instead of providing financial support of Charles' policies, were the arrest of the Earl of Stratford, abolition of the hated courts of the Star Chamber and the High Commission, and an enactment to insure its own meeting at least once every three years whether called by the monarch or not. It then methodically set about to couch itself in power which could not be removed by any king. It introduced a bill which would snuff out all of episcopacy in every "root and branch" and by this action make up for the intolerance suffered by the practices of Laud.

The Long Parliament issued its Grand Remonstrance of grievances suffered under Charles I in November, 1641, which included suggestions of reforms, not the least of which was Pym's proposal that the king's ministers must be such as "the Parliament may have cause to confide in." Charles did not sit idly by during this rush of events. He made his attempt through the House of Lords to impeach Pym, Hampden, Hazelrigg, Holles, and Strode--all Parliamentary leaders--on charges of high treason; and when the Lords, who were shocked by the unconstitutionality of the attempt, refused to act, he entered Commons on January 4, 1642, to arrest them personally. This action precipitated the opposition to him, and both the Parliamentary faction and the supporters of the king began preparation for the war which was to begin eight months later.

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John Pym, quoted by George Macaulay Trevelyan, England Under the Stuarts (London, 1916), p. 219.

2

Trevelyan, p. 221.

After a period of about two years, during which the Royalists held the upper hand by virtue of their more experienced soldiers, Parliament entered a "Solemn League and Covenant" with Scotland, to whom it promised that it would see to it that the new religion in England would be based on the Scottish model in return for military aid.

Part of the difficulty experienced by the Roundheads (as the Parliamentary forces were called) was in the divergences of opinion as to what their various segments wanted from the war. The more conservative Puritans wanted to retain the kingship, while others wanted a period in which Parliament would hold power with the king returning to power at a later date. Because of this, some of the Roundheads did not press too hard for complete victory, since they did not want the monarchy destroyed. Another consideration was the rising tide of opinion among the lower class members of the army for a system of religious toleration.

Cromwell utilized this religious fervor and established an army known as the "New Model," which was made up, in general, of the lower class members of the army. With this New Model, the Parliamentary forces rapidly brought the war to a close to the great consternation of a considerable number of Roundheads who looked with disfavor on the members of the New Model Army.

After Charles' capture by the Scots in 1645, the same problem which had prevented a quick conclusion to the war prevented a settle-

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<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid., p. 264.

ment after the king's forces were defeated. Charles took advantage of the disorder in the Puritan camp and tried to deal with each faction. The problem was solved with Charles' flight and subsequent attempt to instigate war between the factions. Because of Charles' actions, Cromwell, with the New Model behind him, took command of the situation and defeated a Scotch Presbyterian army that favored the king. With the support gained from the other army leaders because of Charles' double-dealing, Cromwell posted Colonel Pride at the door of the House of Commons where he weeded out those members who had previously favored returning Charles to the kingship.

The Rump Parliament, which was left, assumed supreme power over England and set up a court which tried, convicted, and executed Charles.

In the new government Cromwell held the most power, and through wars in Ireland, Scotland, and Holland, he was able to demonstrate the power of the new government to countries abroad.

The Commonwealth, however, proved unsuccessful, primarily as a result of the corrupt nature of the members of the Rump Parliament, and it was dismissed by Cromwell who called the "Barebones" Parliament in 1653. This parliament, proving no more successful than the Rump, was dissolved voluntarily in less than six months, and Cromwell became the "Lord Protector" of England until his death in 1658. After his death, Cromwell's son, Richard, succeeded him as Lord Protector but abdicated his position in May, 1659, and the army resumed control with General Monck giving the ablest leadership. Monck led a movement to

recall the Long Parliament, and in 1660 it returned. With its decision to ask Charles I's son to rule as Charles II, the period of direct Puritan dominance came to an end.

In addition to being an outspoken advocate of Puritanism during the momentous conflict between the Puritan Parliament and the king, Milton took an active part in the government of the Commonwealth when it was established in 1649. In 1649, Milton contributed an uncited treatise to the controversy caused by the realization that any sort of compromise with Charles was impossible which in turn propitiated a great deal of republican sentiment and led to Charles' trial and execution. Milton's Tenure of Kings and Magistrates was designed to answer the Presbyterian opposition to these extreme methods and to reconcile the public to the regicide itself.<sup>4</sup> Possibly for this voluntary service, Cromwell appointed Milton Latin Secretary to Council of State in March of 1649, and in this position Milton did much to win respect abroad for the newly formed Commonwealth.

### III

The purpose of this study, as already stated, is to arrive at Milton's theory of religious toleration which can be ascertained only by considering it in the light of the doctrine of Christian liberty. Since a discussion of toleration must consider Christian liberty, the religious aspect of the Puritan Revolution is most important in this

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<sup>4</sup>

James Holly Hanford, A Milton Handbook (New York, 1954), p. 103.

study. For it was a result of the large religious questions which were debated on every side that brought up for public discussion a system of religious toleration in the first place. If it had not been for the intolerance of Laud and, later, of the Presbyterians, perhaps there never would have been a necessity for a workable system of toleration.

The calling of what turned out to be the Long Parliament by Charles in 1640 loosed a tide of events which considerably altered the course of English history. Since a number of its members had been persecuted by Archbishop Laud during the years he was Charles' religious advisor, much of the early work of the Long Parliament was to correct the wrongs they had suffered under Laud's hands. Logically enough, one of its first acts was to send Laud to the Tower..

With the Established Church (the Anglican Church) rendered helpless in parliament, there was presented to Parliament The First and Large Petition of the Citie of London and other Inhabitants thereabouts: For a Reformation in Church-government, as also for the abolishment of Episcopacie (better known as the "Root and Branch" petition) on December 11, 1640, which asked for the abolition of episcopacy "with all its roots and branches."

According to Haller, this petition "touched off the train of events which led finally to the disruption of church government, the confusion of civil war, and the attempt of one faction of the brotherhood of preachers to replace prelacy by an English version of Presbyteri-

anism." <sup>5</sup> Whether Haller's statement is true or not is a matter for historians to determine. The fact of the matter is, however, that with episcopacy out of the picture, as far as effective religious control is concerned by virtue of Laud's arrest and the arrest of many of the bishops, there was indeed a scramble to replace the displaced established National Church. The Presbyterians, because of being more organized in parliament, were in a better position to supply that lack.

The reason for the rush to re-establish a national church is not difficult to find, because the idea of a single state church was so deeply embedded in most Englishmen's thoughts that the idea of being without one was foreign to them and, in fact, almost subversive. <sup>6</sup>

The disagreement as to what the "right" discipline should be occupied a large part of the discussions which raged over the succeeding twenty years until the restoration of the monarchy and the re-installation of the Anglican Church as the national church.

After the demise of episcopacy there followed a period (1643-1647) during which Presbyterianism held the upper hand. During these years, however, there arose an opposition to Presbyterianism which found its expression in what is known as Independency. The "Independent" coalition dealt a death blow to Presbyterianism in 1647 with the Second Civil War, which resulted in the Commonwealth in 1649. During the years after Presbyterianism's defeat, 1648-1660, there was

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<sup>5</sup> William Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution (New York, 1955), p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Hill, The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714 (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 166-7. Cf. Haller, p. 15.



continuous debate over the question of religious toleration.

Toleration had been a moot point earlier, but because of the fact that Presbyterianism was so entrenched, there was little freedom of discussion over the issue. With the ascendancy, however, of the Independent coalition during the period which Jordan calls "The Period of Sectarian (Independent) Domination," it became the topic of religious discussion.

In the free-wheeling religious discussion that lasted for twenty years, Milton took an active part. He entered the debate, in which he is said to have sided with the Presbyterians, in 1641 when the battle was raging against episcopacy. When he discovered that the presbyters were little better than the bishops, he turned against them completely. To the re-institution of the Licensing Ordinance in 1643, Milton answered with his famous plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing, the Areopagitica. After it, Milton maintained a silence over the religious questions for a period of some fifteen years which ended in 1659 with Of Civil Power and The Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings in which he considered various aspects of the relationship between church and state. And in 1673, Milton's Of True Religion was published. This last pamphlet, for our purposes, is perhaps the most important of all his pamphlets.

Milton's individual contributions to the areas in which he played a part will be considered in their respective places in this study.

## CHAPTER II

### CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

#### I

It is easy for one to arrive at the mistaken conclusion that the Puritans (outside the conservative Presbyterians) were zealous advocates of wide conceptions of religious freedom because of the large number of pamphlets written by the Puritans, including Milton, on the subjects of liberty of conscience, religious toleration, and Christian liberty, and the sympathetic treatments of the Puritan Revolution by such scholars and historians as Trevelyan, Masson, Gardiner, and Jordan. What is all too often neglected in considering this period are the inherent limitations of the various systems of religious freedom which were advanced. Only within the past thirty years have certain scholars re-discovered these limitations.

A. S. P. Woodhouse, in his review of Haller's Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, chastises the latter for failing to be aware of the doctrine of Christian liberty as being the basis for setting very definite limitations on the different types of religious liberty. Woodhouse explores this idea further in his collection of the Clarke papers in 1938. One other scholar has considered this

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<sup>1</sup>  
A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Puritanism and Liberty," University of Toronto Quarterly, IV (1934-35), 395-404.

<sup>2</sup>  
Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty (London, 1938), introduction, pp. [1-100]. The page numbers of the introduction are in brackets.

period from the same point of view, and that is Arthur E. Barker.<sup>3</sup>

N. H. Henry has arrived at the conclusion that Milton and all his contemporaries "never advocated more than a limited toleration, and that primarily for his own party" by considering the background of the period and placing the definition of toleration itself in the context of the period under survey. By doing this, Henry has proved that such Milton scholars as Masson have completely misconstrued the actual seventeenth century meaning of toleration by applying later, more liberal, conceptions of toleration. He points out that Masson wrote in a period which not only had toleration as a recognized reality, but in which religious equality had come into being.<sup>5</sup>

Another instance where a scholar has become aware of the implied, though not stated, limitations inherent in these seventeenth century pamphlets on liberty is in Willmoore Kendall's study of Milton's Areopagitica. Kendall, in a careful reading of the Areopagitica,<sup>6</sup> concludes that Milton, contrary to making a plea for a broad freedom of speech, as it is commonly thought, is simply making a plea for people like himself to have freedom of speech.

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur E. Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma (Toronto, 1942); pp. 37-42, 99-107, 110-120, 188-194, 235-259, 286-289, and 293-303.

<sup>4</sup> N. H. Henry, "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," p. 194.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 199-202.

<sup>6</sup> Willmoore Kendall, "How to Read Milton's Areopagitica," Journal of Politics, XXII, pp. 439-473. Kendall evidently arrived at his conclusions independent of other studies of that pamphlet or of that period in which it was written.

Such large studies as Wolfe's Milton in the Puritan Revolution; Haller's Rise of Puritanism and Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution; and Jordan's Development of Religious Toleration in England either do not recognize the existence of the implied limitations inherent in most seventeenth century tracts on liberty, or, as is the case with Haller who seems to disregard the fact that he, himself, had written two other books on a period primarily concerned with religious questions and was in the midst of writing another scoffs at the idea. It almost seems as if he were rationalizing his failure to even include a discussion, however cursory, on the doctrine of Christian liberty in his two earlier works on the period.

## II

Woodhouse and Barker have already discussed, in the main, the doctrine of Christian liberty, but for our present purposes it would be illuminating to include a discussion of it here.

Andrew C. Zenos defines Christian liberty as a

...term...used to denote the breadth of action allowed the believer as distinguished from the non-believer....In the NT the new light on the inner relationship of the believer with God reveals liberty to be one of the essential results of faith (Jn. 8.32 f). In general, this larger range for the play of human activity is viewed as obliterating restraint caused by other conditions. Bondage and slavery in the political sense cease to be sources of distress to the possessor of Christian liberty (I Co. 7.21; Col. 3.11). This

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7

Haller, in Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution, makes the statement that for a seventeenth century Englishman to make a distinction "between one liberty and another was more than most men had time or wish or judgment for." (p. 300.)

liberty consists in the change of attitude toward the law, whereby conduct becomes loving conformity to the will of the Father, instead of constrained obedience to arbitrary prescriptions (cf. 'against such there is no law' Gal. 5.23; also Ro. 7.3; Gal. 2.4; 5.1). Moreover, the principle of sin as a dominant force over conduct loses its compelling power. To this extent the believer is free from sin (Ro. 6.18, 8.2). The added knowledge gained by the believer enables him to see many actions as indifferent, and therefore to be done or not according to his pleasure (I Co. 10. 23-29). This is the perfect law of liberty (Ja. 1.25), which, however, places upon its subject the responsibility 8 of guarding against its misuse and abuse (Ga. 5.3; I P. 2.16).

This whole concept of Christian liberty is inextricably tied to the doctrine of Free Will. It seems apparent that the point of departure of Christian theologians with regard to Free Will is with the gospel of Paul--particularly:

For the good that I would I do not: But the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.<sup>9</sup>

This passage reflects Paul's belief that when Adam sinned man lost every<sup>h</sup>thing and that it is only through the grace of God through Jesus Christ that man is redeemed from sin. Before Christ's coming, man was bound by the strictures of the Mosaic Law which he was bound to obey, and under it, because of Adam's sin, man could do no good:

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8

Andrew C. Zenos, "Christian Liberty," Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Bible Dictionary (Philadelphia, 1936), p. 515.

9

Paul, Romans, 7.19-25. The Bible, King James Version.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing:  
for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good  
I find not."<sup>10</sup>

Under the Mosaic Law, man is free only to sin. With Christ, how-  
ever, man is made "...free from the law of sin and death."<sup>11</sup> There is  
a restriction to the extension of freedom from bondage, however; "...if  
any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of him."<sup>12</sup> But not  
just any man can have the "Spirit of Christ," and be "delivered from  
the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of  
God";<sup>13</sup> it is only to those "who are the called according to his purpose."<sup>14</sup>

When one considers that this "glorious liberty" is reserved  
only for those who are called for God's purpose, the true limitation of  
the seemingly infinite extension of grace can be seen to be considerably  
restricted. Paul further delineates the conditions of election: "For  
whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the  
image of his Son....Moreover whom he did predestine, them he also called:  
and whom he called, them he also glorified."<sup>15</sup> There is an elect, ac-  
cording to Paul, and that elect is justified by God; and Christ, himself,

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10

Ibid., 7.18.

11

Ibid., 8.2.

12

Ibid., 8.9.

13

Ibid., 8.21.

14

Ibid., 8.28. Note that Paul says "...the called." (Italics  
mine in this instance.)

15

Ibid., 8.29-30.

makes intercession for them. The love which comes to those who have received the "Spirit of adoption" is with them forever more and "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature" is capable of separating the elect from it. <sup>16</sup>

All through Paul's Epistle to the Romans run the arguments justifying the doctrine of election (the recipients of which, only, are entitled to Christian liberty), but rather than pick out all these, it will suffice to quote a few more verses which would prove conclusively that Paul conceived of Christian liberty as being a liberty reserved for the elect only and that election itself is an extension of God's infinite mercy (it is not gained by good works); since man (through Adam's sin) had lost everything, and that any good that came to man, or any good that man did was by virtue of God's mercy. "Is there un-righteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Even though this was said to Moses, it applies to "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." <sup>17</sup>

It can be seen that Paul had a definite conception of Christian liberty. All good is the gift of God, since everything came from God.

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<sup>16</sup>

Ibid., 8.31-39.

<sup>17</sup>

Ibid., 8.14-16, 24.

When Adam sinned man lost the good that was his before Adam sinned. Through Christ, given by God in his mercy, man was delivered from the strictures of obeying the Mosaic Law, and given the perfect liberty of doing nothing but good. However, God has reserved this liberty to his elect who are chosen by him, a fact in itself justifying the doctrine of election. Those who have been elected to grace are the recipients of a gift, through God's mercy, that can never be taken from them for any reason whatsoever.

This is the beginning of the doctrine of Christian liberty which is the built-in limitation to the tracts on liberty in the Puritan Revolution.

### III

The doctrine had been a topic for discussion by most of the major Christian theologians throughout the history of the church--at least prior to the seventeenth century.

St. Augustine's thoughts on Christian liberty are important in the history of that doctrine as it was conceived of by Milton and the seventeenth century. It is unnecessary, in the opinion of the writer, to go completely through Augustine's doctrine because it is an amplification of Paul's. With Augustine, however, comes the necessity of justifying according to logic the question of free will, which outwardly seems to contradict the basic precepts of Paul's conception of Christian liberty; whereas, Paul was able to say simply



18

"It is God that justifieth." Augustine had to justify it by other means.

Augustine subscribed to Paul's theory that without grace man was free to do only evil, but, with grace, man had the freedom of choice to do only good (one of the advantages gained from being a possessor of Christian liberty). He thought also that, although man fell through his own will (man had always been free to do evil), he cannot "rise through his own will" because, in order to accomplish the latter,<sup>19</sup> he must have received God's grace.

Before man receives God's grace (and is, therefore, freed from sin) he is a servant of sin and free only to sin; therefore, he is not free to do what is right. Only when man is freed from sin does he begin to be the servant of justice. This is what constitutes true liberty, so far as Augustine is concerned. It is the "joy experienced in doing what is right." But at the same time "it is a holy servitude arising from obedience to precept."<sup>20</sup> Man must be aware at all times that it is only "By grace you are saved through faith."<sup>21</sup>

It is only by virtue of the will "set free by the grace of God from the slavery by which it has been made a servant of sin" that

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Ibid., 8.33.

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St. Augustine, The Problem of Free Choice, trans., by Dom Mark Pontifex (Westminster, Md.; 1954), p. 137.

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St. Augustine, Faith, Hope, and Charity, trans. by Louis A. Arand (Westminster, Md., 1947), p. 38

21

Eph. 2.8., quoted by St. Augustine, p. 38.

man can live rightly. This "gift of God" precedes the act of the will, and not in accordance to the "will's merit"; for if it were, then grace would not be the gift which, in truth, it is.<sup>22</sup>

In Augustine, it becomes more clear why the liberty to do good, even though freed from the Law, is so important. After the fall, but before the Law was promulgated to the Jewish people, man lived in sin without being aware of it. The Law was promulgated simply to make man aware of his culpability. Therefore the law came neither to introduce sin into the world, because it was already there, nor to root it out, for grace alone can do that; it came simply to point it out and at least to give man both a sense of his sin and an appreciation of his need for grace. There is a great distance between knowing the Law and being able to carry it out. For instance lust, contrary to being destroyed by the Law, is increased by being made a violation of the divine commandments. Man knows lust is justly forbidden, but he gives in to it, because only those sustained by the efficacy of grace can not only know the Law but can also carry it out.<sup>23</sup>

Once man comes into possession of God's grace his free will is not restricted; on the contrary, it is made more free. In fact Liberty (libertas) is merely the good use of free choice (liberum ar-

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St. Augustine, Retractions, reprinted in appendix, The Problem of Free Choice, p. 224.

23

The preceding paragraph has been gleaned from Etienne Gilson's The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine, trans., by L. E. M. Lynch (New York, 1960), pp. 153-4.

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bitum). The unlimited nature of the extent of the liberty extended to the elect is reflected by the fact that it is grace alone which confers liberty on man, and the more the will is subject to grace, the healthier it is; and the healthier it is, the freer it is also. 25

From this it can be seen that Christian liberty is, indeed, a proud possession for any man and something not to be tampered with.

Thomas Aquinas is important in the history of the doctrine of Christian liberty, in the writer's opinion, by virtue of the fact that with him the doctrine of predestination is proved more conclusively than it had heretofore been proved. But other than Aquinas' logical proof of predestination, Aquinas' arguments on the subject of Christian liberty seem to use as their basis for fact the writings of St. Augustine. For this reason, if for no other, it seems apparent that it is not necessary to go into Aquinas' theology. 26

#### IV

Luther is noted for his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, but this concept, as is the case with Christian liberty, appears less broadly conceived than it seems at face value. The limita-

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Ibid., p. 164.

25

Ibid.

26

For Aquinas' arguments, see Thomas Aquinas, Nature and Grace: Selections from the Summa Theologica, trans. and ed. by A. M. Fairweather (London, 1954), pp. 101, 116, 137-154. For evidence of Aquinas' debt to Augustine, see Thomas Gilby, "Thomas Aquinas," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1958 ed.), II, 166; and D. J. Kennedy, "Saint Thomas Aquinas," Catholic Encyclopedia, 1912, XIV, 676.

tions of Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers seem to be contained, primarily, in the stipulation that the "priesthood" be in possession of God's grace before their faith becomes a real one: "a Christian man has no need of any work or of any law in order to be saved, since through faith he is free from every law and does all that he does out of pure liberty and freely, seeking neither benefit nor salvation"; but Luther immediately makes the restriction that "since he already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because of his faith, and now seeks only to please God." From this restriction, it can be seen that in order to be a member of the "priesthood of all believers" one must be of the elect. Luther makes this extremely clear when he says, "He...who does not wish to go astray...must look beyond works, and laws and doctrines about works...and ask how that is justified." In so doing, he will find that "...the person is justified and saved not by works nor by laws, but by the Word of God, that is, by the promise of His grace, and by faith, that the glory may remain God's, who saved us not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy by the word of His grace." Not only is the idea that good works gain salvation a misconception, if they are sought after as a means to righteousness they are "burdened with this perverse leviathan and are done under the false impression that through them you are justified" but, in reality, they are "truly damnable works.

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Martin Luther, A Treatise on Christian Liberty, in Three Treatises, trans. by W. A. Lambert (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 272. (Italics mine.)

28

Ibid., p. 273.

For they are not free, and they blaspheme the grace of God, since to  
 justify and to save by faith belongs to the grace of God alone."<sup>29</sup>

It seems unnecessary to carry this discussion of Luther any further; since it should be evident by now that he, as Paul, Augustine, and Aquinas, conceives Christian liberty as being a gift that is received only by those whom God elects to his grace.

One last theologian remains for our consideration of the doctrine of Christian liberty--John Calvin. Calvin defines Christian liberty as consisting of three parts: "(1)...that the consciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness; (2)...that consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed from the law's yoke they willingly obey God's will; and (3) regarding outward things that are of themselves "indifferent," we are not bound before God by any religious obligation preventing us from sometimes using them and other times not using them, indifferently...."<sup>30</sup>

Calvin's conception of Christian liberty (according to the definitions he advances) is little different from that advanced by Paul, Augustine, and Aquinas, and therefore there seems to be little need of exploring it further. By considering the different facets ad-

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<sup>29</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>

John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans, by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, 1960), I, 834-838. For a more compact glance at Calvin, see A Calvin Treasury: Selections from Institutes of the Christian Religion, edited by W. F. Keesecker (New York, 1961), pp. 70-1.

vanced by the different theologians, it is not a difficult matter to arrive at a theory of Christian liberty which includes them all--and that is the doctrine set forth by Paul (mentioned above, pp. 12-15).

V

The doctrine of Christian liberty as traced from Paul to Calvin shows that little change had occurred in fourteen hundred years. It is apparent that Milton and his seventeenth century contemporaries had a conception of Christian liberty not unlike that advanced by Paul,<sup>31</sup> and since Milton based his religious opinions of the scriptures alone, it follows that Milton based his conception of Christian liberty on Paul's doctrine. Whenever Milton uses the term "Christian liberty," he implies (if he does not state) the same limitations that Paul had in mind. And since all of the Puritan pamphleteers used the scriptures as the basis for their arguments, it is apparent that the same limitations are inherent in their discussions of Christian liberty.

If this concept of Christian liberty is kept in mind, it will be seen that those tracts on liberty written during the Puritan Revolution are much less broad in their extensions of religious liberty than is commonly thought.

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Cf. John Milton, The Christian Doctrine, The Complete Works of John Milton (New York, 1931-1938), ed. by Frank Allen Patterson, XIV, 15. (Hereafter to be cited as CE.) In The Christian Doctrine, Milton says, "For my own part, I adhere to the Holy Scriptures alone...."

## CHAPTER III

### MILTON'S EARLY THOUGHT: 1641-1643

#### I

It has already been related how Milton leaped into the pamphlet war against the bishops in 1641. That he joined the battle without calmly considering all the facets of the controverted subjects is attested by the lack of logical development of his arguments, his stooping to vituperative polemics, and his lack of knowledge of what Presbyterianism really stood for:<sup>1</sup>

In the anti-prelatical tracts, Milton was not concerned with the details of the church government which was to replace episcopacy.<sup>2</sup> Milton's argument with the Church of England arose from his conviction that it, under the rule of Archbishop Laud, had become destructive of spiritual vigor.<sup>3</sup> Because of the lack of spiritual vigor, Milton urged immediate reformation of the Church with the new church to be presbyterian in nature. The presbyterian church discipline urged seems not to be Scotch Presbyterianism, but more of an Independent church polity.<sup>4</sup>

But regardless of whether Milton was aware of the problems of

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<sup>1</sup> Haller, Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1938), pp. 349-50.

<sup>2</sup> Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Dowden, Puritan and Anglican: Studies in Literature (London, 1900), p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> Henry, Milton's Puritanism (Doctoral Dissertation, University

settling the details of church government or not there is no doubt that he was perfectly aware of the concept of Christian liberty, liberty of conscience, and, to a degree, religious toleration. This does not mean that Milton gave well-reasoned arguments for any of these. His immense intellect apparently would not settle into the confines of a well-ordered pamphlet--at least in the anti-prelatical pamphlets.

In Of Reformation, Milton immediately mentions the problem that had caused the Puritans to object so strenuously to Laud's practices--that of being made to conform to things considered by the Puritans as indifferent. To Milton, the preoccupation of the Anglican Church with "...mitres, gold and geugaws fetched from Aron's old wardrobe" had been the reason that the soul had "given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wing apace downward: and finding the ease she had from her visible and sensuous colleague, the body, in performance of religious duties...forgot her heavenly flights, and left the dull and droyling\* carcass to plod on the old road, and drudging trade of outward conformity."<sup>5</sup>

The concept of the soul and the body as being two separate entities has been discussed in the chapter on Christian liberty; so,<sup>6</sup>

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of North Carolina, 1941), p. 152; cf. Allen Herbert Scott, "John Milton: Religious Independent" (M. A. Thesis, University of Richmond, 1957), p. 40.

\* Note to the reader: the CE prints Milton's prose with its original seventeenth-century spelling.

<sup>5</sup> Milton, Of Reformation, CE, III, 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> See also, Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, pp. [57-60].



the preceding paragraph can be seen as a clear indication that Milton was completely aware of the separation of natural and spiritual things. If Milton's familiarity with, and acceptance of, the doctrine of Christian liberty is kept in mind, it will be apparent that the limitations of Milton's theory of religious toleration are contained in his tracts, whether he specifically points them out or not.

But in his first entry into the pamphlet warfare of his day, Milton was directing his pamphlets to people who were as aware of the religious ground rules, as it were, as he was; so it was unnecessary for him to spell out the separation of the two orders of the world. In Of Reformation, Milton appears to think that episcopacy has failed as a religious group because it had attempted to combine these two orders by forcing the Puritans to conform to what the latter considered to be indifferent matters.

In so doing, episcopacy had returned the church to the position it had been in under the Mosaic Law under which the church operated in the Old Testament. Milton was at one with Calvin's statement, "...that consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that free from the law's yoke they willingly obey God's will";<sup>8</sup> because he says that "...the duties of evangelicall grace" which used to be done by the elect with the "...adoptive and cheerful goodness which our new alliance with God requires" had been changed by

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., p. [37].

<sup>8</sup>

Calvin, I, 834-838. This is one of the three parts of the definition Calvin gives to Christian liberty.

episcopacy into a "...Servile and thral-like feare...."<sup>9</sup>

Further indications are given by Milton later in Of Reformation that he is very much at odds with episcopacy over the precise definition of "indifferent" things:

O Sir, if we could but see the shape of our deare Mother Eng-land...how would she appeare...but in mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and teares abundantly flowing from her eyes, to behold so many of her children expos'd at once, and thrust from things of dearest necessity, because their conscience could not assent to things the bishops thought indifferent.<sup>10</sup>

Milton considers it a crime indeed to force a true Christian, who is in God's grace, to be forced to conform to "indifferent" things in religion. "What more binding then Conscience? what more free then in-differency needs be," for if any means should be taken that "shall violate the strict necessity of Conscience..." true religion suffers. When conscience is restricted the bonds of religion "shall break asunder."<sup>11</sup>

Milton did not treat the subject of religious toleration at all in his first three anti-prelatical pamphlets. He was more concerned over the consequences of a church system which attempted to bind the consciences of God's elect by forcing them to conform to indifferent things. Milton seemed to think that the forcing of conscience would do the church irreparable harm.

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<sup>9</sup>  
Milton, Of Reformation, CE, III, 3.

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>11</sup>  
Ibid.

That Milton's sympathies were not with the masses in 1641 (nor does it seem that they ever were) is shown by his conservative approval of the monarchy. By his approval of the monarchy, Milton showed himself to be of the same mind of most of his fellow Englishmen.<sup>12</sup> Milton's lack of interest in the masses' religious freedom is shown vividly by his warning to the bishops, in Of Reformation, that if religious liberty is denied to Englishmen (i.e., the regenerate) rebellion will result. "What more banefull to Monarchy than a Popular Commotion, for the dissolution of Monarchy slides aptest into a Democracy...."<sup>13</sup>

Sentiments such as this do not indicate a broadly conceived sympathy with the public as a whole, but it goes to prove that Milton never was a disciple of broad freedoms of anything for the masses. He argued for a limited group of people. Milton did, of course, negate the idea that wider religious freedom for the elect would open the gate to "a flood of sects....What sects?....Noise it till ye be hoarse; that a rabble of sects will come in, and it will be answer'd ye, no rabble, Sir Priest, but a unanimous multitude of good Protestants will then be join to the church, which now, because of you, stand separated."<sup>14</sup> However, Milton is not noted for logic in these early pamphlets, and in the following chapter he can be seen applauding the presence of "sects and errors" as being that which "God suffers to be

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<sup>12</sup>

Cf. Hanford, p. 79; and Don M. Wolfe, Milton in the Puritan Revolution (New York, 1941), pp. 46-7.

<sup>13</sup>

Milton, Of Reformation, CE, III, 56-7.

<sup>14</sup>

Milton, The Reason of Church Government, CE, III, 215-6.

for the glory of good men, that the world may know and reverence their true fortitude and undaunted constancy in the truth."<sup>15</sup>

Even though this last statement seems to be a contradiction to the first, it still seems obvious that Milton desires the greatest breadth of freedom for the regenerate and if there are to be any sects or errors allowed it is to make the truth present in the regenerate more pointed.

There is little else that need concern us in the anti-prelati- cal tracts other than to mention that for Milton the scriptures were always the point of reference for his religious arguments: "The tes- timony of what we believe in religion must be such as the conscience may rest on to be infallible, and incorruptible, which is only the word of God."<sup>16</sup> Milton had written on this same subject earlier, in Of Reformation, where he had said that the scriptures were the final authority and there was no need for the bishops to tell anyone how to read the scriptures. For the bishops to even infer that it is neces- sary for them to interpret the Bible for others goes "...to infer a general obscurity over all the text, [and] is a...suggestion of the devil to dissuade men from reading it, and casts an aspersion of dis- honor both upon the mercy, truth and wisdom of God."<sup>17</sup>

In the anti-prelati- cal tracts (Of Reformation; Of Prelatical

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<sup>15</sup>

Ibid., pp. 223-4.

<sup>16</sup>

Milton, An Apology, etc., CE, III, 326.

<sup>17</sup>

Milton, Of Reformation, CE, III, 32.

Episcopacy; Animadversions, etc.; The Reason of Church Government, etc.; An Apology, for Smectymnuus). Milton did not become involved in the debate over religious toleration that had been prompted by such astute observers as Roger Williams, John Goodwin, and Lord Brooke, who had recognized in Presbyterianism an intolerant church system not very different from Laudian episcopacy. Milton, however, did touch on the subjects of Christian liberty and liberty of conscience and revealed himself to be an apologist for the regenerate. It seems apparent that Milton had no doubt that he was a member of the regenerate, and it was for him, and others like him, that he appealed for religious freedom.

He appears to have thought that any rule by the masses, whether of religious matters or of political matters, was something that would work to the detriment of England. Milton did, however, treat a subject that was to be paramount in the Areopagitica, written over a year after the last anti-prelatical tract--that of truth becoming more true when compared directly with error. By this, it would seem that Milton would tolerate sects and errors to show more pointedly the truth and grace of those in God's grace. But on the whole, if any degree of toleration can be gleaned from these first five pamphlets, it would reveal a system of toleration from which Milton never deviated throughout all his prose works--an extension of toleration to all Protestant Christians who could be counted among the regenerate.

## II

After the anti-prelatical tracts, Milton absented himself

from the continuing pamphlet warfare for a period of a year and a half. During this time many events occurred both in England and in Milton's private life which were to alter Milton's opinions somewhat.

On June 14, 1643, the Long Parliament with its Presbyterian majority reinstated the Licensing Ordinance which had been one of Laud's methods of forcing conformity on the Puritans. The Licensing Ordinance had been established by Elizabeth I and had run unbroken through Charles I's reign until it was abolished when the Long Parliament first sat in 1640. After the abolition of the Star Chamber (the enforcing agent of the Ordinance), free discussion was rampant for almost three years. During these years, the Presbyterians had gained in power through political and military exigencies which required that some agreement be made with Scotland to aid Parliament in the widening breach between it and the king which culminated in open rebellion.

As the Presbyterians gained in power, they sought methods of consolidating their power. The Licensing Ordinance was one of the results of the Presbyterians attempts to hold their gains. As the Presbyterians had gained political power, it became apparent to many Englishmen that the Presbyterians were no more tolerant than Laud had been. Because of this, many pamphlets were directed against the Presbyterians.

Following hard on the reinstatement of the Licensing Ordinance, came the formation of the Westminster Assembly of Divines by Parliament (July 1, 1643) to advise the latter on the matter of establishing the one "right discipline" for England. Since the Assembly was

made up of a large majority of Presbyterians, there was little doubt in anyone's mind as to what the "right discipline" advocated by the Assembly would be.

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These two events did not appear to affect Milton very much, because it was over a year after the Licensing Ordinance was passed before he wrote the Areopagitica. During the interim, Milton had licensed Of Education (June 5, 1644) and The Judgement of Martin Bucer (July 15, 1644) which indicates that he was not extremely upset over the Ordinance at the beginning.

The toleration controversy initiated by the five dissenting divines with their Apologeticall Narration in late 1643 or early 1644 (which was a last-ditch effort, as it were, to insure an accommodation for their beliefs under Presbyterianism when it came to be the established church) appears to have been little noted by Milton because there is no mention of it in the divorce pamphlets, or in Of Education, or in The Judgement of Martin Bucer.

The only pamphlets written after the anti-prelatical tracts (during the years 1641-1643) that are of any importance so far as this study is concerned are the divorce pamphlets. Their importance lies in what Milton had to say about Christian liberty. Milton's discussion on Christian liberty in these divorce tracts, however, is not really applicable to this study; because, in the opinion of the writer, Milton seems to be more interested in stretching the scriptures to con-

form to his ideas on divorce than on Christian liberty as it has been defined in this study (see above, p. 11).

Milton's basic contention (that of Christ's coming as being an abrogation of the Mosaic Law) is in keeping with the basic concept of Christian liberty. But, he has to make an exception to this general contention to prove that divorce is an indifferent thing to be done or not according to the believer's individual conscience. Milton says that the scriptural foundation on which the doctrine which says divorce is forbidden in the New Testament was written by Paul, not of commandment, but by permission. Because Paul was not commanded by God to speak about divorce, Milton concludes that Paul's doctrine of divorce does not have to be followed. In addition, Milton says that Paul had made a judgment about an indifferent thing about which "God thought best to leave uncommanded." Not even an apostle can "interpose his judgment in a case of Christian libertie without the guilt of adding to Gods word."<sup>19</sup>

Milton's attempt to prove that divorce is an indifferent thing and therefore a civil matter, rather than a religious matter, seems to be his primary concern in the divorce tracts. He says little, in the opinion of the writer, about Christian liberty (Milton says nothing about toleration in these tracts) that would necessitate a detailed discussion of the tracts.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Milton, Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1st ed.), CE, III, 396.

<sup>20</sup>For further information on Milton's arguments for divorce, see Barker ("Christian Liberty in Milton's Divorce Pamphlets," and Milton



## III

During the years 1641-1643, though Milton wrote voluminously about religious matters, he had little to say directly on the subject of religious toleration, already a major topic of discussion with other Puritan writers. Though Milton did not treat the doctrine of Christian liberty as an individual topic, he showed himself to be fully aware of it in its fullest applications.

It has been seen that when Milton writes of liberty, he generally means "Christian" liberty rather than civil liberty. Even though he treated the subject of Christian liberty (the treatment is slight, however), Milton seems to have made no direct plea for the extension of it to anyone, or any group. His interests in the religious controversy seems to be a desire to get rid of the bishops (in the anti-prelatical tracts), and to prove that divorce was an indifferent matter and therefore a civil matter (in the divorce tracts).

Other than the fact that his arguments for a complete reformation of the church might be considered for the good of humanity,<sup>21</sup> Milton does not appear to have grasped the realistic religious situation that was broiling around him. His interests were to become more realistic shortly after this period (perhaps as a result of the manner in

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and the Puritan Dilemma, pp. 63-98); Haller (Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution, pp. 78-99); Hanford, pp. 88-94; and Ernest Sirluck, ed. (Complete Prose Works of John Milton (New Haven, 1953-1959), II, 137-158. Hereafter to be cited as YE).

<sup>21</sup>Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution, pp. 56-64.

which his divorce tracts were received by the Presbyterians) and he was to take an active part in the controversies, political and religious, on a more mundane level.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELIGIOUS TOLERATION CONTROVERSY

#### I

One of the most controversial aspects of the Puritan Revolution was the question of religious toleration. The lack of toleration had been one of the major factors in causing the war,<sup>1</sup> and during the following decade (1640-1649), the lack of religious toleration and the pressing need for it left England in a religious muddle that was not solved until the Commonwealth was established in 1649.

Prior to Laud's being raised to Archbishop of Canterbury and being entrusted by Charles to carry out church policies, the Puritans had been granted considerable leeway in the established church system that had been set up by Elizabeth I. In it, the Puritans had only to conform occasionally to various dictates of the Established Church. It was only when zealous Puritans refused to conform that persecution was levelled at any Puritans. Laud, however, refused to allow non-conformity in England and, with the consent of Charles, set about to enforce conformity. Because of Laud's strict enforcement of this policy, he was primarily responsible for the violent reaction to episcopacy in 1640 with the convening of the Long Parliament.

The religious vacuum, caused by the disestablishment of the Anglican Church presented further difficulties for the Puritans since

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<sup>1</sup>Jordan, III, 17.

they, as almost all Englishmen at that time, were in favor of a single state church. Of course, the Puritans desired a form of toleration or accommodation inside whatever that single state church was for their own unique beliefs. After Laud's arrest and after the destruction of the courts of the Star Chamber and the High Commission, which rendered episcopacy ineffective, the Puritans, who were now in control of Parliament, since they held a majority in it, attempted to settle the question of what should be the "right discipline" established for England.

Masson points out that there were three parties in England in 1640 that were concerned with reforming the constitution of the Church of England. There was the "High Church Party" which was made up of Laudians who, even though they realized the impossibility of preserving Laud's system in its entirety, were interested in retaining as much of his system as could be retained. Allied with these were those who, even though they had not been Laudians theologically, had recently been "approximating to Laud ecclesiastically." At the head of this group was Hall, Bishop of Exeter. The second group, to which a far larger number of the laity belonged, was the "Moderate" or "Broad Church Party." This group aimed, mainly, at a "Limited Episcopacy" instead of the episcopacy then established. They wanted to preserve the episcopal organization of the Church, not from any belief in its absolutely divine or apostolical right, but on the grounds of expediency and national fitness. Along with this they wanted a great reduction of the power of the bishops and the clergy generally. The last of the three parties was what Masson calls the "Root and Branch Party." Its members consisted, primarily, of Presbyterians who wanted the abolition of episcopacy

"root and branch," the annihilation of all dignities in the Church above that of presbyters or parish-minister, a simplification of the ritual of the Church to correspond, and the distribution of the funds obtained from the abolition of the Anglican system to "humbler" religious uses, or the general uses of the state.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the church policy advocated by the Moderates was more congenial to traditional English religious thought, the rising difficulties with the king eventually ruled out this system.

The formation of the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1643 which had been commissioned by Parliament to advise it on the answer to the church problem fostered other problems for the religious groups outside Presbyterianism. The Assembly had as its sole aim the forcing of a system of Presbyterianism on England. This coercion was resisted by a small number of Independent divines (the five dissenting brethren) who saw, from the beginning, the serious danger which religious liberty would experience from the attempts of the Presbyterians to impose an exclusive and rigid church system on England.<sup>3</sup> But the uniformity of thought among the Presbyterians impressed a large number of Englishmen who longed for a solid symbol of religious authority. The Independent leaders in the Assembly, though their doctrine was indistinguishable from the Presbyterians in 1643,<sup>4</sup> sensed that there would be

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<sup>2</sup>David Masson, The Life of John Milton (New York, 1946), II, 195-199.

<sup>3</sup>Jordan, III, 48.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

no room for dissent under a Presbyterian Church system. All they argued for was an accommodation of their beliefs under Presbyterianism, but the fact that they held out for some measure of religious liberty, however slight, endeared them to the Sects.

As it became more obvious that the Presbyterians had little room in their doctrine for tolerating any type of dissent and that even criticism of their premises was considered a "species of heresy,"<sup>5</sup> the Independents were driven more to the left, in order to encompass the desires of the Sects--which included a desire for religious toleration--and to gain thereby their support.

It may be commonly thought that Milton's Areopagitica was the first plea for religious liberty in the struggle for religious freedom in the Puritan Revolution, but almost a year prior to the appearance of the Areopagitica, the five dissenting divines in the Westminster Assembly published An Apologeticall Narration. The five dissenting divines (Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs, and Williams Bridges) had lived in exile in Holland until the advent of the Long Parliament and, on their return to England, they expected to be able to preach as they had in Holland.<sup>6</sup> They had no real argument with the Presbyterians so far as doctrine was concerned, for they were as orthodox as the Presbyterians were. They opposed, however, the "rigorous centralization of control desired by their op-

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>Haller, "Before Areopagitica," PMLA, XLII (1927), 878.

ponents, and favored a somewhat larger freedom for individual ministers and congregations."<sup>7</sup> The five dissenting divines had no intentions of making a general plea for religious liberty, but rather a plea for an accommodation for them and their adherents under the Presbyterian system if it should be established in England.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of An Apologeticall Narration is twofold: it was a sharp reminder to the Assembly of Divines that the English Puritans, let alone the English people, were not prepared to accept Presbyterianism, and that no uniform church system could be imposed except by civil power, from which it followed that the final decision concerning the church rested with Parliament;<sup>9</sup> and it transferred the debate over the one "right discipline" from the Assembly to the floor of Parliament (the tract was "Humbly Submitted to the Honourable Houses of Parliament.") and thus to the public at large--a step taken because they had come to realize that there was no further hope of the Presbyterian majority in the Assembly helping or favoring accommodation.<sup>10</sup>

It is in the second reason that the five dissenting brethren in their Apologeticall Narration really made their contribution to the struggle for religious liberty. The fact they they addressed it to Parliament (therefore to the people at large) opened the floodgates,

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<sup>7</sup>Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 1638-1647 (New York, 1934), I, 49.

<sup>8</sup>Masson, III, 87; see also Sirluck, ed., YE, II, 72.

<sup>9</sup>Haller, "Before Areopagitica," p. 879.

<sup>10</sup>Jordan, III, 369; Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty, I, 50; Sirluck, ed., YE, II, 72.

as it were, of arguments for toleration, and there developed three forms of toleration which were urged on the English people in 1644 as alternatives to the intolerant church structure that the Presbyterians were attempting to force on England. Masson lists these as (1) a system of Absolute Liberty of Conscience with no national church, or state interference with religion, of any kind whatever; (2) a system of unlimited toleration around an established national church; and (3) a system of limited toleration around an established national church.<sup>11</sup>

Of the first system, Roger Williams is mentioned as being the main exponent, as he is also, of the second system. The third system is considered to be more representative of the English people in the main, and its spokesmen were the five dissenting brethren. It is to be recalled, however, that the toleration urged in this system is a very limited one which would include an "indulgence" for them after Presbyterianism should be established, and an indulgence for other respectable sects and persons who entertained "lesser differences."<sup>12</sup>

It would be remembered, however, that all of these systems of toleration are even more limited than they appear on the surface as indicated in the preceding chapter.

## II

No attempt will be made here to mention all the differences of opinion

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<sup>11</sup>Masson, III, 122-124.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 129.



in the controversy over toleration because of the complexity of such an endeavor. For the purpose of this study it will suffice to mention only John Goodwin and Roger Williams in addition to John Milton, since these two men are often compared to Milton so far as the liberality of their views on religious liberty are concerned. The overall views of Milton will be discussed at length elsewhere.

The first of these two men to be discussed is John Goodwin. W. K. Jordan says of Goodwin that he "gave to religious toleration the ablest and most systematic defence which it was to receive during the period under survey."<sup>13</sup> It is to Goodwin that credit can be given for the enlargement of Congregational thought into Independency, and, through this function, he gave to the Independent position "clarity, vigour, and persuasiveness."<sup>14</sup>

When the Civil War broke out in 1642, Goodwin went to the fore in not only arguing for the right to resist the king, but in goading the people to actually resist the king.<sup>15</sup> But his most important contribution was his unhappiness over the moderate and tentative position assumed by his more cautious colleagues in the Assembly, and the fact that he grasped intellectual control of the movement which aligned the sects and powerful sections of lay thought under the "banner of Inde-

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<sup>13</sup>Jordan, III, 376.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>John Goodwin, Anti-Cavalierisme, reprinted in Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty, II, 217-269.

pendency."<sup>16</sup>

The difficulty in accurately gauging Goodwin's thought on the subject of religious liberty (in which is included the subject of religious toleration) that has given rise to the general misconception of what toleration really meant to the seventeenth century religious thinkers can be seen clearly in W. K. Jordan's study of the period. For example, Jordan begins by crediting Goodwin with giving the "ablest and most systematic defence: of religious toleration that it received during the tumultuous twenty years that encompassed the period of Puritan dominance,<sup>17</sup> and ends by having to admit that the "weight of his [Goodwin's] argument was launched rather against the evils of intolerance than in the defence of a positive theory of toleration."<sup>18</sup> Then, as if to completely reveal his consternation at having to make this admission, Jordan quickly informs the reader: "Yet this cannot be represented as an indication that he was without determined and zealous devotion to religious liberty in the broadest meaning of that term."<sup>19</sup> The last statement is, of course, a contradiction of the first, but it is not an uncommon failing that of necessity follows unless one applies the concept of Christian liberty to the question of toleration.

Sirluck is not so hesitant as Jordan to recognize that Goodwin's theory of religious toleration was a limited one. Sirluck ad-

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<sup>16</sup>Jordan, III, 377.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 411.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

mits that Goodwin goes far beyond both the right of the saints to carry out God's will and Christian liberty in things indifferent, but Goodwin, Sirluck points out, stopped short of advocating a general toleration.<sup>20</sup>

Goodwin's attitude can be seen readily by analyzing his most important statement on toleration, Theomachia. In it, Goodwin makes no plea for a broad application of toleration. He argues for the toleration of Independents. When Goodwin says that "Reformation indeed suffers, and loseth time" when "the Way...which call[s] God Father" is "hedg'd up with thornes,"<sup>21</sup> he does not mean that every religious group should be free to exercise their consciences freely. Goodwin qualifies his previous statement by saying, "The gleanings of Independency (So called) will not hinder the vintage of Presbytery" because the earth is big enough to contain the "irregularity" of Independency without upsetting "the perfect roundnesse of it, because it is swallowed up into victory by the vastnesse of the globe."<sup>22</sup>

In fact when the "Nationall Reformation" is complete

let but Presbytery bestir herself, and act her part within her Jurisdiction, with as much diligence, wisdome and faithfulness, as the Congregationall Way will undertake to act amongst her Proselytes; and there will not be the least occasion to feare, but that the whole and entire body of the

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<sup>20</sup>Sirluck, ed., YE, II, 113.

<sup>21</sup>Goodwin, Theomachia, reprinted in Haller, ed., Tracts on Liberty, III, 21.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

nation will shine with the beauty and lustre of a perfect Reformation.<sup>23</sup>

Notably absent from the integral members of the "perfect Reformation" are all the Sects, Jews, Turks, anti-Christians, and Roman Catholics.

So when Goodwin incredulously wonders "how men come to have so much ground of hope as to set their foot upon, of composing differences and distractions, or settling peace and love throughout the Nation, by exalting one way of Discipline, of Church-Government, for the treading downe and trampling underfoot all others."<sup>24</sup> it is obvious that Goodwin's primary concern is to make sure that the Independents who follow the "Congregational Way" are not among those that will be subjected to the "treading downe and trampling underfoot" by the Presbyterians.

Further evidence that Goodwin is arguing for a limited toleration of the Independents (in Theomachia) is shown by his question of whether "Independence (so called)" is an exception to the rule of God's charge that his anointed be not touched and his prophets done no harm. Goodwin finds it hard to believe that God has "any where made Presbyterie a distinguishing character of such of his anointed ones, who must not be touched from others of them, who may be crushed, and whose bones may be broken."<sup>25</sup>

The "anointed ones," as it will be recalled from the chapter on Christian liberty, is a term which is a synonym for members of God's

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

elect, or those who are in God's grace and are therefore entitled to Christian liberty.

These few illustrations make it clear that Goodwin, contrary to being devoted to religious liberty "in the broadest meaning of that term"<sup>26</sup> was simply striving to protect himself against the charge of espousing an unlimited toleration.<sup>27</sup>

Roger Williams, himself, advocates a toleration which is much less universal than is commonly thought. Williams is credited with demolishing the doctrine of persecution and with extending a system of toleration to all faiths, including Jews, Turks, and pagans provided they obey the civil authorities. This stipulation "provided they obey the civil authorities" is important in an over-all consideration of Williams' thought because it shows his recognition that the spiritual state and the civil state should be completely separate. But what often leads to a misconception about Williams' theory of religious toleration is the seemingly universal applications of it--to Jews, Turks, and pagans, etc.--obscures the fact that Williams, a Calvinist in doctrine (he believed in the doctrine of predestination in its strictest form),<sup>28</sup> when he thought of mankind, divided it into two parts: those entitled to Christian liberty (those who by predestination are elected to God's

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<sup>27</sup>See Sirluck, ed., YE, II, 113. Sirluck advances the hypothesis that Goodwin denied the authorship of M. S. to A. S. because he wanted to make it clear to the enemies of Independency that he advocated an unlimited toleration when in reality he advocated a limited one as did most Independents.

<sup>28</sup>Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, pp. 90-1.

grace), and the other part entitled only to natural liberty and have absolutely no claim whatsoever to the liberties reserved for the elect.<sup>29</sup> And when he extends "toleration" to Jews, Turks, and pagans provided they do not break the civil rules, he simply extends them the right to be "permitted in the world."<sup>30</sup>

Pursuing this same point, Williams says that since the kingdom of "Christ Jesus" consists of "officers, laws, punishments, weapons" that "are spiritual and of a soul nature," Christ "will not have anti-christian idolators, extortioners, covetors, &c., to be let alone." These must be "thrust forth" as the unclean and lepers are thrust forth, and then "the obstinate in sin" will be "spiritually stoned to death."<sup>31</sup>

So far as Williams' demolition of the doctrine of persecution is concerned, it is enlightening to note his reasoning of this matter:

First, it is not lawful to persecute any for conscience' sake rightly informed; for in persecuting such, Christ himself is persecuted in them...Secondly, for an erroneous and blind conscience, (even in fundamental and weighty points) it is not lawful to persecute any, till after admonition once or twice...[because] in fundamental and principle points of doctrine or worship, the word of God in such things is so clear, that he cannot but be convinced in conscience of the dangerous error of his way after once or twice admonition, wisely dispensed.<sup>32</sup>

This has been quoted at length to show that Williams was even in favor of persecution, provided the person who had an erroneous and blind conscience was given at least two opportunities to see the error of his ways. Then if the person still persisted in his "error" he was acting

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<sup>30</sup>Roger Williams, The Bloody Tenent of Persecution, printed for the Hanserd Knollys Society by J. Haddon (London., 1848), p. 80.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-1.

"not out of conscience, but against conscience." And if this person, after "such admonition, shall still persist in the error of his way" it is permissible to persecute him because "he is not persecuted for the cause of conscience, but for sinning against his own conscience."<sup>33</sup>

If one understands that Williams did indeed advocate a complete separation of church and state and will consider this with what has been said thus far about Christian liberty, Williams' statement that the "civil New England state...ought permit either Jews, or Turks, or anti-christians to live amongst them subject unto their civil government,"<sup>34</sup> means exactly what it says. It does not imply any religious freedom whatsoever for these non-Christians.<sup>35</sup>

It should be clear now that Williams' theory of toleration is considerably less broad than it has been commonly thought. His pre-occupation with the spiritual man as opposed to the natural man, the spiritual state as opposed to the civil state, Christian liberty as the prerogative of the spiritual man alone as opposed to natural liberty which is reserved for all men (the natural man, however, has no claim to spiritual liberty since he has not been elected to grace) automatically limits his extension of any type of religious freedom to the members of the elect since they are the only ones entitled to spiritual

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.; see also p. 24

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>35</sup>Henry has pointed out (in "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," p. 202) that according to Williams "the Magistrate is required to grant 'permission and protection to a religion' even though he believes it to be false; but there is the qualifying phrase: 'provided it were Protestant.'"

(or Christian) liberty as defined in the New Testament. This extension is further limited by Williams' belief that the Protestant Christian church is the true religion of the Bible and therefore only Protestant Christians are capable of being elected to grace.

### III

This chapter on the toleration controversy has been an attempt to show that of the major theories of toleration advanced there was always implied (and often stated, though in different words) a limited toleration to be extended to God's elect--an extreme limitation in itself--who were Protestant Christians. It has been seen that Goodwin, contrary to advocating a broad theory of toleration, was simply trying to prove to the enemies of Independency that Independency did not advocate a toleration with broad applications, but wanted a toleration for Independency, alone, under Presbyterianism when it became the established church. It has also been seen that Williams' theory of toleration, commonly thought of as being very liberal, does not allow Jews, Turks, or anti-Christians the right of maintaining establishments of their religions, but simply allows them the right to live under the civil government, provided they obey its laws.

Now that the historical and religious backgrounds have been sketched and a brief mention of the doctrine of Christian liberty has been made along with a brief discussion of the toleration controversy, it is possible to go directly to Milton to determine his part in all that has been mentioned thus far.



## CHAPTER V

### MILTON'S ROLE IN THE RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

Milton wrote his first anti-prelatical tract in 1641, and in so doing, he joined the battle already raging between the newly freed Puritan spokesmen and the soon to be dispossessed bishops. Of the latter, Archbishop Laud had already been placed in the Tower where he was soon to be joined by a number of his colleagues.

The camp to which Milton lent his aid was the Smectymnuans (a name which is derived from the initials of the five men--Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurston--who wrote the pamphlets attacking Bishop Hall).

Bishop Joseph Hall had written Episcopacie by Divine Right in 1640 which traced the origin of bishops and justified hierarchy by the practices of the primitive church and the testimony of the fathers. Hall followed this in January, 1641, with Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament, which was a defence of the bishops in the midst of the outcries against them. To this "temperate and thoughtful defence of episcopacy," the Smectymnuans had replied with An Answer to a Book Entituled, An Humble Remonstrance<sup>3</sup> (which did not appear until March 20, 1641).

Contrary to Jordan's opinion that An Answer was "libellous

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<sup>1</sup> Don M. Wolfe, ed., YE, I, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan, III, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfe, ed., YE, I, 78.

and scurrilous,"<sup>4</sup> it appears that the reply of the Smectymnuans, while literally unspectacular (since it was a point by point refutation of Hall's remarks) was less than scurrilous; in fact, Wolfe points out that the ending was conciliatory, with the pamphlet closing with the Smectymnuans quoting Hall's prayer for illumination as voicing their own feelings.<sup>5</sup>

In An Answer there was a short postscript which is thought to have been written by Milton,<sup>6</sup> and this might perhaps be considered "libellous and scurrilous" compared to both Hall's and the Smectymnuans' moderate attitudes.

Milton showed in the Postscript what was to appear in almost all his anti-prelatical tracts--a lack of logic and an immense store of intellect.

The Smectymnuan Controversy in its entirety lies outside the range of this study. It is mentioned only because in his anti-prelatical tracts Milton made several statements which pertain to the subjects that are the crux of this study--religious toleration, freedom of conscience, and Christian liberty.

After Milton's initial entrance into the pamphlet war with Of Reformation (May 1641), he wrote four other pamphlets: Of Prelatical Episcopacy, (July, 1641); Animadversions (July, 1641); The

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<sup>4</sup>  
Jordan, III, 30.

<sup>5</sup>  
Wolfe, ed., YE, I, 80.

<sup>6</sup>  
Masson and Hale, quoted by Wolfe, ed., YE, I, 79-80.

Reason of Church Government (January or February, 1642); and, Apology against a Pamphlet (April, 1642). Then he was to drop out of the picture for almost a year and a half, during which he married, was deserted, and wrote the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (published August 1, 1643).

## II

Contrary to a number of Milton's vociferous Puritan contemporaries who were writing against the prelates because of having been previously severely punished for writing against and refusing to conform to the Laudian church system (such as Prynne, Burton, and Lilburne), Milton had not been imprisoned for his defence of his religion; nor had either of his ears been touched, much less cut off, as was the case with Prynne and Burton; nor had his cheeks been branded with the letters "SL" (for "seditious libeller"); nor had his nostrils been slit as had Alexander Leighton's. Milton had evidently been aware for some time that immortality was within his grasp, and he had spent his entire life preparing himself to be a poet.<sup>7</sup>

His lack of participation in the events which led up to the ascendancy of Parliament's power and, more importantly, the discrediting of the bishops of the Church of England (and ergo the Church

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<sup>7</sup> When Milton left for his trip to the Continent, in 1638, at the age of twenty-nine, it appears that he had never been gainfully employed. Cf. Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution, pp. 41-2; and The Rise of Puritanism, p. 341.

of England itself) with the advent of the Long Parliament in 1640 is shown vividly by his decision to make a leisurely trip to the Continent, during which he was informed of the rising difficulties in England, and his six-months' delay in returning to England (in July, 1639).

Even after his delayed return to England, it was over a year before he lifted his pen in his famous "left hand" and entered the controversy. Wolfe advances the hypothesis that Milton's awareness of his lack of proficiency in prose (considering that he had, from his college days, been preparing himself to be the great English poet) led him to delay his "enlistment in the crucial ideological warfare of his day."<sup>8</sup> But this hypothetical explanation sounds rather weak when one considers that verse also, was employed in this same controversy.

### III

Two events in 1643 were to have far-reaching effects so far as the fortunes of Presbyterianism in Parliament was concerned: the reinstatement of the licensing ordinance (which extended back to Elizabeth I) on June 14, 1643; and the formation of the Westminster Assembly of Divines (appointed by Parliament to settle the one "right discipline" problem which had arisen with the abolition of the established national Church of England) that held its first meeting on July 1, 1643. The former was little noted by Milton<sup>9</sup> and it is evident that the latter

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<sup>8</sup>Wolfe, ed., YE, I, 109.

<sup>9</sup>Haller, (in "Before Areopagitica") maintains that Milton had

was not "protested" too much by Milton until the Assembly showed its true colors--i. e., that of forcing yet another type of intolerant national church on the English people in place of the Anglican Church.

Milton continued his prose works after his last anti-prelatical tract (An Apology against a Pamphlet, etc.) of April, 1642, with his Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (August 1, 1643). With this last pamphlet he leaped into the growing controversy over Christian liberty, liberty of conscience, and religious toleration.

For his arguments in the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Milton had taken the ambiguity of "outward things" and applied it to divorce maintaining that divorce, not having been denied in the Old Testament (and not being able to believe that God would contradict himself in the New Testament),<sup>10</sup> was an indifferent thing and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the church.

Milton's reasons for writing the divorce tracts--whether they were a result of his unfortunate marriage, or if the marriage just happened to occur while he was writing the first tract--shall not concern us here. The matter that is important arises from two facts: Milton considered divorce an indifferent thing neither good nor evil in itself, but involving good or evil in particular circumstances upon which only the individual conscience can arrive at a conclusive deter-

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not protested against the licensing ordinance when it was adopted, but that the reception of his divorce tracts prompted him to enter the fray.

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Barker, "Christian Liberty in Milton's Divorce Pamphlets," p. 156.

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mination, and the fact that Milton turned against the Presbyterians in the divorce pamphlets, not because of the Presbyterians' reception of them.

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The first reason is not of paramount importance, because Milton had previously shown his lack of compunction for interpreting the Bible to suit his own needs and, in so doing, was allowing himself, at least, freedom of conscience. The second is more important because it shows that Milton became aware relatively early that religious liberty (that religious liberty belonging to the regenerate) suffers under an intolerant church form, and this realization gave a foundation for a theory of religious toleration which remains unchanged throughout the corpus of his prose works.

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## IV

To the charge often made against Milton that he did not advocate a comprehensive theory of religious toleration, it can be answered that not many seventeenth century Englishmen did. Religious toleration in seventeenth century England was extended only to Christians--Protestant Christians, that is. Milton took this limitation a step further. The Protestant Christian who was entitled to religious toleration, freedom of conscience, and Christian liberty was a man who was an intel-

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Ibid., p. 157. (Italics mine.)

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Henry, Milton's Puritanism, pp. 153-156.

13

Cf. Henry, Milton's Puritanism, p. 231 and "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," p. 209.

lectual peer of Milton's.

When, in Of Reformation, Milton says to the bishops: "If<sup>14</sup> these doctors...who had scarce half the light that we enjoy...", he leaves no doubt in our minds as to what degree of "light" he has. Milton says, of the bishops, "all, except two or three, were ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, and many of the Greek...."<sup>15</sup> So, the man for whom Milton demands freedom to read and interpret the Bible for himself is a man who is an intellectual equivalent to him.

The opening demand for this freedom, directed now towards episcopacy, is to be turned later against Presbyterianism. This change, according to Henry, occurs with the divorce pamphlets.<sup>16</sup> But even if the popular conception that Milton turned against the Presbyterians in the Areopagitica is accepted (because of the Presbyterian reception of the divorce pamphlets), Milton, as early as 1644, shows himself to be against the Presbyterian church form and the concept of an intolerant church.

Regardless of what Milton's opinions of Presbyterianism were, his idea that men cannot seek, much less claim, neither just nor natural privileges unless he is "ally'd to inward goodness..."<sup>17</sup> seems to make it amply clear that Milton argues for religious liberty for the regenerate, not for everyone. There is no explicit evidence

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<sup>14</sup> Milton, Of Reformation, CE, III, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Henry, Milton's Puritanism, pp. 153-156.

<sup>17</sup> Milton, Tetrachordon, CE, IV, 74.

that Milton ever changed his conception of this.

Even though Milton made various allusions to religious liberty in the Areopagitica, it remains as Masson says, "...not a plea for Liberty of Conscience or for Toleration, but only for the Liberty of Un-licensed Printing."<sup>19</sup> During the fifteen years following the Areopagitica, Milton did not contribute anything to the continuing religious controversy.<sup>20</sup> Milton did, however, return to the fray in 1659 and began his fullest treatments of religious liberty and toleration that ended with his last pamphlet, Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism (1673).

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Henry, "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," p. 209.

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Masson, III, 287-8.

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Jordan, IV, 204.



## CHAPTER VI

### AREOPAGITICA: 1644

#### I

Milton's Areopagitica, contrary to being a landmark in the history of toleration, is an argument for the liberty of unlicensed printing. Its subtitle, "A speech for the Liberty of Un-Licens'd Printing," plainly states this, and the context of the work clearly shows it. The bulk of the Areopagitica is a review of the history of licensing and the lack of it in ancient times. The latter part of the work argues for the necessity of free argument in the cause of determining truth (as opposed to error) and only toward the last is anything said about toleration.

It is in the Areopagitica that Milton firmly states that "Bishops and Presbyters are the same to us both in name and thing."<sup>1</sup> It is commonly thought that Milton broke completely with the Presbyterians in this pamphlet.<sup>2</sup> Milton also discusses what he considers to be heresy. Milton's religious ideas are based strictly on the scriptures, and he thinks that a man must arrive at his religious conclusions by studying the scriptures. Because "A man may be a heretick in the truth, and if he believe things only because his pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth

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<sup>1</sup>Milton, Areopagitica, CE, IV, 331.

<sup>2</sup>Henry (Milton's Puritanism, pp. 231-2) maintains that Milton turned against them in the divorce tracts.

he holds, becomes his heresie,"<sup>3</sup> Implicit faith is wrong because it is accepted at face value and not through study of the scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

Milton is certain that the reformation of the church is in the hands of Englishmen: "God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church, ev'n to the reforming of Reformation itself: what does he then but reveal Himself to his servants, and as his manner is, first to his Englishmen...."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the English (he is addressing the predominantly Presbyterian Parliament) should "forgo this Prelatical tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of man."<sup>6</sup>

Milton demands above all liberties, "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freeley according to conscience..."<sup>7</sup> But considered

<sup>3</sup>Milton, Areopagitica, CE, IV, 333.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.,<sup>p.</sup> 340. "The medieval church distinguished between the 'explicit faith' required of the higher clergy (acceptance of the doctrines of the church with a clear understanding of their nature and grounds) and the 'implicit faith' which would suffice for the lower clergy and the laity (acceptance of the same doctrines on the authority of the church). (Sirluck, p. 543, n. 199.). Milton's argument against implicit faith was never to waver as will be shown below pp.70-92 in the discussion of the later theological pamphlets.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.,<sup>p.</sup> 340. This statement seems to be highly significant in determining what Milton considered the "true Christian" to be. In Of Reformation Milton spelled out the intellectual background for his elect (see above p. 54). In it he narrows it to Englishmen, and will later narrow it even further to just Protestant Christian Englishmen. This is, if for no other reason, a clear indication that any doctrine of toleration, Christian liberty or liberty of conscience will be necessarily extremely limited, and cannot, under any stretch of the imagination, be considered to be either universal or pure as Hanford (p. 123) and Jordan (IV, 217) say.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.,<sup>pp.</sup> 341-2.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.,<sup>p.</sup> 346.

in the context of seventeenth century religious thought, this is not a demand for everybody. However, one thing about which Milton is sure is that Truth and Falsehood must grapple because "whoever knew Truth put to the worst, in a free and open encounter." The attack on truth always results in truth becoming more sure.<sup>8</sup> Truth has many shapes and if it did not how can "...all that rank of things indifferent, wherein Truth may be on this side, or on the other, without being unlike her self"? The very fact that Englishmen have been forced into "this iron yoke of outward conformity" smacks of episcopacy, because "how many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief stronghold of our hypocrisie to be ever judging one another."<sup>9</sup>

This is one of the worst things that can happen when men are not allowed to search for truth. It is a recognized fact (in Protestantism) that "all cannot be of one mind," and is it not more Christian that "many be tolerated, rather than compell'd" so that they can search out truth? But Milton draws the line of his toleration and excludes Popery: "I mean not tolerated Popery, and open superstition," since it extirpates all religious and civil supremacies, it also should be extirpated. But first "...all charitable and compassionat means [should] be us'd to win and regain the weak and the misled."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.,<sup>?</sup> 347. See Of True Religion.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.,<sup>?</sup> 348.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.,<sup>?</sup> 349. This is the only extension of leniency that I know of that Milton made to Popery. In Of Civil Power and Of True Religion they are not even given this small opportunity to mend their ways.

Milton's realization that Presbyterianism is inherently intolerant leads him to admit that even though "many sectaries and false teachers are...busiest in seducing" general reformation, it is wrong to stop their mouths." It is possible that they had been misjudged without understanding what their intentions were because we might be acting as the same "persecutors" that we have charged prelacy with being.<sup>11</sup>

The idea that Milton advocated unlimited liberty of unlicensed printing is false. In fact, after the books have been published and have "...come forth" and if they are "found mischievous and libellous, the fire and executioner will be the timeliest and most effectual remedy, that mans prevention can use."<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the pamphlet Milton argues that it is wrong to allow "an Oligarchy of twenty ingrossers"<sup>13</sup> to decide what should or should not be allowed to be printed. This, of course, is in keeping with Milton's idea that the scriptures are the basis for all religious argument, and it is to them that one must go to determine what is truth or not, and no one (or no body of men such as the censors) is qualified to decide what is irreligious or not since that decision is a matter of conscience. and consequently a matter of personal judgment to be arrived at by the individual alone and guaranteed in principle by the Protestant creed.

A review of the Areopagitica will show no lengthy argument for

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 350-2.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 346.

toleration or for liberty of conscience, only a definitive argument for the liberty of unlicensed printing.<sup>14</sup> This liberty, however, is distinctly limited to those who sign their tracts, or at least have their printer's name signed. If this qualification is not heeded, then after the tract is published, it is permissible to burn the books in question.

To the extent that Milton discusses toleration only one definite statement can be made. Popery is excluded from it; however, means should be used to save the "weak and misled." This is as far as Milton will go toward toleration of Roman Catholicism; in fact, it is further than he went in the later pamphlets, Of Civil Power, (1659) and Of True Religion (1673). As far as the sects are concerned, Milton admits that he has perhaps misunderstood their aims, but that is all he specifically states.

## II

Because of the immense influence of the Areopagitica on English literature, it has been the object of many studies by Miltonic scholars. From these studies has arisen the misconception (because of its argument for the freedom of the press) that it advocated a broad theory of toleration. For this reason, it might be well to discuss some of the body of criticism on it.

Most scholars agree among themselves that Milton wrote the Areopagitica because of the unfavorable reception of his pamphlets on divorce, rather than because of the licensing ordinance of June 14, 1643. Perhaps

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Masson, III, 287-8.

this conclusion is a result of the fact that Milton had not been immediately angered by the re-establishment of the licensing ordinance and had, in fact, duly licensed Of Education (June 5, 1644) and The Judgement of Martin Bucer (July 15, 1644):

A few scholars credit Milton with a broad doctrine of toleration by implication since, as it has been pointed out, Milton made only one specific reference as to what was to be tolerated or not tolerated.<sup>15</sup>

Baker recognized that the Areopagitica is a defense of learning and learned men rather than for toleration, and says that this is because the arguments in it, unlike those of other Independent appeals to Parliament, are based primarily on Milton's "immense classical and humanistic erudition" rather than on theology.<sup>16</sup>

Although, the Areopagitica is the most well-known of all Milton's prose works today, it had little influence in his own day. The reason for its lack of influence has been widely debated.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Masson says that Milton "...stands...as the advocate of a Toleration that would have satisfied all the necessities of the juncture, by giving full liberty not only to orthodox Congregationalists, but also to Baptists, so-called Antinomians and Seekers, and perhaps all other Protestant sects that had any real rooting at that time in English society." (Life, III, 288.) He has to admit, however, that it "breathes the full principle rather than the exceptions." I think that Masson is correct, but that he could have gone further, and definitely could have said all Protestants.

<sup>16</sup>Baker, pp. 1-13.

<sup>17</sup>Sirluck says that since certain tolerationists (Lilburne, Overton, and Walwyn) use the same geneology of licensing that Milton used shows its immediate impact. (YE, II, 91.) Arnold Williams states that the reason for its lack of influence lay in the universality of its principles. ["Areopagitica Revisited," University of Toronto Quarterly, XIV (1944), 70-1] Wolfe says that "it is possible that the Areopagitica evoked no pronounced

## III

Even while considering the differences of opinion as to the Areopagitica's immediate influence, it is recognized that in it Milton did not contribute anything new to either toleration thought or, for that matter, to the fight for the liberty of unlicensed printing, and on the whole he was decidedly behind some of his contemporaries.<sup>18</sup> Milton was not only lagging in this area of thought, but all the attacks on licensing by Milton and others effected no change on the policy of the Long Parliament.<sup>19</sup>

The primary importance of the Areopagitica in this present study is what it had to say about toleration, Christian liberty, and liberty of conscience, and in this sense, Milton's argument for the freedom of the press can be interpreted as a part of that wider freedom of conscience. For, by controlling free discussion, Parliament was hindering the process by which reformation could be most speedily and fully accomplished. Not only did control of the press hinder reformation, it neglected the fact that good and evil were inseparable (and the fact that the distinc-

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response because the issue it crystallized was more academic than practical." (Milton in the Puritan Revolution, p. 121.) From these statements it can be seen clearly that there is no universal agreement on the Areopagitica's contemporary influence.

<sup>18</sup>Masson, III, 288; and Jordan, IV, 210.

<sup>19</sup>Sirluck, ed., YE, II, 163. Not only was the Areopagitica ineffective with the Long Parliament but it remained so throughout the 1640's and 1650's. It was not until later in the century that it was used as an argument for unlicensed printing, and the freedom of the press.

tion of good could not be made without comparing it to evil) and that truth can be discovered only if one is allowed free search after it.<sup>20</sup>

Free discussion was needed, also, because man must look to the future and must progress from truth to truth until Christ returns to claim his kingdom. And the only way the progression could occur was with the human activity of "free reasoning."<sup>21</sup> This concept of the progressive search for truth is highly significant in the toleration controversy because the progressiveness of reformation and the search for truth made possible a theory of liberty without destroying the fundamental assumption that all ultimate truth was contained in the scriptures.<sup>22</sup>

Milton did not attempt to spell out any specific reforms in the Areopagitica, he simply argued for the unhindered freedom of expression and of conscience to help the progression of reformation and of the search for truth.<sup>23</sup>

The Areopagitica is primarily directed to the Presbyterians since they had passed the licensing ordinance, and since the Independents had been agitating against the Presbyterians for quite some time (some of them since 1640), Milton became directly involved with the Sectarians in the controversy over toleration.<sup>24</sup> But Milton cannot be said to have

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<sup>20</sup>Arnold Williams, p. 73. Also see above, pp.57-8.

<sup>21</sup>Barker, 76.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Cf. Milton, The Christian Doctrine, CE, XIV, 15.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 72; and Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution, 239.

<sup>24</sup>Haller, "Before Areopagitica," 899.



written the *Areopagitica* as a defense of the sects. It is more likely that as he had supported the Smectymnuans because of their common opposition to episcopacy he now supported the sectarians out of their common opposition to Presbyterianism and not from an identity of fundamental principles.<sup>25</sup>

Milton himself had said, "...I wrote...*Areopagitica* in order to deliver the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered; that the power of determining what was true and what was false, what ought to be published and what was to be suppressed, might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiberal individuals, who refused their sanction to any work which contained views or sentiments at all above the level of the vulgar superstition,"<sup>26</sup> and this is in line with his life-long held conviction that men are not to be dictated to by anyone, but must look to the scriptures themselves to find truth.

In the *Areopagitica* Milton had argued for free will, liberty of conscience, and the search for truth by comparing it with evil, and the subsequent rise of a new and regenerate England coming from the free debate which had been stemmed by the licensing ordinance, and which had flowed so freely and effectively until the re-institution of the licensing ordinance in 1643.

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Barker, p. 80.

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Milton, *The Second Defense*, CE, VIII, 187.

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David Daiches, *Milton* (London, 1957), p. 119.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POLITICAL PAMPHLETS AND THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE: 1645-1659

#### I

After the Areopagitica Milton apparently did not take an active part in the religious controversy that continued to rage over religious toleration. Milton did, of course, continue to exercise his "left hand" but he wrote, primarily, of political matters. To the knowledge of the writer, there is nothing in any of these pamphlets during this period which directly pertains to the subject of religious toleration.

Milton did, however, make several statements with regard to Christian liberty, but these statements do little to amplify what he had already written on that subject.

It does seem important to note what Milton had to say on liberty which bears out the thesis of this study. When Milton mentions "liberty" he does not mean freedom for all in religious matters, he means freedom for the regenerate alone. In A Second Defense, Milton explains how he happened to enter the struggle for liberty:

When the bishops...had at length fallen and we were now at leisure...I began to turn my thoughts to other subjects; to consider in what way I could contribute to the progress of real and substantial liberty; which is to be sought for not from without, but from within, and is to be obtained principally not by fighting,<sup>1</sup> but by the just regulation and by the proper conduct of life.

The very fact that Milton specifies that liberty "...is to be sought

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<sup>1</sup>

Milton, A Second Defense, CE, VIII, 131. (Italics mine.)

for not from without, but from within..." shows his belief in the concept of Christian liberty which is a freedom for the inner man gained through grace, and not through fighting.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier, in Eikonoklastes, Milton had said that "Christian libertie [was] purchas'd with the death of our Redeemer, and establish'd by the sending of his free Spirit to inhabit in us...." This statement again bears out Milton's apparent life-long belief that Christian liberty was an inner liberty, and confined to the man in God's grace.

It should be obvious by these two statements (which have their counterparts in Milton's first pamphlet, Of Reformation, and in his last, Of True Religion)<sup>4</sup> that Milton never thought of religious liberty (with religious toleration) as being an inherent right for everyone.

## II

In The Christian Doctrine, Milton discusses Christian liberty as a separate topic for the first time, and, in it, he reaffirms what he had been saying all along with regard to Christian liberty: that it was an inward liberty given by God to the regenerate. He also states definitely what his conception of Christian liberty is.

In his statement of what Christian liberty is, Milton seems more concerned with proving that the coming of Christ completely abro-

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<sup>2</sup>

Cf. definition of Christian liberty, above, pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup>

Milton, Eikonoklastes, CE, V, 207. (Italics mine.)

<sup>4</sup>

See above, pp. 23-26; and below, pp. 85-92.

gated the Mosaic Law than he is with developing a concept of Christian liberty. In the seven reasons Milton gives for proving the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, Milton shows himself to be completely at one with Paul:

First...the law is abolished principally on the ground of its being a law of works; that it might give place to the law of grace....Secondly, [Romans] iv.15. "the law worketh wrath; for when no law is, there is no transgression. "...Seeing then that the law worketh wrath, but the gospel grace, and that wrath is incompatible with grace, it is obvious that the law cannot co-exist with the gospel. Thirdly, the law of which it was written, "the man that doeth them shall live in them," Gal,iii. 12. Now to fulfill the ceremonial law could not have been a matter of difficulty; it must therefore have been the Mosaic law from which Christ delivered us. Again, as it was against those who did not fulfill the whole law that the curse was denounced, it follows that Christ could not have redeemed us from that curse, unless he had abrogated the whole law....Fourthly, we are taught, 2 Cor. iii, 7. that the law written and engraven in stones was the ministrations of death, and therefore was done away. Now the law engraven in stones was not the ceremonial law, but the decalogue. Fifthly, that which was...a law of sin and death... is certainly not the ceremonial law alone, but the whole law....<sup>5</sup>

The reasons have been quoted at length to show how closely Milton agrees with Paul. In addition to giving reasons why Christ's coming completely abrogated the Mosaic Law, Milton makes further statements about those who are the recipients of grace: "I am not speaking of sinners, who stand in need of preliminary impulse to come to Christ, but of such as are already believers, and consequently in the

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Milton, The Christian Doctrine, CE, XVI, 133-135. Only the first five reasons have been quoted; because the last two are concerned only with proving the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, and do not directly serve our purposes.

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See above, pp. 12-15.

most intimate union with Christ...."<sup>7</sup> Later, in comparing the difference between the law of Moses and of Christ, Milton says, "...Moses imposed the letter, or external law, even on those who were not willing to receive it; whereas Christ writes the inward law of God by his Spirit on the hearts of believers, and leads them as willing followers."<sup>8</sup>

These two statements are further proof that Milton conceived of Christian liberty as being an inward liberty.

Toward the end of his discussion of Christian liberty in The Christian Doctrine, Milton demonstrates how he arrives at his conclusion on the doctrine: "From the abrogation, through the gospel, of the law of servitude, results Christian liberty; though liberty, strictly speaking, is the peculiar fruit of adoption...."<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Milton leaves no doubt as to what his conception of Christian liberty is:

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY is that whereby WE ARE LOOSED AS IT WERE BY ENFRANCHISEMENT, THROUGH CHRIST OUR DELIVERER, FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN, AND CONSEQUENTLY FROM THE RULE OF THE LAW AND OF MAN; TO THE INTENT THAT BEING MADE SONS INSTEAD OF SERVANTS, AND PERFECT MEN INSTEAD OF CHILDREN, WE MAY SERVE GOD AND LIVE THROUGH THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.<sup>10</sup>

In another instance Milton asserts the relationship between the true believer and God: "...they shall be judged by the law of liber-

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., p. 149. (Italics mine.)

<sup>8</sup>  
Ibid., p. 151. (Italics mine.)

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid., p. 153. (Italics mine.)

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 153-155.

ty; (James 2.12) namely, by God, not by fallible men in things ap-  
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 pertaining to religion...."

All these statements should make it reasonably obvious that Milton (when he wrote of Christian liberty) thought of Christian liberty as being extended to a limited group of people--the true believers--then one can see clearly that Milton means this group when he argues for religious liberty. In addition, it should be reasonably apparent that any system of liberty offered by Milton is extended only to those  
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 who are in God's grace and are thereby entitled to Christian liberty.

### III

During the years 1645-1659, Milton did not join the continuing  
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 controversy over the problem of religious toleration. His prose writings were primarily directed toward political matters, and the few exceptions to this, such as his defenses, lay outside the bounds of this present study. Milton's usually neglected pertinent writings on religious toleration were to come after this period, and will be dealt with in the following chapter.

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Ibid., p. 157.

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Cf. H. J. C. Grierson, "Milton and Liberty," Modern Language Review, XXIX (1944), 104.

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See Jordan, IV, 210.

## CHAPTER VIII

MILTON'S THOUGHT DURING THE RESTORATION: 1659-1673

### I

Of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, etc., and Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church constitute Milton's arguments against Oliver Cromwell's practice (during the Protectorate) of maintaining a modified church establishment with a committee empowered to settle the compensation of ministers and to hold the various denominations together in a loosely orthodox unity.<sup>1</sup> When Oliver Cromwell died and Richard Cromwell became the Protector Milton wrote these two pamphlets with the hope that the abuses, as they appeared to him, could be removed. He argued in the first that the civil powers had no right to exercise any compulsion whatsoever in religious beliefs and, in the second, that the system of tithes enacted by the state for the support of the ministry should give way to voluntary contributions.<sup>2</sup>

Milton, in Of Civil Power, finally gave a definitive statement of Christian liberty, and seems to advocate the complete separation of church and state. In advocating the separation of church and state, Milton was contributing nothing new, for Roger Williams had advocated

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<sup>1</sup>  
Hanford, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid.

that during the 1640's. What Milton thought of as being the cause of "...not ing but trouble..." and the cause of "...persecutions, commo-  
tions...[and] the inward decay of true religion..."<sup>3</sup> had been what Barker has called the Puritan Dilemma, that of the solution of the prob-  
lem of the relationship between the reformation of the church and the  
establishment of liberty.<sup>4</sup>

In this pamphlet Milton says there can be no peace until this problem is solved or England will be threatened with the possibility of "...utter overthrow...by a common enemy."<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that Milton was late in writing about this subject, but that delay is neither here nor there in this present study. The fact is that he did treat the subject.

In Of Civil Power, Milton again used as his primary source "...the scripture...and therein from true fundamental principles of the gospel,  
to all knowing Christians undeniable."<sup>6</sup>

Milton had discovered that two things had been responsible for dealing "...much mischief to the Church of God and the advancement of truth: force on one side restraining, and hire on the other side cor-  
rupting, the teachers thereof."<sup>7</sup> Since he had already stated that he

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<sup>3</sup> Milton, Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Barker, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Milton, Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



intended to discuss the second reason in another place (which he does in Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings) he says that one of the chief reasons for the first fault has been the lack of understanding what is meant by "matters of religion." There is no real difficulty here since they are "such things as belong chiefly to the knowledge and service of God...." Because these matters of religion belong "chiefly to the knowledge of God," they are above the "reach and light of nature" and, because of this, the matters of religion are "liable to be variously understood by humane reason...."

This strikes to the very heart of Milton's argument. If these "matters of religion" are outside the comprehension of "nature" (the order of nature--synonymous with the state, the social organ of nature) then it stands to reason that "no man ought be punished or molested by any force on earth whatsoever...."<sup>10</sup> Not only should man be left alone for "...belief or practice in religion, according to...conscientious perswasion...," the state has no right to ask man to follow "any law of man," because man is supposed to follow "...the will of God and his Holy Spirit within us...."<sup>11</sup>

Not only is it wrong to follow the dictates of the state with regard to religious matters, but because "...the main foundation of

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<sup>8</sup>  
Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>  
Ibid.

our protestant religion!...[is] the holy scripture..." and it is im-  
 perfectly understood except by "divine illumination;" it is logical that  
 "...no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judges  
 or determiners in matters of religion to any other mens consciences  
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 but thir own."

Milton wonders why Protestant Christians think it is so "...ig-  
 norant and irreligious in the papist" to think that he is doing God's  
 will by believing only as the church believes, if Protestant Christians  
 justify themselves by believing only as the state believes. The un-  
 questioned belief of the dictates of the state by the Protestant Chris-  
 tian is to be more condemned than the belief of the papist in what the  
 church believes. Not only are both attitudes wrong, but the only cor-  
 rect way to arrive at belief is not through "...traditions, councils  
 nor canons of any visible church, much less edicts of any magistrate  
 or civil session..." but matters of religion can be judged by "...the  
 scripture only...and that only in the conscience of every Christian to  
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 himself."

Looking back to his arguments for divorce, Milton wonders why  
 anyone can give "...dominion or constraining power over faith or con-  
 science..." to ordinary ministers when even the apostles did not have this  
 privilege. And to the charge that by preventing the "ordinary" minister  
 these powers the church discipline is undermined, Milton replies that there

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Ibid., p. 6.

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Ibid., p. 7.

is no problem for what he has just said comes from the scriptures, and that if the scriptures are consulted the result will be "...according to true church-discipline; which is exercis'd on them only who have willingly joined themselves in that covenant of union...." If church discipline does not arise from this, it is "not of the true church" and is "an inquisition...." Milton asks "if we must believe as the magistrate appoints; why not rather as the church?"<sup>14</sup>

Milton sees no harm in these statements and to those who will shout blasphemy, he would simply remind them that "blasphemy or evil speaking against God maliciously...is far from conscience in religion...." He also sees another "Greek apparition" in his way, heresy. Heresy simply means "the choice or following of any opinion, good or bad, in religion, or any other learning..." and is "choice only one opinion before another, which may be without discord."<sup>15</sup>

All this boils down to the fact that since the Protestant religion has as its general maxim that no man is qualified to judge another man's conscience, and since "heresie" means one opinion over an accepted one, if the opinion has been arrived at by conscience even though considered erroneous by others, he "can no more be justly censured for a heretic than his censurers; who do but the same thing themselves, while they censure him for so doing."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>

Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>15</sup>

Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>16</sup>

Ibid., pp. 13-14.

To Milton the man who follows the church against his conscience and persuasion (founded on the scriptures) is the heretic rather than the man who, after having followed his conscience, follows the scripture even though it is against any point of doctrine received by the whole church. Since Protestants have the scriptures as their common rule and touchstone and thrive on the religious debate of any opinion, just so it is "disputable by scripture," there is no such thing as a man in religion being a heretic. The only heretic now is he who abides by traditions or opinions not in the scriptures, and the only one that does this, Milton says, "is the papist... he [is] the only heretic, who counts all heretics but himself."<sup>17</sup>

But it is not to the papists that the epithet of "forcers of conscience" can be applied; this has to be applied to Protestants. The papist has to be judged by his principle of punishing those who do not believe as he does, the protestant who encourages everyone to believe the scriptures (even though it is against the church) persecutes as heretical those who disagree with his doctrine. This in itself is<sup>18</sup> against everything Protestantism stands for.

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Ibid., p. 14. This passage seems to have been misinterpreted by Jordan (IV, 220) who is mistakenly under the impression that Milton (in the last pamphlets) had accepted a theory of "pure toleration." In my way of thinking "pure" infers strongly that there would be no exceptions to this theory which is not the case. Jordan's conclusion that Milton arrived at a theory of "pure toleration" seems to ignore completely that Milton specifically named the papist as a heretic "who counts all heretics but himself." It appears that Jordan has left the qualifying word "papist" out of his consideration of these pamphlets which would make Milton's theory of toleration just a little less than "pure."

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Ibid., p. 18.

For the persecution of Protestant by Protestant, no matter what sect, is not only against the scriptures but against the "granted rule of every man's conscience to himself...." By the common doctrine of Protestantism, no Protestant should be "forced or molested for religion."

But this is as far as Milton goes in extending toleration. He had just said that the only heretics he knew of were papists. Now, he says that papists have no right, whatever, to plead for toleration; since they cannot be considered to belong to a Christian religion. As far as religion is concerned they are more aptly classified with idolators. But actually they are less a religion than a "Roman principality endeavoring to keep up her old universal dominion under a new name, and a mere shadow of a catholic religion...." It was more a "catholic heresy against the scripture, supported mainly by a civil, and except in Rome, by a foreign power...."<sup>19</sup>

If this is not a valid enough reason to exclude papists from toleration then it can be approached from another direction (one that had been used in logically extending it to all Protestants). Popery operates on an implicit faith from which it follows that the conscience becomes implicit and, because of "voluntarie servitude to mans law,

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Ibid., p. 19. Toleration of Roman Catholics, indeed, was a stumbling block over which almost all Puritans could not pass (Roger Williams would allow them to exist in the world, not to maintain religious establishments). But despite the universal Puritan fear of the Roman Catholics, they were in possession of very little influence in England. In fact, in 1634, out of three million people in England there were only 150,000 Roman Catholics. (Wolfe; ed., YE, I, 527.)

forfets her Christian libertie." If this is so "Who then can plead for such a conscience, as being implicitly entrald to man instead of God, almost becoms no conscience, as the will not free, becoms no will"?

Milton goes on to say that the reason Popery should not be tolerated is for "just reason of state, more than of religion...." Not only should Popery be denied toleration, but those who profess to be Protestants and try to force their religion on others deserve no toleration either, "being no less guilty of popery in the most pop-<sup>20</sup>ish point."

It appears from this passage that Milton, though he does not say so specifically, would deny toleration to the Presbyterians also (at least, Presbyterianism as it was during the early 1640's).

Having traced the boundaries of his conception of toleration, Milton proceeds to give his explicit reasons for advocating the complete separation of the state from "matters of religion."

The Protestant's belief and practice flow from faculties of the inner man and are free from and cannot be constrained by nature; therefore, free from the magistrate's power since he is the head of the order of nature. Not only is the Protestant "free and unconstrainable...<sup>21</sup> by nature..." but since its entire being is embued with "love and charity, incapable of force...[and] renewed and regenerated...by the power

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Ibid., pp. 19-20.

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See above, pp.44-46., for discussion of "nature."

and gift of God alone...," how can such a religion capitulate to the force of man? For that matter, how could force be applied to it in the first place, especially since it is under the "free offer of grace in the gospel," without frustrating and making ineffectual "both the religion and the gospel?"<sup>22</sup>

Christ rejects outward force in the government of his church for two reasons: to show its divine excellence and its ability to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of the world (which are upheld by outward force only) without use of worldly force; and to show that his kingdom is not of this world. This simply proves that the kingdom of Christ is not governed by outward force (since it is not of this world, all of whose kingdoms are maintained by outward force), but it does not prove that a "Christian commonwealth" cannot defend itself from outward forces, religious or otherwise.<sup>23</sup>

Milton cannot conceive that Christ had chosen the force of the

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Milton, Of Civil Power, pp. 20-21.

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Ibid., p. 22. Henry comments that there is no inconsistency from the Protestant point of view in denying toleration to all non-Protestants and at the same time striving for "religious and intellectual liberty." He goes on to say that liberty was the right to establish one's own church and have the magistrate protect it. (Milton's Puritanism, p. 225.)

Woodhouse explains this seemingly contradictory situation by explaining the Puritans conceived of mankind as being divided into two orders: (1) natural, and (2) grace). Those liberties that belonged to the order of grace (Christian liberty, for instance) did not belong to the order of nature and, in fact, the 'natural' man had no right to expect those liberties. (Puritanism and Liberty, pp. [58-60] and [65-66].)

Luther makes the distinction between the "inward"--i.e., of the order of grace, and the "outward" man--i.e. of the order of nature, leaving no doubt that the higher orders of liberty belong to the man in grace; whereas the natural man has no claim to them. (Luther, pp. 251-270.)

world to subdue conscience, and conscientious men (themselves considered weakest) but that they should subdue and regulate force (their adversary, not aid or instrument in governing the church).

To this end, anyone who says that the church needs a Christian magistrate ignores the fact that Christianity, for over three hundred years, spread throughout the world under "heathen and persecuting emperors." Therefore, it follows that the Christian magistrate cannot force a state religion on "...our obedience implicit..." For that matter, neither can the church. All either of them can do is to "recommend or propound it to our free and conscientious examination." That is, unless they intend raising the state over the church in religion. If the church allows the state to do this, it contradicts its "setled  
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confession both to the state and to the church."

Since the magistrate has no place in religion then not even the "meanest Christian" should wish that the Christian magistrate "...meddle...rashly with Christian liberty, the birthright and outward testimony of our adoption..." For if he does, he himself is meddling with that "sacred libertie which our Saviour with his own blood" purchased  
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for him.

The use of outward force in religious matters never does any good: "to compel the licentious in his licentiousness, and the conscientious in his conscientiousness..." does not honor God but instead

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24

Ibid., pp. 23-24.

25

Ibid., p. 32.



aggravates and multiplies both of them. Force is also against Christ's teachings. Christ exercised force only once and "that was to drive profane ones out of his temple, not to force them in...." But the magistrate, being Christian (and it is for this reason alone) must make sure that "profane and licentious persons omit not the performance of holy duties...." While performing this duty, however, he must make sure that "conscience be not inwardly violated," even though the licentious must be made to "outwardly conform." The magistrate has a more compelling reason to take care of the conscientious than the profane, and the magistrate must not "take away (while he pretends to give) or diminish the rightful liberty of religious consciences."<sup>26</sup>

In the final analysis, the right of "Christian and evangelic liberty" will stand against all licentiousness and confusion, because God knew that these things would be encountered and his word will prevail and conquer.

In this pamphlet Milton extends liberty to the Protestant Christian of all sects. He denies it to Roman Catholics on the grounds that not only are they idolatrous but they are not really of a religious nature; on the contrary, they are a menacing foreign civil power. The magistrate is denied the right to use "outward" force in matters of religion, but if the church is threatened from without, the Christian ma-

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This, in my opinion, is the only place in this pamphlet that Milton distorts his argument to prove his preconceived point; because after saying the state should stay out of religious matters, he turns around and makes this exception. His other arguments seem to follow logically.

gistrate should protect it.

Milton, however, does not appear to be advocating any type of church whatsoever.<sup>27</sup> His religion is an "inward" one to be arrived at by the study of the scriptures alone, and any force that attempts to limit this inward right has no right to ask for toleration. This, by implication, would seem to deny toleration to Presbyterians.

There is no specific evidence, as it should be apparent, that Milton has made a plea for either a theory of "pure toleration" or of "universal toleration" in Of Civil Power. He is still bound by a life-long hatred of Roman Catholicism. It seems quite evident that his "Protestant Christian" is closely akin to Calvin's "elect," and that Milton considers himself a member of this "regenerate" group. Of the orders of the world (grace and nature)<sup>28</sup> Milton is quite certain that he, personally, is of the order of grace.

## II.

In the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings, Milton discusses the other problem that he had mentioned briefly at the beginning of the pamphlet Of Civil Power: "hire...corrupting, the teachers...."

This pamphlet has little bearing on the purpose of this study. It is primarily concerned with the abolition of state-exacted tithes on the grounds (as Milton had stated in Of Civil Power) that the civil

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<sup>27</sup>

There is a Masters' paper in preparation at the University of Richmond by Peter A. Edmonds that will substantiate this observation.

<sup>28</sup>

As defined by Woodhouse and mentioned above, p. 78, n. 23.

power had no jurisdiction over religious matters. It also advocates this abolition because men had been attracted to the ministry, not out of the desire to do God's work, but only for monetary remuneration.

The pamphlet is important, however, in that it gives a more definite idea of what Milton's conception of the church was, and it suggests (by Milton's denial of the value of an elaborate education for the ministers) the idea of a lay ministry. Again it has to be allowed that Milton is not advocating anything new, but this view is mentioned merely to place it in his theological thought as it applies to religious toleration, Christian liberty, and liberty of conscience.

The immediate background for Likeliest Means...,etc., is the abdication of Richard Cromwell and the restoration to power of the original Long Parliament in which Milton saw the hope of the disestablishment of the national church and the abolition of the tithe system as a possible result of its sitting. Each of the two problems was brought to the floor of Parliament, but neither was acted upon. It was with these occurrences that Milton issued his second argument on what he thought was wrong with the church and how it could be rectified.

As Milton appears to have understood the problem of the system of tithes (which were exacted by the state to maintain the church ministers) there is no scriptural foundation in the first place. Not only is there nothing in the scriptures about the necessity of paying tithes, "the maintenance of church ministers" is something that is not a con-

cern "...properly belonging to the magistrate...."<sup>29</sup>

There is another consideration that has to be made. The "Christian church is universal" and not tied to any "nation, dioces, or parish" but consists of many churches complete in themselves and gathered by free consent and engages in chusing both thir particular church and thir church-officers." This is how Christian churches should be formed and, if a system of tithes is instituted, "all these Christian privileges will be disturbed and soone lost, and with them Christian libertie."<sup>30</sup>

The institution of tithes prompts irreligious men to enter the ministry with the hopes of a lucrative career. It would be better to abolish the system and get those men into the ministry who really wish to do God's work for unselfish reasons. It is not necessary that a man be elaborately educated. The only real requirement is to be well-versed in the study of the scriptures "which is the only true theology."

The church and state must remain separate. For the magistrate to either use church funds, or to take it into his own hands to pay the ministry is to "suspend the church wholly upon the state," and worst of all, to "...turn her ministers into state-pensioners."<sup>31</sup>

Since the "Christian church is not national," but consists of many "particular congregations subject to many changes...through civil

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<sup>29</sup>

Milton, Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church, CE, VI, 47.

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., p..64.

<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., p. 82.

accidents...[and] through schism and various opinions..." the magistrate has no right to exact a tithe system. Because in so doing he would be infringing on matters of conscience which are "not to be decided by any outward judge...."<sup>32</sup> The magistrate must not force his will in matters of conscience (particularly with regard to state payment to ministers) because independence and state-hire in religion are inconsistent and independence in the church cannot last as long as hirelings are still in the church.<sup>33</sup>

The present church is overloaded with "...a numerous faction of indigent persons" who for the most part out of "extrem want and bad nurture," claim by divine right and freehold one-tenth of our estates. They have no right to do this because the ministry is "...free and open to all able Christians, elected by any church." Christians owe it to Christendom to rid the church of hirelings, and if they would "...but know thir own dignitie...libertie...adoption...[and] spiritual priesthood, whereby they have all equally access to any ministerial function....," they could accomplish this end.<sup>34</sup>

As it can be seen, in retrospect, Milton becomes more insistent that the church and state be separated (except when the church needs defending from outward enemies). The clergy must not be maintained in any way, shape, or fashion, by the state--and particularly in wages

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<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., p. 99.

exacted by tithes, since this makes the clergy a "state-pensioner." Milton does not, as it is evident, advocate any church form whatever. His church can be any type (since the church is universal) or abide within any one. It seems obvious that Milton preferred the latter, and was able to reconcile this through the scriptures.

### III

It is commonly thought that Milton's most complete statement of religious toleration was made in the Areopagitica in 1644. This thought has prevailed despite Masson's observation that it is "strictly speaking...not a plea for Liberty of conscience or for Toleration, but for only the Liberty of Unlicensed printing." <sup>35</sup> Milton's statement of religious toleration is in his last pamphlet Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism and Toleration (subtitled: "and What Best Means may be used against the Growth of Popery") in 1673.

The fact that this pamphlet has been almost completely ignored <sup>36</sup> is difficult to understand.

The dominant themes are those of earlier pamphlets. True religion is that which is based on the word of God. Roman Catholicism is again denied toleration on both religious and civil grounds, and

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<sup>35</sup>

Masson, III, 287-8.

<sup>36</sup>

Only three studies appear to have been made of this pamphlet, and two of these were made by Henry (see Milton's Puritanism, and "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance."). After Henry, Wolfe seems to have given the next fullest coverage of the pamphlet (Milton in the Puritan Revolution, pp. 112 and 116-7). Jordan and Barker ig-

all Christians are to tolerate each other as long as they are Protestant.

Milton is explicit on the two main principles of true religion: "...the Rule of true Religion is the Word of God only; and...faith ought not be an implicit faith..."<sup>37</sup> These are subjects that had been treated by Milton in Of Civil Power and to a degree in Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings<sup>38</sup> fourteen years earlier.

Returning to Milton's definition of true religion, Milton says that if all Protestants were to follow these two principles "they would avoid and cut off many Debates and Contentions, Schisms and Persecutions, which too oft have been among them..."<sup>39</sup> Milton is rather explicit on the terms he advances for toleration.<sup>40</sup> Protestants must not persecute or fail to tolerate other Protestants because if they do they "flatly deny and Renounce these two...main Principles, whereon true Religion is founded..." In addition the Protestant must not compel

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nore it completely. Hanford's summary quotes Masson and calls it "rather tame...compared with the two ecclesiastical tracts written in the last days of the Republic." (p. 128.)

<sup>37</sup> Milton, Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, CE, VI, 165-6.

<sup>38</sup> Henry has pointed out the similarity between these two pamphlets with the last one. His comparison was primarily to refute Masson's observation that Milton's views of toleration had shrunk into a rigidity and narrowness, by discussing the pamphlet (Of True Religion) in the light of the circumstances of the day and the theocratic and totalitarian nature of late Reformation political theory. ("Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," p. 199.)

<sup>39</sup> Milton, Of True Religion, CE, VI, 166-7

<sup>40</sup> It is true that the toleration is extended to Protestant Christians alone, but proving that Milton had a broad conception of religious toleration is not my purpose. It is simply to show what Milton's theory of religious toleration is.

his fellow Protestant from what he believes as the manifest word of God to "an implicit faith," because if he does he endangers his fellow Protestant's soul. This force must not take either the shape of "rash belief" or of "outward conformity: for whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin."<sup>41</sup>

Once again Milton defines heresy as "...Religion taken up and believ'd from the traditions of man and additions to the word of God."<sup>42</sup> According to this definition of heresy there is only one heresy in Christendom and that is "popery...and he who is so forward to brand all others for Hereticks, the obstinate Papist, the only Heretick."<sup>43</sup> And, according to this definition, how can "Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arians, Socinians, and Arminians" be guilty of heresy since their "thoughts and teachings" are based on the scripture and therefore are no heresy?

For this reason, if for no other, Milton will extend toleration to all Protestants. Any Protestant that refuses to do so is abjuring the principles of the Protestant religion.<sup>44</sup> It is inconceivable to Milton that Protestants can refuse to tolerate other Protestants since Protestants enjoy toleration in Roman Catholic France among Papists. If the Protestants are allowed toleration in Roman Catholic countries

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<sup>41</sup>

Milton, Of True Religion, CE, VI, 167.

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>

Ibid. See Of Civil Power, CE, VI, 14.

<sup>44</sup>

Ibid.



should not a Protestant "...justly expect it among Protestants...?"  
 But this is not the case, for in Protestant England "...some times...  
 the one persecutes the other upon every slight Pretense."<sup>45</sup>

The argument that "some" of these Protestants give for persecution--that they act only on indifferent things--is a purely invalid one according to Milton, because "indifferent things" are not based on the scriptures. In fact, they are "an addition to the word of God..."<sup>46</sup>  
 The sixth article of the Church of England will give the final answer to this "long and hot contest, whether Protestants ought to tolerate one another...." If men will but exercise their rationality and be imparital, they will have to conclude that Protestants, because of the basic principles of their religion, must tolerate all other Protestants.<sup>47</sup>

Thus does Milton arrive at a theory of toleration which appears to be extended to all Protestant Christians. He is still adamant in denying toleration to Roman Catholics.<sup>48</sup> Roman Catholics are completely denied religious toleration for the same reasons that they had been denied it in the Areopagitica twenty-nine years before, and in Of Civil

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<sup>45</sup>

Ibid., pp. 169-70.

<sup>46</sup>

"Whatsoever is not read in the Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man as an article of Faith, or necessary to Salvation." Quoted by Milton, p. 170.

<sup>47</sup>

Ibid., pp. 170-1.

<sup>48</sup>

See Henry ("Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," pp. 199-202) for a full discussion of the religious and historical background of this pamphlet.

Power fourteen years before; because it constitutes a threat to the state as well as the true Protestant religion. But now, Milton goes on to say that in addition to having no right to toleration (either civil or religious) they must be denied even liberty of conscience, because their religion is idolatrous and constitutes a "great offence to God, <sup>49</sup> who is declar'd against all kind of Idolatry, even though secret." The fact that they consider the removal of their "Idols" a violation of their consciences is immaterial because the Protestant has "...no warrant to regard Conscience which is not grounded in Scripture." Another reason for denying them freedom of conscience (as if there were any need for more reasons) is that their "Images" are unnecessary for salvation since they are based on traditions and not the scriptures.<sup>50</sup>

Protestants have a very pressing need for tolerating each other and that is to protect themselves ~~from~~ the common enemy--Roman Catholicism. And why should Protestants not tolerate each other? The gospels clearly say, "Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."<sup>51</sup> It also exhorts us to "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good,"<sup>52</sup> and this means that not only should Protestants tolerate and prove all things (for this was

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<sup>49</sup> Milton, Of True Religion, CE, VI, 172-3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 173-4.

<sup>51</sup> Phil. 3.15., quoted by Milton, Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>52</sup> I Thess. 5.21., quoted by Milton, Ibid.

Paul's judgment) but, Protestants, if they think themselves "in the truth" according to attentive study of the scriptures, how can they refuse to "hear or read" him who gained his knowledge the same way? To deny these other men who are "equally gifted" the right to express their opinions is to bring in the "Papistical implicit faith which we all disclaim."<sup>53</sup>

If we allow the papists' books to be "read & sold" as commonly as our own books, "why not much rather of Anabaptists, Arians, Arminians, & Socinians?"<sup>54</sup> Disagreement on matters of religion must be allowed for good always comes from it. Not only are the Protestant's "...Senses awak't...his judgement sharpn'd..." but the truth he holds is more firmly established. It is taught in logic that when two contraries are laid together each appears more evident; therefore, if controversies are allowed, "falsehood will appear more false, and truth more true...."<sup>55</sup>

If truth and its adversaries are allowed to battle, not only will truth be "the more true" but Popery will be confounded and unimplicit truth will be generally confirmed.<sup>56</sup>

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Ibid.

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Ibid., pp. 177-8.

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Ibid., p. 178. Cf. the statement in the Areopagitica: "...whoever knew Truth put to the wors, in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing." (CE, IV, 347.) This substantiates Henry's conviction that there seems "no evidence in the prose to show that Milton underwent any appreciable change in outlook and sympathy between his first pamphlet in 1641 and his last one in 1673." (Milton's Puritanism, p. 231.)

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Ibid.

This short pamphlet, which Masson and Hanford consider to be "tame," gives a more complete statement than any other of Milton's pamphlets on religious toleration. To be sure the toleration advocated is a limited one. It emphatically denies toleration to Popery (the only limitation specifically cited),<sup>57</sup> and it specifically extends toleration to Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arians, Socinians, and Arminians.

It appears that Milton extended toleration to Protestants only, and to all Protestants, provided the Protestant group (or single Protestant man) based its (or his) belief on the scriptures. Even so, another qualification is needed; since Milton was preoccupied with the privileges of the regenerate (of which he seemed to consider himself a part).<sup>58</sup>

With this consideration in mind, a summary of Milton's theory of toleration as expressed in the last pamphlet can be made. Roman Catholics by name are denied toleration (and liberty of conscience). All Protestants, by implication, are extended toleration; Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arians, Socinians, and Arminians, by name. In addition, any religion (no matter what) is denied toleration if its

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The limits of Milton's toleration cannot be specifically stated since Roman Catholicism is the only religion he denies toleration by name. Masson contends that Milton's doctrine of toleration "throws Jews, Turks and all non-Christians overboard by implication." (VI, 696-98.) Wolfe contends that Milton's toleration did not extend to Jews ("Limits of Miltonic Toleration," JEGP, LX, pp. 834-846).

58

See the scriptural passage Milton quotes in Of True Religion to substantiate his argument for toleration: "Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded, etc., Phil. 3.15. (Italics mine.)

teachings are not based on the scriptures, and this would infer that all non-Christians and anti-Christians would be denied toleration; since their teachings are not based on the scriptures even though they are not denied toleration specifically.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the evidence given in this study, it is the conclusion of this writer that John Milton's theory of religious toleration was a more limited one than has commonly been thought. The primary reason for the lack of breadth of his toleration is that the extension of toleration is only to those who are entitled to Christian liberty. Toleration is further limited to only regenerate Protestant Christians, because Roman Catholicism is considered by Milton, not a Christian religion, but a civil power. Since Roman Catholicism is a civil power, it can neither expect, nor ask for religious liberty because religious liberty is reserved for those who are in possession of God's grace.

That Milton intended toleration for Protestant Christians alone is attested by the fact that the only religious groups to which he specifically extended toleration--Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Arians, Socinians, and Arminians--are Protestant Christian. Even though Milton does not specifically name any other groups to be extended toleration, it seems evident that all Protestant Christian groups would be entitled to it. The only stricture that Milton names for a group is that its religion should be based on the "...true Worship and Service of God, Learnt and believed from the word of God only...." Because of the nature of this definition, it seems apparent that true religion

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Milton, Of True Religion, CE, VI, 165.

can exist within a single individual as well as in religious groups.

Milton specifically denies toleration to only one religious group--Roman Catholicism, but by implication all non-Christian religions would be denied toleration according to Milton; since these non-Christians would not have based their beliefs on the scriptures.

On the basis of the conclusion stated above, it seems apparent that modern scholarship must alter its previous premise that Milton was an eloquent exponent of wide systems of liberty for the whole of humanity to take into account the inherent limitations of Milton's conception of liberty, both civil and religious. The complete separation of church and state which was practised first by the United States in the late eighteenth century and by England in the middle nineteenth century was not foreseen by Milton or advocated by him.<sup>2</sup>

Milton was an adherent of the predominant Protestant English idea that mankind is made up of two orders: that of nature; and that of grace. Only to the order of grace is Christian liberty a prerogative. It is against those who advocated the use of force (whether religious or civil) to prevent those of the order of grace from exercising their prerogatives of Christian liberty (included in which is the pursuit of the true believer's conception of the true religion) that Milton argued.

Because of his belief in Christian liberty and the right of the regenerate to practise their religious liberty unhindered, Milton is a

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Cf. Henry, "Milton's Last Pamphlet: Theocracy and Intolerance," pp. 209-210.

product of his time and shows that he agreed, on the whole, with most of his seventeenth century contemporaries. Because of his basic agreement with his contemporaries over the question of who should receive toleration, Milton can be seen as an example, not an exception, of the prevailing thought on toleration in seventeenth century England.



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## VITA

On the third of September, 1939, England declared war on Germany. Later that same day, in New Bern, North Carolina, a less earth-shattering event took place--Roger Shade Wilson was born. Having been born under such momentous circumstances did little to alter the childhood of young Wilson because his youth was commonplace.

Wilson began school in New Bern, and after sojourns in Jacksonville, Charlotte, Wilmington (all in North Carolina), and Portsmouth, Virginia, he was graduated from Churchland High School in Churchland, Virginia, in 1957. Several days after his graduation, Wilson moved to Richmond, Virginia where he had been offered a job with a local brokerage office there.

That same year he entered the University of Richmond. Following an uneventful four years of college, during which Wilson was a member of the United States Marine Corps for one year (after which he was discharged for a hearing defect), he was graduated, quite unnoticed, in the class of 1961.

Following his graduation, Wilson continued to work at the brokerage house for another year when he resigned his post and went to Europe via coal steamer.

In Europe, where he had fond desires of writing the "great American novel," Wilson slowly realized that the route to literary renown through starvation in a garret was not his forte. Having arrived at this conclusion Wilson made preparations to return to America.

On his return he applied to the graduate school of the University of Richmond where he studied for a M. A. in English. Two months after his entrance, in September, 1962, Wilson married Mrs. Bette Eldridge, a widow with three children.

This abrupt introduction to family life encouraged Wilson to seek his degree more quickly than he had originally planned.

Wilson's immediate plans are to teach at the Richmond Professional Institute for a period of several years, after which he plans to pursue a Ph. D. degree.