

POETRY TO SAVE THE NATION:  
POLITICS IN THE POEMS OF JOHN MILTON

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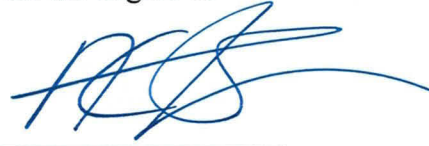
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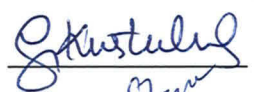
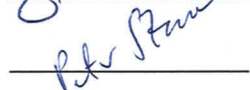

  
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## ABSTRACT

### POETRY TO SAVE THE NATION: POLITICS IN THE POEMS OF JOHN MILTON

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This thesis focuses on selected passages of John Milton's political poetry, and puts them in the context of his changing political views. The author traces the development of Milton's ideas from the early work *Lycidas*, through poems like the Sonnet *When the Assault was Intended to the City* (No. VIII), which was written during the Civil War, and the Sonnet *To the Lord General Cromwell* (No. XVI), to his final works, like *Samson Agonistes*. In marking the development of political ideas in the poems, reference will also be made to prose works, like *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and the *Defensio Secunda*, which are the sources of our detailed knowledge of Milton's politics. In many ways, what we find recorded in the poems is a series of disappointments: with Parliament, Cromwell, and the nation. The Introduction and Conclusion sections of the thesis ask the question of why Milton brought politics into his poetry so frequently. The thesis suggests that this was part of Milton's Puritan emphasis on working out his calling in his daily life and concerns.

**Keywords:** John Milton, the English Revolution, 17<sup>th</sup> century English poetry, poetry and politics

## ÖZ

### ULUSU KURTARMAK İÇİN ŞİİR: JOHN MILTON' IN ŞİİRLERİNDE POLİTİKA

Kıraçlı, Ezgi

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü

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Bu tez John Milton'ın siyasi şiirlerinden seçilmiş eserlere ve bunları kendisinin değişen politik görüşü kapsamında vermeye odaklanmıştır. Yazar Milton'ın fikirlerinin gelişimini eski eseri *Lycidas* dan başlayarak, İç Savaş döneminde yazılmış Sonnet *When the Assault was Intended to the City* (No. VIII), şiirine değinerek ve Sonnet *To the Lord General Cromwell* (No. XVI), şiirinden en son eseri olan *Samson Agonistes*'e kadar izler. Şiirlerdeki siyasi fikirlerin gelişimini işaret ederken Milton'ın politikası ile ilgili detaylı bilgimizin kaynakları olan *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* ve *Defensio Secunda* gibi düz yazılara değinilecektir. Birçok açıdan, şiirlerde bulduğumuz kaydedilen bir dizi umutsuzluktur: Parlamentoyla, Cromwell ile ve ulusla ilgili. Tezin Giriş ve Sonuç bölümleri Milton'ın şiirlerinde neden sıkça politikayı konu ettiğini sormaktadır. Sebebin Milton'ın mesleki gelişiminde görülen Püriten özelliğin günlük yaşamına ve meşguliyetine yansımaları olduğunu ileri sürer.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** John Milton, İngiliz Devrimi, 17. Yüzyıl İngiliz şiiri, şiir ve siyaset

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>STATEMENT OF NON PLAGIARISM .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ÖZ .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>CHAPTERS:</b>	
I.INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. FROM CAMBRIDGE TO <i>LYCIDAS</i> .....	6
III. THE SHEPHERD, THE FLOCK, AND THE WOLF.....	11
IV. THE FORTUNES OF WAR.....	23
V. MILTON AND THE DIVINES.....	25
VI. THE OUTCOME OF WAR.....	31
VII. THE CHAINED LIBERTY.....	34
VIII. THE TWO SWORDS.....	41
IX. THE BLOOD SOWN AND MILTON'S CONCERN FOR EUROPE.....	48
X. THE CATASTROPHE.....	57
XI. FREEDOM AND REBELLION .....	59
XII. MILTON STRUGGLING .....	65
XIII. CONCLUSION.....	74

<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
<b>CV.....</b>	<b>89</b>



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

John Milton is closely associated with the term Puritanism. This is a doctrine of purity, deriving from the word pure, which describes a simple lifestyle, plain-looking churches, and strongly-held beliefs. The seeds of Puritanism were sown by the French theologian and pastor, John Calvin, whose influence was strong in Scotland, the Netherlands, some parts of Germany, and among the Protestants of France. However, the term Puritanism refers to Calvinism as it developed in England and America, and includes both of the groups which became known as the Presbyterians and Independents. An early alternative to the term 'Puritan' in England was 'Precisian', referring to precise religious practices and views, and this is the word used by, for example, Christopher Marlowe:

Wagner: I will set my countenance like a precisian, and begin to speak thus: Truly, my dear brethren, my master is within at dinner ...<sup>1</sup>

Max Weber makes a profounder analysis of Puritanism in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The third chapter, titled '*Luther's Conception of the Calling*', states that a distinctive characteristic of this movement is at the root of the word "calling."<sup>2</sup> Puritanism, which emphasizes God's will or divine

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<sup>1</sup> **Marlowe, Christopher.** "Dr. Faustus." *Types of Drama: Plays and Contexts*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Ed. Sylvan Barnet. New York, England, and Sydney: Longman, 1997. pp. 193.

<sup>2</sup> **Weber, Max.** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1930. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch03.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 12 January 2011.

will, sees the task or “vocation” as the believer’s destiny. Furthermore, the Puritans interpret their calling as a “worldly task” that needs to be performed in “the great Task-Master’s eye.” (Milton, “Sonnet VII”) The fulfillment of their task is for them accomplished through God’s grace, and can be observed as a sign of that grace.

It is not difficult to see that Milton also experienced the same. He was the son of a Puritan father, John Milton senior, who was a scrivener. His education both at home and at school strengthened him in this creed. In the light of this belief, before the Puritan Revolution, Milton’s wish was also to fulfill God’s will. In the earlier poem referred to above, entitled “How Soon Hath Time.” (1632) Milton clearly states that he already had a mission given to him by God and he wrote the poem in accordance with this mission or duty:

... To that same lot, however mean or high,  
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;  
All is: if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my great Task-Master’s eye.

These last lines point out Milton’s intention to carry out a mission, although it was not yet clear whether this would be as a church minister or a poet.

It is possible to see this sense of mission in his poem, written a decade later, entitled “When the Assault was Intended to the City.” (1642) Stating his sense of mission, Milton calls on soldiers to defend him and his house:

If deed of honour did thee ever please,  
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.  
...  
Whatever clime the sun’s bright circle warms  
Lift not thy spear against the Muses’ bower ...

The poem in fact has special importance for us in understanding Milton’s views on his task or calling. Although a young man, with as yet no notable published verse, he compares himself to the greatest of the ancient poets. He says that “The house of Pindarus” was protected during the time of Alexander, just as “Electra’s Poet”, Euripides, was saved from attack. Both of these authors were spared because they were respected as poets. What is important is that Milton sees himself as being as

powerful as these poets, and this shows his care about his task because he believes that this is his destiny bestowed by God.

It is Max Weber who gives us the clue as to why John Milton chose to bring the everyday political events of his day into his poetry. Politics forms the subject matter of many of his sonnets, and the reader never feels that the Revolution's politics are far from the poet's mind, even in *Paradise Lost*, and *Samson Agonistes* which, were written long after the Good Old Cause came to an end. Specifically quoting from Milton (*Paradise Lost*, Book XII, 580–587, 646–647), Weber points out that Adam and Eve's calling is to be worked out in this world, through their labours:

... The world was all before them,  
There to choose their place of rest...

[Raphael says] ... Only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith;  
Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,  
By name to come called charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath  
To leave this Paradise; but shalt possess  
A paradise within thee, happier far.

Weber comments on "... this powerful expression of the Puritan's serious attention to this world, his acceptance of his life in the world as a task."<sup>3</sup> Whereas the Catholic Church's vocation is to the spiritual life of priests, monks and nuns, the Puritans above all brought their religion down to a worldly basis.

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling ... For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1930. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch03.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 12 January 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1930. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch05.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 18 February 2011.

Seeing their callings as a means to gain earthly blessings, the Puritans see a “peculiar ethic” in their duties, which tells them not to spend their money on “enjoyment of life” but to be modest and simple.<sup>5</sup> The quotation Benjamin Franklin gives from the Bible expresses the Puritan virtue and proficiency in a calling: “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Jesus Christ’s preaching summarizes Puritans’ approach to their labour: “Give us this day our daily bread.”<sup>7</sup>

It is true that Weber focuses on the example of Benjamin Franklin to illustrate the practical focus of the Puritan’s calling, and only briefly mentions Milton. However, the confining of the sense of calling to social achievements can be applied equally well to John Milton:

But God requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandments, in accordance with that purpose. The social activity of the Christian in the world is solely activity in majorem gloriam Dei (for the greater glory of God). This character is hence shared by labour in a calling which serves the mundane life of the community.<sup>8</sup>

The subject matter Milton chooses for his poems is never far removed from his everyday life, and his thoughts about reformation and revolution. John Milton, who believes to have been an elected individual of God, refused to separate his poetry from his service of the Revolution, believing that this was duty in his calling.

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<sup>5</sup> **Weber, Max.** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1930. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch02.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 18 February 2011.

<sup>6</sup> *King James Version*, Proverbs 22:29, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch02.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 18 February 2011.

<sup>7</sup> *King James Version*, Matthew 6:11, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch03.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 12 January 2011.

<sup>8</sup> **Weber, Max.** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1930. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch04.htm>. Trans. by. Talcott Parsons and Anthony Giddens. Transcribed by Andy Blunden in February 2005. Web. 18 February 2011.

More than any previous English poet, Milton elevates the world of politics into the subject matter of poetry. Clearly, Milton's prose was his main tool for expressing his political ideas, and the thesis which follows will constantly refer to his prose treatises. However, particular attention will be given to the fact that Milton also made poetry a vehicle for politics. As a result, a close reading of the clearly political passages in his poetry reveals the developments in his views and his intense experience of the successes and failures of the English Revolution.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM CAMBRIDGE TO *LYCIDAS*

John Milton was admitted to Christ's College, University of Cambridge, under his tutor William Chappell in 1625.<sup>9</sup> It is clear that Milton placed himself with the Protestant side among the range of views held by his fellow students. In the poems that he wrote on the Gunpowder plot his distaste for Catholicism is clear, and his criticism of the Arminian Anglo-Catholic bishops of the Church of England is implied.<sup>10</sup> In "On The Gunpowder Plot", interestingly, Milton calls Guy Fawkes disloyal to the "King and the English nobles", showing that as a student Milton was still loyal to the king and aristocracy. In the poem "On The Same", Milton likens Guy Fawkes to a man working for the "trina monstrum ... corona", "the monster with its triple crown." In this set of poems, which were composed within a few months of Milton's return to Cambridge in 1626, Milton shares in the by then traditional Protestant celebration of the defeat of Catholic hopes in England. "On the Fifth of November" presents the Serpent, who envies the happiness of Britain, inciting Fawkes "to up and act", to instigate the plot.<sup>11</sup> Predictably enough, the Catholic church is the first political enemy identifiable in Milton's writings. Again in *Lycidas* we will see that Milton likens the Roman Catholic Church to a "grim wolf"

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<sup>9</sup> **Campbell, Gordon.** "The Life Records." *A Companion to Milton*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. UK and USA: Blackwell, 2001. pp. 486.

<sup>10</sup> **Lewalski**, 2001, pp. 32-33.

<sup>11</sup> "On The Gunpowder Plot", "On The Same", "On the Fifth of November" and "Elegia Quarta" are in Meritt Hughes pages 13, 14, 18 and 25.

which “daily devours apace”, a reference to the military successes of that church and its growth in the world at the time.

Another concern is evident in Milton’s early poetry. For him the true bishops and ministers shoulder the responsibility for looking after their sheep. Thus, he dedicates “Elegia Quarta” (Elegy IV) to the honour of Thomas Young, who was his tutor at St. Paul’s and enduring friend. In this Elegy Milton praises Young, calling him a pastor who knows how to “feed the sheep” that Jesus Christ loves.<sup>12</sup> In the same way, in *Lycidas* he criticizes the clergy for neglecting this skill.

Milton also became a critic of the education system<sup>13</sup>, as is evident in Prolusions One, Three, Four, and Five which were written in his undergraduate years.<sup>14</sup> Among these, the third Prolusion is an illustration of his advocacy of modern, humanist education like that which he received at St. Paul’s, where he studied subjects from Greek to contemporary English literature. In Prolusion Three, he emphasizes the importance of maths, history, and science. He expresses the view that students are to be educated as broad-minded people who can go beyond the limits of the syllabus of Cambridge, dominated as it still was by scholastic topics and methods. Therefore, in this Prolusion he says scholastic philosophy just creates “a more polished fool and contriver of nonsense.”<sup>15</sup>

Milton’s other Prolusions, Two, Six, and Seven were written in his postgraduate years. In the sixth Prolusion, Milton has come to criticize Buckingham’s foreign policy during the Thirty Years’ War. Buckingham’s expedition to Cadiz in 1625 failed and this led to another war. During this war Buckingham invaded the Ile de Ré in France. However, he miscalculated and lost the siege. Milton mockingly writes:

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<sup>12</sup> Milton, John, “Elegia Quarta” (Elegy IV), lines 25-8.

<sup>13</sup> Lewalski, 2001, pp. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, Gordon & Thomas N. Corns, 2008, pp. 37.

<sup>15</sup> In his main work on the subject, *Of Education* (1644) Milton comes up with a new schedule putting emphasis on Greek, history, logic, grammar and Latin. With this education Milton believes that the students will be “writers and composers in every excellent matter.” (Meritt Hughes, at pages 631, 636-7).

... And certainly now I could wish that it were my lot to be, like Horace, a fishmonger's son, for then my jests would be salted to perfection, and I should send you off with such a salt rubbing that you would hate salt water as much as our runaway soldiers from the isle of Rhe.<sup>16</sup>

In Prolusion Seven Milton stands by knowledge against illiteracy. In this Prolusion Milton presents himself as a “scholar and poet” but, significantly, not as a promising clergyman this time.<sup>17</sup> This indicates that Milton had by this time abandoned the idea of joining the church. This Prolusion signifies the importance of knowledge since “ancient times” when “the commonwealths” were “founded by learning.” Milton’s thoughts concerning the importance of education and knowledge for responsible individuals anticipate his later prose, both the *Areopagitica* (1644) and his pamphlet *Of Education* (1644).

John Milton, who had initially wanted to be an Anglican minister, petitioned for his B.A. during the Lent term in 1629 and in 1632 he petitioned for his M.A.<sup>18</sup> However, in 1632, Milton decided against this career (probably he alienated himself from the established church) and retired to Hammersmith to live with his family and plunge into further studies.<sup>19</sup>

The reason why he retreated is evident in the *Reason of Church-Government* (1641). He describes himself as having been “Church-outed by the Prelates”; that is to say, he could not enter because the Church of England was dominated at the time by Laudian ‘priests’. Milton uses a similar statement in *Second Defence*:

... I ought at least not to be wanting to my country, to the church, and to so many of my fellow Christians, in a crisis of so much danger; I therefore determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and

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<sup>16</sup> Hughes, Meritt Y., 1957, pp. 621.

<sup>17</sup> Lewalski, 2001, pp. 43.

<sup>18</sup> Campbell, Gordon. “The Life Records.” *A Companion to Milton*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. UK and USA: Blackwell, 2001. pp. 486.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, Gordon & Thomas N. Corns, 2008, pp. 67.



my industry to this one important object.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, at some stage Milton took a position against the traditional Calvinism that was the earlier majority view among Protestants in England. N.H. Keeble in his article '*Milton and Puritanism*' describes the Calvinist and Arminian theologies. For the Calvinist theology, the guilty individuals have no chance to deserve God's grace or no opportunity to beg for His mercy because God has destined their fate. On the other hand, the Arminian theology refuses the predestinarianism of Calvinism and stresses the individual choice to co-operate with or reject God. Milton is, therefore, not a Calvinist on the grounds that he believes every individual has free will to make his own choice.<sup>21</sup>

In his much later epic, *Paradise Lost*, Book III, God makes a speech in which he says that the humans who have fallen cannot "justly accuse Their maker" as if they are ruled by predestination. It is, God says, their own choice whether to commit sin or not. He adds that although He "foreknew" their action, He "had no influence on their fault." Thus, God summarises,

I formed them free, and free they must remain.<sup>22</sup>

At some early stage in his development, John Milton adopted the Arminian position so clear in his later clashes with the Presbyterians, and experienced in his great epic poem.

Milton knew from that time that his life was still dedicated to God and the true Church although he had given up his earlier plan to join the clergy. Therefore, Milton applied himself to the study of Church history, realizing the fact that his own

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<sup>20</sup> **Milton, John.** *The Second Defence of the English People*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. II. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1210/78225>. Web. 21 January 2011.

<sup>21</sup> **Keeble, N.H.** "Milton and Puritan Doctrine." *A Companion to Milton*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. UK and USA: Blackwell, 2001. pp. 134-5.

<sup>22</sup> **Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg,** eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book III), lines 110-24, 2008, pp. 65.

ministry lay outside the Church, as a man of letters, financially independent and free to write as he pleased. Milton convinced his father

that a man of learning, who was independent of ecclesiastical control, could perform a wider Christian ministry as an author.<sup>23</sup>

After Hammersmith, he began to live in Horton. In Horton he found “a source of pleasure and amusement” amidst these readings that taught him “something new in mathematics or in music” along with the “Greek and Latin classics.”<sup>24</sup>

Therefore he designed to make himself a writer and poet on religious and political affairs. As he began to improve himself, his disrespect grew for the “ill-trained, illiterate products” of universities. Milton called many of them “hirelings” or rather “wolves” that threatened the “flock” of Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> The result of these independent readings would be *Lycidas*, in which he mentions his earlier enemies along with the current ones. In this early masterpiece, John Milton expresses in the clearest possible way – one must not forget that he was working at a time of strict censorship – his criticisms of William Laud, who had been appointed as the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633.

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<sup>23</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 153.

<sup>24</sup> Milton, John. *The Second Defence of the English People*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. II. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1210/78225>. Web. 21 January 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 151.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SHEPHERD, THE FLOCK, AND THE WOLF

It was during this period that Milton wrote *Lycidas*, an elegy on the death of Edward King on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1637. King was drowned in the Irish Sea when the ship carrying him to Ireland to visit his family sank. When the news of his death reached the Cambridge University community, a group of King's friends and colleagues decided to organize a volume of memorial verses in his honour. Milton was also invited to make a contribution to the collection. His contribution, the last in the collection, was *Lycidas*.<sup>26</sup>

This work is one of the most autobiographical of all the minor verses of Milton. He gave the name *Lycidas*, which was traditionally used in pastoral poetry, to Edward King emphasizing that he was a good shepherd who knew how to look after the "flock." In this aspect, this poem is not only pastoral but also satirical since Milton's state of mind at that time, and above all his attitude to the church, shaped the form and content of the poem.<sup>27</sup>

The poem begins with the voice of the persona of the poet as he disturbs nature and mentions plants which have symbolic meaning

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,

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<sup>26</sup> Danielson, 1989, pp. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 157.

And with forced fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

Milton's sorrow is deep for Edward King who was a very young and a very successful student. His loss urges Milton to write this pastoral elegy. Milton thus invokes the Greco-Roman Goddess and Gods to help him with writing a "lofty rhyme." Apollo, who is the God of music, intellect and poetry, is associated with laurel. Venus is associated with myrtles and Dionysus, who is associated with ivy, is the God of wine. With their help this poem can be written soon, "before the mellowing year."

King entered Christ's College in Cambridge when Milton was in his second year, and had been accepted as "Fellow" in 1630. Like Milton, Edward King had wanted to enter the Church but then both of them postponed their ideas to prepare themselves for "a more effective ministry." Thus, Milton and Edward King continued their lives separately. Milton went to Hammersmith and then Horton and King decided to stay at University.<sup>28</sup>

The poem continues :

Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
Compels me to disturb your season due;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Milton states that his grief and sadness cause him to appeal to nature. Since King deserves a "lofty rhyme", Milton wants to be the one to "sing for Lycidas." King died before "his prime"; that is to say before his dreams came true, thus he left no one equal to him.

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<sup>28</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 155-56.

Therefore, this poem which is to be written is one of praise for “young Lycidas” who lies in his bier made of water. Since King died due to a shipwreck, his bier is like the vessel that sank into the depths of the sea<sup>29</sup>:

Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;  
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string ...

Milton also calls on the Muses for inspiration. If the Muses begin to sing, this poem will be filled with words to make an ode to pay tribute to King. Milton also comes up with another reason why these “Sisters” should touch the strings of their instruments:

Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse.  
So may some gentle Muse  
With lucky words favour my destined urn,  
And as he passes turn,  
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud! ...

Milton would like the Muses not to hesitate to “favour” his own grave, his “destined urn”, upon his death. Just as they help Milton to sing for Edward King, Milton pleads to them to do the same for him. So Milton here sees his death covered with a burial cloth as King is now covered. Just as his friend is given verses commemorating his death, Milton himself will be celebrated in this way.<sup>30</sup>

Milton conceives his poem as an inquiry, or quest, and this is to get information about who was to blame for the shipwreck. As it happened in the sea Milton, establishing an imagined legal trial, calls the powers of the sea and wind:

... And listens to the Herald of the Sea,  
That came in Neptune's plea.  
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,  
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?

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<sup>29</sup> **Martz, Louis L.** “Who is Lycidas?”, *Yale French Studies*, No. 47 (Image and Symbol in the Renaissance 1972), pp. 170-188. Yale UP, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2929408>. Web. 28 June 2010.

<sup>30</sup> **Schiffhorst**, 1990, pp. 61.

The poet listens to a procession of mythological figures that help in an inquiry and lament the disaster.<sup>31</sup> They are called by the speaker, the poet, who is like a prosecutor, to get a clear answer to why shipwreck happened. He calls the herald Triton, the messenger of the sea god Neptune, and he calls Hippotades, the God of wind:

And questioned every gust of rugged wings  
That blows from off each beaked promontory:  
They knew not of his story,  
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,  
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:  
The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.

So Milton realises that they are innocent; the sea and winds were calm at the time of the shipwreck. Instead, the “perfidious bark”, the treacherous boat, is to blame.

It was that fatal and perfidious bark,  
Built in th’ eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Now the poem turns from the idea of a court room to introduce a series of characters who praise Edward King. One of them is Camus the “reverend sire.” Camus is the God of the river Cam (which runs through Cambridge, and therefore symbolises the town):

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge  
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.  
“Ah! Who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?” ...

Milton associates Camus with a “mantle” of hair and “bonnet sedge” to signify the greenery round the river, which fits the poem’s pastoral mode. Camus visits Milton to share his grief about the “mishap.” Camus names Edward King as his

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<sup>31</sup> **Martz, Louis L.** “Who is Lycidas?”, *Yale French Studies*, No. 47 (Image and Symbol in the Renaissance 1972), pp. 170-188. Yale UP, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2929408>. Web. 28 June 2010.

“dearest pledge” because his life was full of promise but was cut short.<sup>32</sup> Thus, for Camus, his favourite youth had gone too soon, so his loss is irreplaceable.

After Camus the next and the last visitor is the “pilot of the Galilean Lake”:

Last came and last did go,  
The pilot of the Galilean Lake;  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain.  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).

This visitor is St. Peter holding two heavy keys. Peter represents the church on earth. The ‘Piloting’ or guiding foundation of the keys give power to open the way to heaven or to close it, and are golden and iron respectively. Milton’s portrayal of Peter with the keys is not simply ornamental in the poem. It is known from Matt. 16: 18-19 that Peter was chosen by Christ to bind and loose man’s sins on earth. The apostle brings the focus of the poem to the issue of the state of the church.<sup>33</sup>

The Clergy are shepherds who fatten their sheep and protect them against the wolves. But if these shepherds begin to neglect their duty by entertaining themselves at feasts or acting like masters, then they think of what is best for them rather than what is best for their flock. As a result of their bad deeds, they approach the ministry with selfish aims, and exclude those who wish to be good ministers. Thus Milton mentions this corruption among clergy by these lines:

He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:--  
“How well could I have spared for thee, young swain”  
Enow of such as, for their bellies’ sake,  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
Of other care they little reckoning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers’ feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.

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<sup>32</sup> Schiffhorst, 1990, pp. 60.

<sup>33</sup> “New Testament, Matt. 16: 18-19: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Shaw, William P. “Lycidas 130-131: Christ as Judge and Protector”, *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1977), pp. 39-42. *Modern Language Studies*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3194152>. Web. 28 June 2010).

St. Peter appears wearing his “mitre.”<sup>34</sup> Scholars of Milton’s *Lycidas* have identified “The Pilot of the Galilean Lake” as St. Peter. He was a fisherman, hence a pilot. Milton’s pilot, moreover, “wears a mitre, carries keys, and fulminates against the corrupt clergy.”<sup>35</sup> Like Camus, he also laments for King, saying he could have done without many churchmen, who would be greedy and working for their “bellies”, if he could have kept King, who was to have been a “young” shepherd. St. Peter says this to Edward King because he is also aware of the problems among the clergymen. Thus Milton is able to bring in an attack on the clergy of his day.

The clergy, who think just to fill their stomachs, are “robbers” who do not enter the sheepfold, the Church, by the gate but climb in other ways.<sup>36</sup> These usurpers consider scrambling hastily at the shearers’ feast more than remembering the Feast in Heaven to which many will come but very few will be accepted.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the clergy then think about their earthly possessions rather than think about their spiritual needs.

As a result of their materialistic thoughts they are hirelings who throw the “worthy bidden guest” away for the sake of their own hungry “bellies.” For this reason, St. Peter says he has enough of corrupt clergymen:

Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least  
 That to the faithful herdman’s art belongs!  
 What recks it them? What need they? They are sped ...

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<sup>34</sup> *King James Version*, Leviticus 8:9, mitre is described as one of the requirements of being a priest: “And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses.” (“The Official King James Bible Online.” <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n. d. Web. 05 April 2011).

<sup>35</sup> **Hone, Ralph E.** “The Pilot of the Galilean Lake”, *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Jan. 1959), pp. 55. North Carolina UP, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4173263>. Web. 28 June 2010.

<sup>36</sup> *King James Version*, John 10:1, “... Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” (“The Official King James Bible Online.” <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n. d. Web. 05 April 2011).

<sup>37</sup> *King James Version*, Matt. 18: 11-12, “... And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (“The Official King James Bible Online.” <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n.d. Web. 05 April 2011).



The expression “blind mouths” stands for the greediness of the bishops in particular.<sup>38</sup> St. Peter criticizes the bishops for not knowing how to look after the sheep and thus for not knowing the art of a shepherd. They just work for themselves doing nothing for their flock.

Milton now turns his mind to other acts of bishops and other clergymen of the poet’s day:

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.

Milton is referring indirectly in these lines to censorship, which Archbishop William Laud imposed rigorously. Famously, William Laud forbade discussion of predestination, the important but controversial issue among his Calvinist opponents. However, through St. Peter’s mouth, the poet notes that, while bishops can write what they like, they forbid others. This is certainly a condemnation of the Archbishop. When Laud was brought to his position as an Archbishop, he brought his church policy together with him, “to reform church ritual and government.”<sup>39</sup> Between 1633 and 1637 Laud promoted:

a systematic campaign to eradicate the unacceptable features of the Scottish church ...<sup>40</sup>

These same features, against which Laud had campaigned, were supported by Milton. In 1637, Charles and Laud imposed the Book of Common Prayer to replace the Presbyterian order of service and the Geneva Bible used in Scotland. This clash initiated the Prayer Book Rebellion in 1637. Laud’s most remembered brutal act was associated with censorship. It was in the same year when William Prynne, John Bastwick and Henry Burton were gathered before the Court of Star Chamber. They were sentenced to have their ears hacked off because they were accused of:

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<sup>38</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, 1992, pp. 757, “Ruskin comments in *Sesame and Lilies*: ‘A “bishop” means “a person who sees.” A “pastor” means one who feeds. The most unbishoply Character ... is therefore to be blind. The more unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed,- to be a mouth’.”

<sup>39</sup> Lewalski, 2001, pp. 55.

<sup>40</sup> Cust, 2007, pp. 223.

having written and published pamphlets denouncing the hierarchy of the Church and institution of bishops.<sup>41</sup>

What makes *Lycidas* a major poem of the time is its approach towards the Anglican Church, combining this with the poet's thoughts on Edward King's death. Milton in this poem clearly appears as a critic of the corruption in the established church.<sup>42</sup>

So we find in the short passage cited above the first reference to license and liberty which, as we will see, became a key theme in Milton's life. His main work on the subject is *Areopagitica*, published in 1644. However, the main topic of this section of *Lycidas* is the corruption of the church.

Milton in his next criticism mentions the other face of the Anglican clergy that is represented by William Laud. Milton states his satire on clergy again using the sheep as his symbol:

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But swoll'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ...

St. Peter explains the job of faithful shepherds. They are needed to feed the sheep. If there are sheep dying of starvation this is because the clergy fail to feed them. "The hungry sheep" is a reference to the situation in which selfish Anglican clergy fail to provide anything but "wind." This wind refers to publications like the infamous *Book of Sports* or Laud's *Constitutions*. The clergy mistreat their sheep, or "flocks", rather than feed them. As a result the foul contagion of false beliefs spreads.

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<sup>41</sup> Lewalski, 2001, pp. 56; Hunt, 2003, pp. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Schiffhorst, 1990, pp. 23-24.

The clergy in this poem also neglect their duty to defend their flocks from the Roman wolf.<sup>43</sup> As well as the greedy clergymen and bishops there is also a wolf at large:

Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.  
But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

The Anglican Church became a threat to true believers with its power as the established Church and its closeness to the Catholic Church in theology. At the same time, it seems that the growth of Catholicism cannot be prevented. Like a “grim wolf”, Catholicism “daily devours apace.” This recalls the fact that at the time of writing the Roman church was driving Protestantism out of Central Europe, and spreading rapidly in colonies and outposts like South America, India and the Far East.

Milton, however, takes an optimistic view, claiming that there is one force that will stop Catholicism from spreading. He names it as “two-handed engine” that meets the enemies “at the door.” The reason why he has named this force so is a question of interpretation and many suggestions have been made.

One of the clear interpretations can be seen in Milton’s own prose, *Christian Doctrine*. In *Chapter XXXI of Particular Churches*, Milton emphasizes that the invisible Church is formed by the “union of Father and Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is the head of this pure Church.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it can be said that the power of God and His son is like the sword that is named “two-handed engine.”

On the other hand, according to William P. Shaw, at the second coming Christ will lift his weapon and “smite once.” He will act not only as the protector of His

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<sup>43</sup> **Brown, Cedric C.** “The Legacy of the Late Jacobean Period.” *A Companion to Milton*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. UK and USA: Blackwell, 2001. pp. 116; **Schiffhorst**, 1990, pp. 65.

<sup>44</sup> **Milton, John.** *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*. Trans. by Charles R. Sumner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1825.  
[http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7111169M/A\\_treatise\\_on\\_Christian\\_doctrine](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7111169M/A_treatise_on_Christian_doctrine).  
Workbot. 16 August 2010. Web. 10 April 2011.

Church but He will also sit as a judge rewarding the good shepherds and punishing the evil. And thus ‘the Lamb shall overcome them’ because “he is Lord of lords and King of kings.”<sup>45</sup> These two titles are the two-handed engine, according to this argument.

W. A. Turner gives another interpretation to the engine. As for W. A. Turner, says Merit Y. Hughes in his introductory notes for *Lycidas*, these two keys symbolise the two houses of Parliament or the two kingdoms of Scotland and England.<sup>46</sup>

The interpretation favoured by the present author refers to the Bible: Daniel 12:1 and Book of Revelation 12:7. In Daniel 12:1, the archangel Michael is called “the great prince.” In Book of Revelation 12:7, Michael is said to fight against the dragon and his angels and Book of Revelation 12:9 says that the “great dragon”, called “the Devil, and Satan” is sent away from heaven. In this sense, Catholicism is seen an enormous dragon with gigantic power. So just as the dragon is cast away from heaven with his angels, Catholicism is to be defeated. In *Paradise Lost*, Book VI, the Archangel Michael, who represents the end of the world, wins the war against Satan and his followers with “huge two-handed sway.” Satan was pushed away from heaven with “one stroke” because “one stroke they aimed.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, with this engine Milton believes that only a spiritual power can stop the foe and this power is the Archangel Michael with his two-handed sword.

As Milton continues, the poem characteristically switches from a Biblical to a classical story. The poem concludes its mention of the evil churches, and now can take a more optimistic turn:

Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past

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<sup>45</sup> **Shaw, William P.** “Lycidas 130-131: Christ as Judge and Protector”, *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1977), pp. 39-42. *Modern Language Studies*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3194152>. Web. 28 June 2010; **Schiffhorst**, 1990, pp. 65, “The section concludes with the mysterious image of the two-handed engine, suggesting that somehow a divine judge holding the scales of justice and mercy will purify the English church.”

<sup>46</sup> **Hughes, Meritt Y.**, 1957, pp. 117.

<sup>47</sup> **Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg**, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book VI), lines 250-51, 316-18, 2008, pp. 149.

That shrunk thy streams ...

This is the mythological story of Arethusa and Alpheus. Arethusa (Arethuse) came across a clear stream and began bathing not knowing it was Alpheus, the river God. Alpheus then fell in love with her. Since Arethusa was the chaste attendant of Artemis, she wanted Artemis to hide her under a cloud. However, Alpheus was so persistent that Arethusa begged Artemis to change her into a stream. Then Alpheus flowed through sea and mingled with her waters under the ground.

This reference to mythology tells of a new beginning, just like Edward King, who started anew through water. In some ways, the myth is a key to understanding the main message of the poem. Milton refuses to lose hope because of King's death. In fact, the opposite is the case, as he sees in King's death a new beginning. King will live on in heaven.

The ending of the poem is strikingly optimistic:

... Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills,  
While the still morn went out with sandals grey;  
He touched the tender stops of various quills,  
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:  
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,  
And now was dropped into the western bay.  
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:  
Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

At first the sun has not risen yet and all the things are "grey." But then with the morning's touch on the shoulders of various poets, including Milton, the sun rises again. The rising of the sun brings life to "fresh woods" and "pastures new." Thus, the morning image that signifies resurrection moves the poem towards an optimistic ending.

John Milton in *Lycidas* deals with some present matters of those days, binding the ideas of sheep in a pasture and pastors with the pastoral genre that comes into being as a "critique" of religious life. Although the poem is written in mourning for

Edward King, with St. Peter's arrival the poem turns into a satire of churchmen of the time<sup>48</sup>.

What Milton criticizes in the poem is the Church of England which, under the authority of William Laud, errs by increasing its dominance and applying surplus ritual and ceremony that reduce the importance of preaching.<sup>49</sup> Under these circumstances in *Lycidas* we see a new Milton who seems to have given up the idea of being a clergyman. For this reason this poem appears to be a quest for order and for unity of faith in an uncontaminated Church.

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<sup>48</sup> Beer, 2008, pp. 87.

<sup>49</sup> Beer, 2008, pp. 87.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FORTUNES OF WAR

Milton, who came back from his journey to Italy and other European countries by 1639, already shows which side he is going to be on by deciding not to be a church minister. Therefore, during the Second Bishop's War (1640) it was certain that Milton would condemn the King and Archbishop Laud. Milton's opposition to the Laudian ceremonies and to the Episcopalian policy were seen in his anti-prelatical (anti- Episcopalian) works published between 1641- 1642.

The Sonnet *When the Assault was Intended to the City* (No. VIII) is written in 1642 after the indecisive battle of Edge Hill. There was an anticipation of an attack on London by the Royalists at that time and so Milton starts the poem with these lines:

Captain, or colonel, or knight in arms,  
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,  
If deed of honour did thee ever please,  
Guard them, and him within protect from harms ...

In this poem the "Captain, or colonel, or knight in arms" are the Royalist soldiers, who are expected to attack in London. Milton knew that his life was in danger since his home would be destroyed by this attack. So in the poem he urges the soldiers to "guard" the poets like him and to prevent the Royalists' from doing harm to the poet. Milton encourages the soldiers, who may be Parliamentarian or Royalist, saying that if they keep him from the assault and "harm", then he will favour their "deed" by writing in their honour:

He can requite thee, for he knows the charms  
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,  
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,  
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.  
Lift not thy spear against the Muse's bower; ...

As ever in his poems, in this poem Milton gives examples from ancient times:

The great Emathian conqueror bid spare  
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower  
Went to the ground; and the repeated air  
Of sad Electra's Poet had the power  
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

He says that, just as the house of the Greek poet Pindar was spared by Alexander the Great because of Pindar's status as a poet, soldiers who respect poetry should also prevent harm coming to the house of Milton. Similarly, he recalls how the Spartan generals spared Athens after they were moved by lines from Euripides' play *Electra*.

In the event, the king changed his mind about attacking London. He would decide to take the route to Banbury and then Oxford. What this poem mainly reflects is Milton's high view of the poet's role in society, and incidentally Milton's exalted sense of his own calling, and talents, as a poet.



## CHAPTER V

### MILTON AND THE DIVINES

Milton's poem was written before 'Pride's Purge', which filled the Parliament with Independents. Milton was the supporter of the Parliament that had ended episcopacy with the Solemn League and Covenant signed on July 1, 1643. Before the Covenant the parliament passed the Grand Remonstrance and the triennial Act in 1641, and the Root and Branch petition in 1640 that were aimed at limiting the King's authoritarianism both in religion and in state affairs.

Milton had always believed that the abolition of episcopacy was very important. For him "the service of prelaty is perfect slavery" because they do not "serve or feed your souls with spiritual food" and because "they will sell your liberties, your parliaments." Furthermore, they "induce tyranny and reduce popery" rather than "set free the minds and spirits of a nation from sin and superstition." With these aspects prelaty is like "Midas" who turns everything he touches into the "dross and scum of slavery" in the bondage of "hierarchy and superstition" leaving out "legal freedom of civil life."<sup>50</sup>

During the First Civil War, the Scottish Presbyterians fought with the Parliamentarians against the Royalists. This union with the Kirk led to a change in

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<sup>50</sup> **Milton, John.** *The Reason of Church-Government Urged against Prelaty.* Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011.

the structure of the English Church. A church council, the Westminster Assembly, was appointed by the Long Parliament in 1643 to convert the English Church into Presbyterianism. For Milton this was unacceptable because this new institution was an example of the integration of the state with the church.

Milton questions the ambiguous acts of the Presbyterians with “On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament.” This is a poem with a tail or tail-rhyme stanza that contains longer lines, two or more short lines that rhyme with each other and serve as tails to the divisions of the stanza. Italians call this kind of poem *sonetto caudate*.

The poem begins with the lines that Milton reminds people that they have abolished prelaty:

Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord  
And with stiff vows renounc'd his Liturgy,  
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality  
From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorred,  
Dare you for this adjure the civil sword  
To force our consciences that Christ set free  
And ride us with a Classic Hierarchy.

Milton is satirical about the Presbyterians. He finds their acts ambiguous because although they have abolished episcopacy and common prayers, they aim to take the corruption of “plurality” back from the Episcopalian polity. Milton defines plurality as a “widow'd whore” to symbolize the corruption of the church because the bishops who were appointed to more than one see could not be carefully present in any of these places but took an income from both.

As for Milton the Presbyterians should have “abhor'd”, hated, this polity because it is not different from the Episcopalian polity considering the “hierarchy” of the bishops (priest-bishop-archbishop) and “plurality.” The Presbyterian leaders, kept from their own churches by protracted councils and debates, were no better than absentee prelates. With “Civill Sword” they impose their own beliefs upon the individuals. Thus, they show no toleration to different beliefs. However, the freedom

of belief and speech are inborn rights that were set free by Christ.

Milton emphasizes that various kinds of belief make human beings aware of the “potency of life”, and “good and bad” as he writes in *Areopagitica*.<sup>51</sup> So Milton states that different opinions must be heard to allow people a choice. For Milton bad and good coexist and “grow together” as in the parable of the wheat and the tares and thus the wisdom of human beings can make a choice.<sup>52</sup>

It is obvious that Milton increasingly becomes a defender of freedom in these years. He questions the Presbyterians who aim to establish a state-church because an established church means the dominance of one kind of Scripture that is accepted by the individuals, one common religious belief, and one book of order. Therefore, this structure leads the country to a “classic hierarchy” which Milton states is “taught ye by mere A.S. and Rutherford.”

The use of names and initials give this poem an informal tone.<sup>53</sup> A.S. stands for Adam Steward, a Scottish pamphleteer who supported the Presbyterian cause. Rutherford is Samuel Rutherford (Rotherford), who was another Scottish Presbyterian at the Westminster Assembly.

With the abolition of episcopacy by Parliament, the Westminster Assembly of Divines began deliberations “for the settling of the liturgy and the government of the

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<sup>51</sup> “For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul wad whose progeny they are ... Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil ...” (Milton, John. *Areopagitica*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011).

<sup>52</sup> *King James Version*, Matt. 13: 24-30, The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them ...” (“The Official King James Bible Online.” <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n. d. Web. 05 April 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 301.

Church of England.” There was a heavy majority of Presbyterians at the Assembly and those “great rebukers of non-residence”, as Milton called them, took up residence in England. The Assembly’s domination of the English Church continued until its abolition by Parliament on February 22, 1649.<sup>54</sup>

Like Jesus Christ, St. Paul is invoked as the defender of honesty, true faith and purity:

Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,  
Would have been held in high esteem with Paul  
Must now be named and printed heretics  
By shallow Edwards and Scotch What-d'ye-call ...

For Milton “Life, Learning, Faith and pure intent” were preserved by St. Paul. In parallel to this opinion, Milton expects the Assembly not to label, not to “print”, those who do not share the same opinion with them as “heretics.” Milton was also named as a heretic because of his pamphlet on divorce.<sup>55</sup>

Thomas Edwards, who was the writer of *Gangraena*, “claimed a consistent opposition to separatism and error.” In other words, Edwards had an attitude against “the Brownists, Separatists [Independents] ... and Arminian Tenets.”<sup>56</sup> Robert Baillie, who was a Scottish commissioner of the Westminster Assembly, “told his Scottish friends that the Independents were growing, the Anabaptists more...two months later Socinianism had been added to his list.”<sup>57</sup> Milton regards both Edwards and Baillie as “shallow”, narrow minded because the Presbyterians are not good

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<sup>54</sup> Hughes, Meritt Y., 1957, pp. 144.

<sup>55</sup> Boddy, Margaret. “Milton's Translation of Psalms 80-88”, *Modern Philology*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Aug. 1966), pp. 1-9. Chicago UP, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/436023>. Web. 28 June 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Hughes, Ann, 2006, pp. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 93- 4.

thinkers. They are characterised by levity, who are weak in spirit, inconsistent.<sup>58</sup> They were the ones who referred to the king as God's anointed and pleaded to the Parliament for mercy. However, this mercy is the "mercy of wicked men."<sup>59</sup> They were the men who acted side by side with the Parliament but then became the enemies of the Parliament. This was the reason for their "inconsistency", "wickedness", "falsehood" and "weakness of spirit."

Milton adds that when they learn about their "plots" and "tricks", the parliament will take their wholesome and preventive scissors and will cut their Phylacteries:

But we do hope to find out all your tricks,  
Your plots and packing, worse than those of Trent,  
That so the Parliament  
May with their wholesome and preventative shears  
Clip your phylacteries, though bauk your ears ...

A "phylactery" is a piece of clothing that the priests wear in Judaism. Milton again emphasizes that like their church structure their clothing is similar to the bishops so they have brought nothing new in the structure of Presbyterian polity.

As a result of their bad deeds the Presbyterians betray Cromwell and his followers and follow the example of the treacherous Covenanters in Scotland. The Presbyterians are responsible for replacing the Episcopal order. Just like the council of Trent of the Catholic Church there is the Westminster Assembly. For Milton the Assembly is much worse than Trent with their "tricks and plots." With the line "Bauk your ears" Milton points out the dark face of censorship by reminding them of Prynne whose ears were cut after writing *Histriomastix* (1632).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "... But through ... inconsistency and weakness of spirit ... or through an inbred falsehood and wickedness" they betray people whom they admired before. This is also a sign of "levity and shallowness of mind." (Milton, John. *The Tenure of the Kings and Magistrates*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Milton, John. *The Tenure of the Kings and Magistrates*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, 1992, pp. 786.

Milton concludes his poem with the hallmark lines of the poem:

And succor our just fears,  
When they shall read this clearly in your charge:  
New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.

In Presbyterian polity, there are elders or presbyters instead of bishops. However, they mean bishops. This dilemma causes Milton to play on words. "Priest" in English derives ultimately from Greek, "presbyteros" which also means "elder." Therefore, this last line signifies that there is no difference between "new Presbyter" and "old Priest" in polity.

Milton's opinions at that time went through a change from Presbyterian to Independent because what the Presbyterians defend is not different from the Episcopalian policy and they restrict liberty. Thus, for Milton the new forces that have the "civil sword" to limit freedom of speech and belief are narrow-minded because they cannot understand and know how to encourage freedom of conscience. Hence, Milton concludes the poem saying that though there is a change in the words, "old Priest" is replaced by "new Presbyter."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> **Boddy, Margaret.** "Milton's Translation of Psalms 80-88", *Modern Philology*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Aug. 1966), pp. 1-9. Chicago UP, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/436023>. Web. 28 June 2010.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OUTCOME OF WAR

John Milton's Sonnet *On the Lord General Fairfax at the Siege of Colchester* (No. XV), written in 1648, refers to Thomas Fairfax who had joined Sir Horace Vere's command during the Bishops' War. He was knighted for his services during the war in January 1641.

During the First Civil War (1642-1646), Fairfax fought at the battle of Nantwich (1644) and defeated the Royalists' army at Acton Church. At the end of the Marston Moor battle (1644) "a rich booty of arms and colours" were seized and the city of York surrendered two weeks after the battle, ending Royalist power in the north of England. Once again, Fairfax defeated the Royalists at the battle of Naseby (1645).<sup>62</sup>

John Milton refers to the New Model Army victories with these lines:

Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe rings  
Filling each mouth with envy, or with praise,  
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze  
And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings; ...

The Army formed in 1645 clinched Fairfax's fame because with this army his "name in arms" was spread "through Europe." Thomas Fairfax, who became the commander-in-chief of this Army, and who quickly shaped the New Model into an

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<sup>62</sup> Young, Peter & Richard Holmes, 2000, orderly at pages 176, 202, and 248.

efficient, disciplined fighting force astonished “the remotest kings” with “envy or ... praise.”<sup>63</sup>

Milton goes on praising Fairfax who obtained victory during the Second Civil war:

Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings  
Victory home, though new rebellions raise  
Their hydra heads, and the false north displays  
Her brok'n league, to imp their serpent wings: ...

John Milton says to Fairfax that his “unshaken virtue” brought home “victory” though the Scottish did not help the Parliamentarians during the war. Therefore, “the north” proved itself a false ally with its “broken league.” The number of the outbreaks of rebellion in England and Wales is like a grim monster with “hydra heads” that renew one of its heads in each defeat. Milton also refers to the Solemn League and Covenant, by saying “brok'n league”, which the north violated. The Covenanters during the Second Civil War (1648-1649) changed their sides and negotiated with Charles I. Yet Fairfax was able to win the war though “new rebellions”, and the Covenanters, rose against him.

Fairfax's fame became “firm” when he was appointed commander-in-chief of all parliament's land forces in July 1647 and when he succeeded as the Lord Fairfax on the death of his father, Ferdinando, in March 1648.<sup>64</sup>

John Milton, as he does Cromwell, warns Fairfax. He tells Fairfax to deal with another “nobler task” that is waiting for him to solve:

O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand;  
For what can war but endless war still breed?  
Till Truth and Right from Violence be freed,  
And Public Faith clear'd from the shameful brand  
Of Public Fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed  
While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

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<sup>63</sup> Gentles, 1992, pp. 12, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Gentles, 1992, pp. 185; Young, Peter & Richard Holmes, 2000, pp. 276.



What lies behind this message for Fairfax is his attitude in Colchester. Fairfax allegedly violated the rules of war, which led Milton to question the “Truth and Right.” When somebody frees “violence” from the fair fight of war, then there is the question of what point this person goes too far, which Milton described as “shameful.” For instance, the town’s people suffered from misery, and starvation. Fairfax aimed to demoralize the Royalists and to turn the people against them. So, he cut the food supplies and besieged the town.<sup>65</sup>

This was the other side of war that became unfair. Fairfax, anxious to win the battle of Colchester, did not think of the condition of the town’s people and he took inhumane decisions. This situation was criticized by Milton because he believed that there was “Public Faith” which needed considering. However, Fairfax left out such considerations and just focused on how to win the war.

Milton wants Fairfax to move from violence to peace and solve the long standing problems of corruption in England. When Milton calls the shame “Brand of publick Fraud”, he wants Fairfax to go beyond the situation of violence and to solve the issues, the problems Britain has had up to now. In other words, Milton wants Fairfax to take an action that rescues Britain from violence and that heals Britain with peace.

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<sup>65</sup> Gentles, 1992, pp. 256.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHAINED LIBERTY

Milton, who had worked closely with Cromwell since 1649, when he became his Secretary for Foreign Tongues, believed, like many others, that the invincible power of the New Model Army was delivered by God. There had been victory against the king, and now the victories continued against the Scottish Covenanters.

Milton in his “Sonnet XVI” praises Cromwell for being the “chief of” the Commonwealth:

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud  
Not of war only, but detractions rude,  
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,  
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd  
And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud  
Hast rear'd God's trophies, and his work pursu'd, ...

Milton believes that Cromwell's honourable reputation is the result of God's help and his unique fame. “Faith” and his “matchless fortitude” have helped Cromwell to see his path “through a cloud”, both when he was at war and when he was exposed to harsh criticisms. Cromwell's skill in the field against the monarchy and the “detractions”, the criticisms which had led to the recent conflict, make his “glorious way” to be cultivated with “peace and truth.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> As for Merritt Y. Hughes in his footnote to the Sonnet “In 1651 ‘Truth and Peace’ appeared on a coin issued by Parliament to express its confidence in the results of Cromwell's victories over the Scots at Preston on the banks of ‘Darwen’ in 1648 and at ‘Dunbar’ in Scotland in September, 1650, and at ‘Worcester’ in September, 1651.” (pp. 160).

Milton here speaks of the “detractions”, the ideological attacks, made on Cromwell. Cromwell’s critics at this time were mainly the Presbyterians. At the end of the First Civil War (1642-1646) King Charles I, who had escaped from a besieged Oxford, hoped to create a political split among the Parliamentarians.<sup>67</sup> The King was successful in his aim when he negotiated with the Scottish Covenanters. The division in the parliament prepared a new debate on religion. The differences between the parties focused on what to do with the king, with the Scottish insisting that Parliament was committed by the Covenant to preserving the king’s life. Cromwell and the army had also long been at odds with the Long Parliament, by now dominated by Presbyterians.

This situation led Cromwell to follow his “glorious way” to “peace and truth” by fighting against these Scottish Covenanters “who sought to impose their Presbyterianism and royalism with it.”<sup>68</sup> There were Presbyterians who wished for Charles I to return to his throne and there were Independents who were mainly against monarchy.

Thus, God helps Cromwell in three major battles:

While Darwen stream with blood of Scots imbru’d,  
And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,  
And Worcester’s laureate wreath ...

In “Darwen” (1648), the Covenanters were defeated. The river was “imbrued”, filled, with the “blood of Scots.” In “Dunbar” (1650) Cromwell destroyed the Scots with an attack at night, which scattered the Scottish cavalry, and led to one of the greatest of Cromwell’s victories. The Battle of Worcester took place in 1651. Cromwell’s victory at the battle spread his name throughout Europe. Foreign states “openly or secretly” wanted to gain his favour.<sup>69</sup> This battle is called “laureate wreath” by Milton, recalling the fact that Cromwell defined this victory as “a

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<sup>67</sup> Bennet, 2006, pp. 113.

<sup>68</sup> Mueller, Janel. “The Mastery of Decorum: Politics as Poetry in Milton’s Sonnets”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13. No. 3. (Spring, 1987), pp. 503. Chicago UP, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343510>. Web. 28 June 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Paul, 1955, pp. 250.

Crowning Mercy” in a letter to Lenthall.<sup>70</sup> Cromwell, in other words, saw the victory as the final and great climax of his campaign. That Worcester was the victorious end of a phase in the struggle was a conviction shared by Milton, as is reflected by the words “to peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough’d.”

All this information which Milton gives praises Cromwell for having been a great general, and anti-monarchist. In the second part of the sonnet, the poet goes on to remind the Lord General that his duty is now to free the church of political domination. Thus he now comes to the point where he warns Cromwell, in effect, against “new foes” around him. These were not military enemies, but those who promoted what was in effect a state church.

... yet much remains  
To conquer still: peace hath her victories  
No less renown'd than war. New foes arise  
Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains:  
Help us to save free Conscience from the paw  
Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw.

John Milton had supported the position of the Independents regarding church government from the time of the Westminster Assembly, if not before. He maintains this attitude also in 1652, when Parliament was considering a scheme for appointments (by ‘triers’) and dismissals (by ‘ejectors’) to control the church, and this is in fact the main concern of Milton in writing his “Sonnet XVI”, to Cromwell in May 1652 with the significant addition to the title “On the proposals of certain ministers at the Committee for Propagation of the Gospel.”

The idea for the “Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel” was presented by John Owen. Owen and his friends “listed fifteen ‘fundamentals’.”<sup>71</sup> The proposal was published in March 1652, and debated during the spring. The first part required the removal of “unsatisfactory ministers from the parishes” and the second part derived from the orthodox Puritans who had become anxious about “the rapid growth

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<sup>70</sup> Paul, 1955, pp. 246.

<sup>71</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 247-9.

of the sects and heretical beliefs” that is the growth of unorthodox sects.<sup>72</sup> Finally, a committee was set up with fourteen members including Cromwell.<sup>73</sup>

On the whole Milton had John Owen in his mind when writing this Sonnet because Owen was Cromwell’s chaplain and the vice-chancellor of Oxford University. It was Owen who dismayed Milton with his scheme for the ‘propagation of the gospel.’ Owen, who had been offended by such excesses as the Socinianism of the Rachovian Catechism licensed by Milton in 1650, insisted that the committee limit heresy and the variety of sects in the country. Besides, Owen criticised the state for doing nothing “to suppress the heresies.”<sup>74</sup> In particular Milton feared that the committee was piloting a system for imposing a single state church on the whole country.

So, there were conservative Independents who sympathised with the idea of an established church, which was also a concept supported by Presbyterianism. And concerning this debate Milton’s hope was Cromwell, who was a member of the committee, and he gives Cromwell some advice on how to handle this enemy. Milton writes that he has no doubt that this threat can be overcome on condition that Cromwell is determined to defeat this enemy.

The “new foes” include the clergy who asked Parliament to establish the English church on broad Protestant principles but with a state-salaried and state-controlled ministry on 29 March 1652.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Owen’s proposal “recommended the maintenance of tithes and of a state church.”<sup>76</sup> Milton therefore calls those who work for this organization “hirelings” who only run after money, authority and title and so do not care about the good of the church.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 241.

<sup>73</sup> Wolfe, Don M., 1941, pp. 90, *www.questia.com*. Web. 01 December 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 303.

<sup>75</sup> Hughes, Merrit Y., 1957. pp. 160.

<sup>76</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 241.

<sup>77</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 247-8.

Their demands are said to be for “secular” chains that combine state with religion. This chain for this reason binds the soul of “freedom of conscience.” Milton means to say that this proposal inhibits “peace and truth”, to which Cromwell leads the way, and is also against the Petition of Right, which abolished church tithes.

In the poem, the “paw” symbolises the hand of the Presbyterians who support the King and the clergy who care about feasting and money.<sup>78</sup> As Milton states in the sonnet such men are like wolves who try to limit tolerance and “free Conscience.”<sup>79</sup> The “maw” shows that these MPs and ministers, and those who work for them, are hirelings. They are only interested in feeding themselves, not in the gospel.

The year in which the sonnet was written was critical for Milton due to the dilemma between the Independents and Presbyterians on the demand for “Presbyterian state church or no state church at all.”<sup>80</sup> What Presbyterians wanted was “religious uniformity” on the idea of a “single unified Church and ecclesiastical discipline” inspired by Calvin. On the contrary, what Independents demanded was true religion, which they defined as allowing other beliefs to have their own church policy independent from the state.<sup>81</sup>

Going back to the first part of the poem, exactly what these “detractions rude” were becomes clear when one reads of critics of Cromwell mentioned by Milton

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<sup>78</sup> John Milton in his work, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, states that they are interested in “carnal admiring of that worldly pomp ...” Milton means that the clergy are after for materialistic glory, “pomp” and property so they do not think about the Gospel, the Holy Bible. (Milton, John. *The Tenure of the Kings and Magistrates*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011).

<sup>79</sup> John Milton has always defended religious toleration and freedom of expression. In his earlier prose, *Areopagitica*, Milton states that “... who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God’s image, but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God ... For books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potency of life in them ...” In this same work, Milton also emphasizes that “For books are as meats and viands are; some of good, some of evil substance ... and judicious reader serve in many respects to discover ...” Thus, with these statements Milton puts the responsibility on conscience. He indicates that books good or bad are to live together and people make their choice among them. (Milton, John. *Areopagitica*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Potter, 1971, rev. ed. 1986, pp. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Paul, 1955, pp. 75- 6.

himself in his prose work *The Tenure of the King and Magistrates*. Cromwell has faced the criticisms on the execution of Charles I, as Milton mentions in his prose. The Covenanters were against the regicide because for them Charles I was still the king, and defeated in the Covenant.<sup>82</sup>

In this prose work, Milton stands against these critics, accusing them of being hypocrites, because at first they supported the parliamentarians, but then they chose to support the king against those parliamentarians who desired a commonwealth. Milton at this point says that such people are not aware of the fact that the one with whom they sympathise is a “tyrant.” When they supported the Parliamentarians they were against monarchy; now as they changed their sides, they pitied Charles, prayed for him, pleaded to the Parliament for mercy and protested against the Parliament that brought him “to the trial.” However, as for Cromwell and his supporters, this is not a simple trial. This is the trial “of justice, which is the sword of God” and thus “which is superior to all mortal things.”<sup>83</sup>

Milton writes about the “free conscience”, and by the time of “Sonnet XVI” this topic had become strongly associated with our author. It in fact even dates back to the time when Milton had written *Lycidas* in which he criticises the state of the Established Church of England and gives indications of the reasons for his quitting his career plans as a minister. Now, in 1652, the new foes are not different from the Anglicans like William Laud in the fact that they aim to restrict freedom of expression. The many men Milton mistrusted in the committee are no different from Laud or the Presbyterians.

In this sense this new threat is another of “new forcers of conscience” that Milton had written about in 1647. However, there is a difference between the foes in 1647 and in 1652. In 1647 Pride’s Purge had not happened so the parliament had not been cleared of the Presbyterians. In 1652, the problem was that the “certain

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<sup>82</sup> On the death warrant Charles was mentioned with his name and surname, Charles Stuart, and no title, which means he was no longer regarded as a king.

<sup>83</sup> **Milton, John.** *The Tenure of the Kings and Magistrates*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011.

ministers” about whom Milton talked in his Sonnet were Independents. This is actually a contradiction because being an Independent means to show more toleration not more restriction. Like the “new Presbyterian” who turns into “old priest” in *New Forcers of Conscience*, in this Sonnet the Independents turn into Presbyterians.

The publication of the book of the Socinian doctrine in February 1651/2, which denies the Trinity and divinity of Christ, offended the Presbyterians and Independents, as indeed it offended the sects like Quakers and Baptists.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, as a total advocate of freedom of expression, Milton in August 1650 licensed the publication of *The Racovian Catechism*.<sup>85</sup>

The questions which made Milton critical of Cromwell emerged in the year this sonnet was written, and their differences continued to grow. In the years following 1650, Cromwell was regarded a conservative Independent who believed, in Cromwell’s words, in:

a settlement with somewhat of the Monarchical power in it ... may be done with safety, and preservation of our rights, both as Englishmen and as Christians.<sup>86</sup>

Owing to Cromwell’s contradictory manoeuvres, Milton foresees a danger for the future of the Commonwealth that is based on a split of the secular and religious realms. Regarding his doubts about Cromwell, he found it necessary to call for Vane to take part in reclaiming freedom. Therefore, another Sonnet appeared in July 1652 in Vane’s honour. For Christopher Hill, Milton’s sonnet to Cromwell aimed to persuade him to “resist conservative force” that demands a state church whereas his sonnet to Vane aimed to praise him “for supporting a freer system.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Paul, 1955, pp. 254.

<sup>85</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 243.

<sup>86</sup> Gaunt, 1996, pp. 137: “This speech was noted by Bulstrode Whitelock’s accounts regarding two meetings he had with Cromwell. These accounts appeared in his published *Memorials* of 1682.”

<sup>87</sup> Hill, 1977, pp. 104.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TWO SWORDS

It was early in July 1652 that Milton addressed a sonnet to the MP Sir Henry Vane, who was the only “civilian member of the Rump to be named or individually praised” by Milton’s works.<sup>88</sup>

The boundaries between state and the church became a crucial issue since Cromwell’s victory at Dunbar. Milton thus in the same year (July 1652), wrote another sonnet (“Sonnet XVII”) to Henry Vane the Younger. Milton’s attitude in this sonnet is different from that which we find in his sonnet to Cromwell. While Milton urges Cromwell in hope for a remedy to release religious toleration from the hands of the clergy, he praises Vane for holding the “bounds between civil and religious authority.”<sup>89</sup> Milton hoped that “Vane’s influence would be great enough to affect Cromwell and to defeat the proposals before the parliament.”<sup>90</sup>

In the preface to *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659) Milton says that in the Council of State there are some members who are qualified enough to distinguish state and religion. This statement implies that Vane is in his mind. Milton hopes that this treatise will make those who restrict conscience not only to comprehend “Christian Liberty” but also to provoke parliament “to enlarge it.” As

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<sup>88</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 243.

<sup>89</sup> Potter, 1971, rev. ed. 1986, pp. 59.

<sup>90</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 413- 14.

in *Areopagitica*, Milton stresses in this treatise that there are both “tares” and “wheat” in the field so they both “grow together until the time of harvest.” This illustration signifies that every Free Church has its own interpretation of scripture so the duty is to let them co-exist. This exemplification also shows that Milton is against both “Salmasius, and regal tyranny over the state and against Erastus, state tyranny over the church”; that is to say, he confirms that neither state nor church should apply power upon one another.<sup>91</sup> To show the act of promotion of Presbyterianism by Richard Cromwell’s Parliament is “heathen”, Milton benefits from the “Letter to the Galatians”, Chapter 2: 5, which tells of “false brothers” among the true Christians, who try to enslave them, ignoring the freedom, they “have in Jesus Christ.” Chapter 4: 31 mentions that “we are children of the free women.” Like in “On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament”, Milton indicates that Jesus Christ delivers freedom to them. He again supports this view based on Chapter 5:1 of Galatians:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage.

Milton with this Biblical reference means to say that it is in the blood of Christians to be free so any attempt to restrict this is “heretical” and “heathen.” According to David Masson, what Milton asserts in this *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* is “Christian Liberty” that involves “Disestablishment and entire separation of Church and State.”<sup>92</sup>

Milton, in the Sonnet *To Sir Henry Vane the Younger* (No. XVII) praises Vane who held several positions at a very young age:

Vane, young in years, but in sage counsel old,  
Than whom a better senator ne’er held ...

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<sup>91</sup> **Milton, John.** *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. II. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1210/78225>. Web. 21 January 2011.

<sup>92</sup> **Masson, David.** “Life of John Milton: Volume 5 (of 7), 1665-1660.” <http://www.gutenberg.org/>

Vane had been Governor of Massachusetts at the age of twenty-three. He was elected to the Short Parliament, and Charles gave him a knighthood and appointed him Treasurer of the Navy. In 1641, with Cromwell, Vane proposed the abolition of the episcopate in the Commons. In 1643, Vane directed the negotiations with Scotland.<sup>93</sup> In 1644, Vane exerted power in the affairs of the nation through the Committee of Both Kingdoms. In 1652, when this sonnet was written, Sir Henry Vane was a member of the Council of State concerned with foreign affairs.<sup>94</sup>

Vane became a “leading member of the Commonwealth regime” and “a dominant figure in the formation of” the policies of the Commonwealth both in the country and in abroad.<sup>95</sup> Worden describes Vane as “the most influential” MP to have influence on the “separation of Church from state.” In addition, Vane shared Milton’s thought on Church-state relations and on the permission of heresy.

Both Vane’s positions and his firm attitude in favour of freedom of conscience made him a successful and an intelligent diplomat, “a Senatour” as Milton’s sonnet written in July, 1652 states. In this sonnet, there is a reference to the Roman Empire:

The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repelled  
The fierce Epirot and the African bold, ...

The “helme” of Rome symbolizes the power of Rome. Rome was a republic ruled by senators. Thus, Milton compares the Roman Republic to the Commonwealth. Just like Rome, the Commonwealth is built around the idea of a republic, rather than an absolute monarchy.

Milton, praising Vane’s abilities, says that even Rome did not have a “better Senatour” when it was at war against Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and Hannibal. The

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*files/14380/14380-h/14380-h.htm#Cc2s1*. Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 19 December 2004. Web. 16 April 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Saillens, 1964, pp. 144.

<sup>94</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, 1991, pp. 787.

<sup>95</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 243.

King of Epirus and Hannibal both wanted to invade Rome and were both defeated.<sup>96</sup> In this sense, there comes another comparison. As there were Roman civil wars, Britain also suffered from the civil wars. The Roman Republic “repell’d”, pushed its enemies away, as the Commonwealth repelled the Royalists.

Milton again praises Vane saying he knows what war requires for winning the battle, “iron and gold”:

Then to advise how war may best, upheld,  
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,  
In all her equipage ...

When Cromwell had marched against the Scots, Vane had demonstrated his ability to supply the army in the battlefield. For Milton considering the outcome of the Anglo-Dutch war, Vane’s skills for logistics would be needed again.<sup>97</sup>

Milton, who had been the Secretary of Foreign Tongues since 1649, counts on Vane. Vane is a clever man who also knows what “spiritual power” and “civil” power mean:

... besides, to know  
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,  
What severs each, thou hast learned, which few have done.  
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe: ...

Civil power is individual liberty and spiritual power is religious liberty.<sup>98</sup> While the Presbyterians demand a united church, an established church, the Independents demand that each church have its own religious structure.

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<sup>96</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Goldberg, Jonathan, 1991, pp. 787.

<sup>97</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 414.

<sup>98</sup> Woods, Susan. “Elective poetics and Milton’s prose: A Treatise of Civil Power and Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings Out of the Church.” *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton’s Prose*. Ed. David Loewenstein & James Grantham Turner. Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1990. pp. 195.

Milton states that Vane has already known the function of both the “state” and “church.” Hence, Vane uses these two swords properly with his “firm hand.” Vane is aware of the fact that state and church are to be separated, unlike in the Presbyterian polity. As Milton shares Vane’s point of view, he praises Vane on this matter. As for Presbyterians, the church is ruled under the state and the Independents emphasize that there needs to be religious toleration in the Commonwealth. For this reason in *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* is an emphasis that Milton put forward that state must be separated from independent churches.

By the time the treatise was written, in 1659, Milton had gone through a period of bitter disappointment with Cromwell. Cromwell had failed to bring disestablishment.

Milton uses different expressions like “spiritual power and civil” in Vane’s Sonnet and “free Conscience” in Cromwell’s Sonnet to promote toleration on Civil Power. Owing to Vane’s support of freedom of expression and of religion, Milton backs him. Milton’s reliance on Vane is also seen on the last two lines of the Sonnet where he says,

Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans  
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.

With this image, Milton draws a mother and a son. Vane’s belief in liberty shows his love for his country. His love is like a son’s love for his mother. Vane, like a son, stretches out his strong arm to religion, his mother.<sup>99</sup> Thus, religion can “lean” in safety on his arm because “her eldest son” protects her from any danger.

In relation to these two sonnets, it can be said that there is a contrast of argument between his sonnets to Cromwell and Vane. The sonnet to Vane does not give him advice but congratulations.”<sup>100</sup> However, it is not always easy to follow the details of Milton’s disappointment with Cromwell and this is because of his long

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<sup>99</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 414-17.

<sup>100</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 245.

silence between 1655 and 1659. Milton was careful with writing nothing political between those times. Looking over the *Second Defence* we can see one clear statement written at the time against the government, indirectly told against Cromwell. Milton, regarding the lawmakers of the government, expresses his anxiety with this statement, "... while they prevent the frauds of the wicked, do not prohibit the innocent freedoms of the good." Milton is against the authoritarian nature of the Instrument of Government, the first written constitution. In other words, Milton demands the abolition of excessive laws due to the fact that they bring controlled censorship to the unwanted voices. However, Milton in this work expresses his content with the time when "all the mouths opened" in the early 1640s. For Worden the main reason why Milton has doubts about the Protectorate and the Instrument of Government is that it was not able to "carry out the separation of the church from the state."<sup>101</sup>

After Cromwell formed a new parliament with the grandees, he did not think twice. He appointed major generals throughout the Commonwealth and levied taxes, with a resulting increase in unpopularity. Although Cromwell gave importance to naval power, Milton keeps his silence. He only wrote the poem titled "On the Late Massacre in Piemont" in 1655. Yet, this poem does not make any references to Cromwell; that is, Milton does not give any advice or praise for Cromwell. Nonetheless, in this case, we can assume that Milton approved of Cromwell's intervention in favour of the Waldenses.

When Cromwell ended the rule of the major generals, the parliament came with another strike: the Humble Petition and Advice that offers Cromwell the crown. Cromwell did not accept the crown but acted like a king. He brought back what was abolished during the Puritan revolution: the tithes, the House of Lords, and censorship. Cromwell revealed that what Owen proposed in 1652 now can be accepted and performed. This is a clear sign of why Milton needed to write these two sonnets, one after another, first to Cromwell and then to Vane. If he was sure about Cromwell's policies that would separate the church from the state then he would not need to write another to Vane.

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<sup>101</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 302.

It was once more clear that “Milton would have agreed with Vane’s warning against heathen tyranny in 1656.”<sup>102</sup> Vane also “equated Cromwell’s usurpation” with Achan as a symbol. The Achan identification is very striking. When the Israelites settled in Jericho, “Joshua commanded them not to take “all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron” because He ordered that they should be “consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.” However, Achan, from the tribe of Judah, “took of the accursed thing” and brought God’s wrath on them.<sup>103</sup> This simile puts Cromwell in the same category as Achan, being a traitor taking the freedom of a nation and causing monarchy again. However, just as the silver and gold was “consecrated unto” God, so was the freedom of conscience that was stolen by Cromwell. Thus there comes another description of Cromwell made by Vane. For Worden, Vane identified Cromwell’s rule of the government as “private and selfish interest.”<sup>104</sup> In a way Vane accuses Cromwell of taking the liberties of a nation. This is a similar tone that Milton uses in *Second Defence* in which he refers to “the foundation ... for the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition”, which according to Worden “was doomed.”<sup>105</sup>

As for Worden regarding Milton’s disappointment, he says, “by 1659, we see only flaws: the secret ambition and the hypocrisy.”<sup>106</sup> Hill also states, “Milton’s concern for liberty gave way to anxiety for the Commonwealth itself in 1659-60.”<sup>107</sup> Therefore, it is obvious that by 1659 Milton has no more expectations from both the nation and the Commonwealth itself. He is no longer sure whether the nation deserves to be free.

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<sup>102</sup> Hill, 1977, pp. 190.

<sup>103</sup> *King James Version*, Joshua 6:18-19, 7:1. (“The Official King James Bible Online.” <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n. d. Web. 05 April 2011).

<sup>104</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 342.

<sup>105</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 296.

<sup>106</sup> Worden, 2007, pp. 345.

<sup>107</sup> Hill, 1977, pp. 198.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BLOOD SOWN AND MILTON'S CONCERN FOR EUROPE

Cromwell's foreign policy and Milton's position as his Latin Secretary is the background of the Sonnet *On the Late Massacre in Piemont* (No. XVIII).

The Anglo-Dutch War ended in 1654 with the peace made between the parliament and the Dutch. Negotiations were completed with Sweden, Denmark, Portugal and most of the Protestant states throughout the continent and another treaty was anticipated with France.<sup>108</sup>

Now the main problem was the Anglo-Spanish War, which lasted from 1655 to 1658. In general, Cromwell's policy at that time was to blockade the power of Spain. Thus, Cromwell maintained a policy of French union against Spain because he did not want France to meddle with Spain. Cromwell in accordance with this aim initiated his *Western Design* project against Spanish colonies in the West Indies by sending a fleet. Although Cromwell did not achieve what he wanted, he was able to turn back and establish the English in another place, which was without any Spanish force, Jamaica.

Assessments of Cromwell's foreign policy in the years 1653-1659 have varied between historians who regard Cromwell as an ideologue whose policies did not suit political reality, and historians who regard him as a pragmatist, whereby the religious references in his speeches are treated as less important. It can be said that Cromwell

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<sup>108</sup> Paul, 1955, pp. 302.



was a pragmatist by giving importance to the economic power of the Commonwealth against Spain and to Protestantism.

The events occurred in Waldensia, a part of Turin province, which in 1655 became the corner stone of Cromwell's foreign policy regarding Protestantism and this was also Milton's concern, which he evoked with a sonnet:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones  
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold,  
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones;  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubl'd to the hills, and they  
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow  
O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundred-fold, who having learnt thy way  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

Milton's first lines of the Sonnet begin with a cry to God to order him to take revenge for his "slaughter'd saints", the Waldenses who lay scattered on the Alpine mountains in cold weather in Spring. Milton prays to God to "avenge" their "blood on them that dwell on the earth." The words "avenge O Lord" appears both in the Book of Revelation 6:10 and Luke 18:8. In the Book of Revelation (6:10), "The Lamb opened the fifth seal and the souls of martyrs appeared and "called out ... How long, O Lord, ... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them ..." In Luke 18:8, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" These references show that Milton saw a connection between current events and the verses of the Bible, especially verses relating to the last days.

For Milton the Waldenses were enlightened even at a time when England was in darkness. Here Milton mentions the different aspects of Protestantism and Catholicism. Protestants separated themselves from the Catholic Church and made their own Prayer Book. Their church was also cleared of images. Thus, Milton describes the Waldenses as "pure" and innocent who kept God's truth "of old." For

him the Fathers of England were sinners because they worshipped “Stock and stones.”<sup>109</sup> Milton again makes a contrast with the Waldenses and the Catholics. He means that the Waldenses had chosen the right way being free from the icons and images before his ancestors chose Protestantism.

“Forget not: In thy book record their groans ...” is a reference to the Book of Revelation (20:12) that says God “records every act of man to judge “out of those things which were written in the books.” Milton here wants God to record their moans and agony in his Book. In the following line, Milton calls Waldenses God’s “sheep.” This is a reference to Jeremiah (50:17) that says, “Israel is a scattered sheep” driven away by the lions, the Babylonians. The “king of Babylon hath broken their bones”, tortured them. Upon this, God says, in Jeremiah 50:18.19, that “I will punish the king of Babylon ... And I will bring Israel again to their habitation.”

Just like Israel, the Vaudois were scattered by the Piedmontese, the lions. Thus, Milton prays to God not to forget that because like the King of Babylon broken the bones of the Israelite, the Piedmontese “roll’d Mother with infant down the rocks” and killed the Waldenses.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, he cries to God, their cries, tears, grief and sorrow will be piled up and reach up to heaven. They may now seem dead, he adds, but their “ashes and blood” are planted in the field and will grow “a hundred-fold.” Milton uses a Biblical reference for these terms. In the New Testament (John 12:24) it is mentioned that

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<sup>109</sup> This is a reference to the Old Testament. In Exodus 32:19, Moses smashes the golden calf that the Israelites made on Aaron’s order. In Leviticus 26:1, God orders the Israelites “Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.” (“The Official King James Bible Online.” <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n. d. Web. 05 April 2011).

<sup>110</sup> “According to Cromwell’s agent, Sir Samuel Morland, in his account of the massacre (History of the Evangelical Churches of the valleys of Piedmont (1658) 334-384) records that the wife of Giovanni, son of Pol Parise, was hurled down a precipice with her baby in her arms. At page 363, it says the baby survived. At page 368, it says that Jacopo Pecols’s wife and son were thrown down the rocks at Taglioretto and at page 374 it says that a woman and her baby were hurled down a precipice in the mountains of Villaro.” (Milton, John. “John Milton’s Sonnet Calling for God’s Vengeance.” <http://ghenbiu.com/google-trends/john-miltons-sonnet-calling-gods-vengeance.html>. N.p. 24 April 2010. Web. 18 April 2011).

“unless a corn of wheat fall into ground” it remains as a lonely seed but if “it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Hence, Milton honours the dead Waldenses. As they are dead now, they can grow and become a bigger community.

He also refers to Matthew 13:3-8 for these terms. In the *Parable of the Sower* Jesus explains that “good soil” produces “a crop-a hundred, sixty...times what was sown.” What Milton means is that the soil where the Waldenses died now becomes a fertile one that can give life to them so their souls along with their grief will tell God about this massacre in heaven and God will respond by blessing their community.

The “triple tyrant” is the Pope who wears a triple crown.<sup>111</sup> This description gives the reason why a papal system is called tyrant. This new Waldenses nation became the true “sheep” of God who believe in Protestantism and who have escaped from the “Babylonian woe” which is Rome and Catholicism. So, just like the children of Israel escaped out of misery and sorrow in Babylon, the Waldenses followed God, escaping from the “triple tyrant.”

Looking at the aspects of Milton’s thinking, we see that Milton has come to share common feelings with Cromwell. We can say that certainly, Cromwell wanted to be seen as a defender of international Protestantism. He described his foreign policy in the Caribbean in the following terms: “We think God has not brought us hither... but to consider the work that we do in the world as well as at home.”<sup>112</sup> Actually, in theory at least Cromwell saw his foreign policy as a means to promote “God’s will”, understood as Protestantism.

Considering Protestantism, we can say that Cromwell’s hatred for the Catholics increased when in 1655 the Catholics both in Piedmont and later in the canton of Schwyz expelled the Protestants.

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<sup>111</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, 1991, pp. 781-2. With this image Milton’s opposition was heard against the Roman Catholic Church once more. The pope was wearing a triple crown that represented the pope’s three functions as supreme pastor, supreme teacher and supreme priest.

<sup>112</sup> Clarke Papers, vol. 3, pp. 207-208; cited in Venning, 1995, p. 4.

The persecution of the Protestants in Savoy, near the South of France, proved to be an antithesis to what Cromwell had claimed, that France was not as intolerant as Spain. The news of the massacres of Piedmont villagers in the Vaudois valleys of Piedmont (part of Savoy) reached London in the first week of April and this strengthened the “pro-Spanish faction.”<sup>113</sup>

The events in Piedmont urged Cromwell to reconsider the relations with France because Savoy was under the strong influence of France.<sup>114</sup> Besides, since the Vaudois were isolated in the Alpine valleys nothing could be done without French cooperation. Cromwell wrote a letter to Louis XIV dated 25 May 1655 in search of this help.<sup>115</sup> In the letter Cromwell states

The lamentable complaints which have been brought unto us from those poor distressed people ... who profess the reformed religion [= Protestantism] in, Lucerna ... and other valleys [in Piedmont], within the dominions of the Duke of Savoy, who have ... been cruelly massacred ... have drawn these letters from us unto your Majesty, especially seeing we have also been informed (but how truly, as yet we know not) that this massacre has been acted partly by some troops of yours, which had joined with other forces belonging to the Duke of Savoy ... Now we do not doubt ... that your Majesty hath such an interest and authority with the Duke of Savoy ... a peace may very easily be procured for those poor people, with a return into their native country, and to their former liberty  
...<sup>116</sup>

As Cromwell’s Latin Secretary Milton made requests for political intervention addressed to Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, the United Provinces, and Transylvania.<sup>117</sup> According to Timothy Venning, we should not imagine that Milton’s position gave him any political power. He was given the post on the basis of his knowledge of Latin:

[Milton] was responsible for the tone of various state letters, such as those to the French and Dutch rulers on the Vaudois massacre, and for the ‘Manifesto’ against Spain in 1655. He also dictated official communications to the offending Duke of Savoy, the Catholic King, and Mazarin, the Cardinal of France. However, this does not indicate any influence

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<sup>113</sup> See Timothy Venning *orderly* at pages 100, 91, 93 and 94.

<sup>114</sup> **Beer**, 2008, pp. 257-8.

<sup>115</sup> **Venning**, 1995, pp. 97.

<sup>116</sup> **Smith**, 1991, pp. 97.

<sup>117</sup> **Parker**, 1996, vol. I, pp. 460-1.

on policy, rather that Cromwell, who used similar rhetoric in addressing Parliament in 1656 and 1658, found his tone congenial.<sup>118</sup>

Piedmont was the home of the Vaudois (or Waldenses) community, that had been excommunicated by the Catholic Church as early as 1215 and whose members were viewed as natural allies to the Protestant English. Since 1561, the religion and lives of the Protestant Vaudois had been protected by a treaty with the Duke of Savoy.<sup>119</sup>

However, the current Duke of Savoy (Charles Emmanuel) in 1655 decreed on 25 January that the Protestant Waldenses community must either convert from their religion or leave their villages within twenty days. The Waldenses refused to leave.<sup>120</sup> The Vaudois massacre was precipitated by the Duke of Savoy, 21-year-old Charles Emmanuel, who was a close relative of the Stuarts, and was “particularly mistrusted by the English army and its leaders.”<sup>121</sup>

The Duke wanted to expel them so they escaped to the mountains. However, they were followed by the Piedmontese and were either massacred or died in the snow.<sup>122</sup> There have been arguments over the exact extent of the massacres, which occurred when “zealous and undisciplined” Catholic soldiers started killing and robbing their victims. The killing and destruction of property was made worse by “the coldness of the season April in the Alps.”<sup>123</sup>

The misbehaviour and roughness of the troops was a warning to other Protestants, in Savoy, in France, and elsewhere, against a possible uprising.<sup>124</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 33.

<sup>119</sup> Beer, 2008, pp. 257-8.

<sup>120</sup> Parker, 1996, vol. I, pp. 460-1.

<sup>121</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 94.

<sup>122</sup> Beer, 2008, pp. 257-8.

<sup>123</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 94.

<sup>124</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 95.

event indicated that the treaty with France against Spain could wait since the French involvement was to be investigated. The council official Samuel Morland was sent to France with letters to deliver the King en route to Savoy, “to assist in a peaceful settlement guaranteeing future toleration for the remaining Protestants.”<sup>125</sup>

If we look at Cromwell’s foreign policy, we see that he sought to promote the unity of Protestantism. Cromwell began this policy in Ireland where he wanted to settle the country with Protestants.<sup>126</sup> His policy upon Protestantism was also followed by capturing Jamaica and using it as a refuge for Protestants. Besides, Cromwell appointed Hartlib as an ambassador to the German Protestants.<sup>127</sup> It was obvious that in Cromwell’s foreign policy there was toleration to all sects except Catholicism. In this case, both George Foxe’s *The Book of Martyrs* and *The Tears of Indians* were used as key works in Protestant states against the Catholics.<sup>128</sup>

Cromwell’s Protestantism was also revealed in his relations with Spain and France regarding the Anglo-Spanish War. Against Spanish force, Cromwell united with France. Thus, a treaty was made between the representatives of Cromwell and Cardinal Mazarin on 3/ 13 March 1657. Then the treaty was extended “in a new series of ‘Secret Articles’ including an article mentioning that Cromwell would prevent a Habsburg succeeding Ferdinand III as Holy Roman Emperor.”<sup>129</sup> Thus, Cromwell needed to limit the power of the Habsburg dynasty. Cromwell supported the Elector of Saxony who was a ‘moderate’ Protestant prince acceptable to many of the Catholic electors. However, Leopold’s election let Cromwell down. Cromwell declared him as a Catholic persecutor and declared that his election would be a ‘Counter-Reformation.’<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, Leopold’s election was in favour of Cromwell because this would neutralize the threat of Spain to England. The

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<sup>125</sup> Abbot, vol. 3, p. 726-7; cited in Venning p. 96.

<sup>126</sup> Paul, 1955, pp. 288.

<sup>127</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 25.

<sup>128</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 75.

<sup>129</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 130-33.

<sup>130</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 133-34.

‘Accession Capitulation’ would prevent help reaching Spain.<sup>131</sup> One consequence of Anglo-French alliance was the defeat of Spain’s army in the Netherlands at the Battle of the Dunes on 14 June 1658. The war between France and Spain ended with the signing of the Peace of the Pyrenees on 28 October 1659.

Why did Milton write a sonnet that dealt with Cromwell’s foreign policy? What is significant about Milton is that he also sees this massacre in relation to his Puritan side. He had opportunities in his life to find ways to strengthen his view of Protestantism as an international move towards a purer church. The first person in this aspect is Milton’s tutor, Thomas Young, a Scottish Presbyterian, who helped him develop his knowledge on classicism and Puritanism. He is a key reference to be pointed out for Milton’s interest in international Protestantism because Young continued to correspond with his pupil after he left for Hamburg, where he ministered to the English merchants. The other and the most influential person for Milton was his close friend Charles Diodati (Carlo Dati), from St. Paul’s, who died in 1638. It is a well known fact that his visit to Geneva and the Diodati family reinforced his interest in the international dimension of Protestantism. On his arrival in Geneva he wrote these statements: ‘[I] call God to witness in all these places, where so much licence exists, I lived free ...’<sup>132</sup> During his travels, he also passed into Savoy, which included Piedmont. Milton here encountered “a culture under the pressure of religious divisions: There were attempts to convert the Waldenses by force”, which as we know has formed a theme of this sonnet.<sup>133</sup>

Briefly, we can say that these experiences of Milton contributed to making him the proponent of Protestant ideology in his whole life. For this reason the situation of Protestants abroad was his concern as well as Cromwell’s. With the poem, Milton is in harmony with Cromwell’s taking an action against the massacre and condemning the persecution. On the other hand, this poem is important for marking the end of

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<sup>131</sup> Venning, 1995, pp. 135.

<sup>132</sup> Lewalski, 2001, pp. 108.

<sup>133</sup> Campbell, Gordon & Thomas N. Corns, 2008, pp. 107-8.

Milton's political career.<sup>134</sup> Apart from this, his blindness made it difficult for him to work, and his retirement seems also to reflect his disappointment with politics.

As Milton has always done, while writing the poem he has referred to the Bible. He has seen this massacre in relation to prophecies about the end of the world.

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<sup>134</sup> **Bradford, Richard**, 2001, pp. 89, *www.questia.com*. Web. 03 February 2011.



## CHAPTER X

### THE CATASTROPHE

After Cromwell's death in 1658, his son became the Third Protectorate of the Commonwealth. However, he was incapable of ruling the government without the control of the army, which meant promoting religious discipline throughout the Commonwealth. A Committee of Safety, consisting of 23 members (civilians and army officers), began to rule the country.

A far more serious threat came from Monck, who warned the Council that he intended to march south with his army unless the Long Parliament was restored. The Long Parliament was re-established in December 1659. Monck entered London and was appointed commander-in-chief by Parliament on 25 January 1660. A new Parliament containing a majority of moderate Presbyterians and Royalists was elected and met on 25 April. The abolished House of Lords returned to Westminster.<sup>135</sup>

The new Parliament, with Monck's support, entered into negotiations with Charles II, at Breda. On 4 April 1660 Charles issued the Declaration of Breda emphasizing that they "do declare a liberty to tender consciences" and that "no man shall be disquieted...for differences of opinion" in terms of religion.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Young, Peter & Richard Holmes, 2000, pp. 329.

<sup>136</sup> Gardner, Samuel Rawson. *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660*. The Declaration of Breda [April 4, 1660]. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. pp. 466.

On 8 May Charles was proclaimed king. On 25 May he landed at Dover, and travelled to London among scenes of wild rejoicing.<sup>137</sup> The Restoration was essential because the king

will, in compassion to us and our subjects, after so long misery and sufferings, remit and put us into a quiet and peaceful possession ...<sup>138</sup>

With the Restoration Period regicides, republicans, sectaries were swept aside.<sup>139</sup> Among them Sir Henry Vane was executed in 1662, two dozen men were imprisoned for life, and some twenty escaped from the country.

On January 30, 1661, the twelfth anniversary of Charles I's execution, the dead bodies of Cromwell, Henry Ireton and John Bradshaw were hanged at Tyburn and their heads were set on poles at Westminster Hall. Milton, who was the defender of the regicides and the Commonwealth, was in danger of death or imprisonment. So in May or early June, 1660, his friends took him into hiding in Bartholomew Close, Smithfield.

The order for Milton's arrest was initiated in June 1660. Meanwhile the House of Commons ordered Milton's *Defense of the People of England* and *Eikonoklastes* to be burnt. With the Act of Indemnity, the regicides were pardoned. Milton thought he was one of them. However, he was arrested late in the 1660s.<sup>140</sup> Then he was released again, probably because he was old and blind.

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<sup>137</sup> Young, Peter & Richard Holmes, 2000, pp. 330.

<sup>138</sup> Gardner, Samuel Rawson. *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660*. The Declaration of Breda [April 4, 1660]. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. pp. 465.

<sup>139</sup> Roots, 1995, pp. 255.

<sup>140</sup> Hill, 1977, pp. 207- 8.

## CHAPTER XI

### FREEDOM AND REBELLION

Milton, who had hoped for a Republican Britain, was now deeply disappointed at the Restoration. Just as the coming of the king and queen ends the chaos and disorder at end of a masque, the Restoration put an end to the period ruled by the Parliament and the army. The coming of Charles II was necessary to fill a political vacuum, for the Commonwealth had collapsed inwards, destroyed by its own conflicts.<sup>141</sup> The nation that was tired of wars and in search of a king now met their king. On 8 May, Charles was proclaimed king, and on 25 May he landed at Dover, and travelled to London amid scenes of wild rejoicing.<sup>142</sup>

Milton, after he lost his Bread Street house in the Great Fire, began to live in his small house in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, until his death on 8 November 1674.<sup>143</sup> In this house, Milton turned away from public life and sought to find his hope in God. Milton's whole effort for a monarch-free country had been in vain, but he had still hoped that God could overcome this enemy.

Furthermore, Professor John Rogers, in a lecture published by Yale University, draws our attention to Book I of *Paradise Lost*, saying that Milton's power as a poet

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<sup>141</sup> Woolrych, 1983, pp. 46.

<sup>142</sup> Young, Peter & Richard Holmes, 2000, pp. 330.

<sup>143</sup> Muir, 1955, pp. 114, 121.

is represented “in the characters of Satan and of God in *Paradise Lost*.” Milton in this epic poem presents us with “the failed revolution against God by Satan and his fellow rebels.”<sup>144</sup> In other words, Milton here seems to sympathise with Satan for objecting to God’s monarchy over the realm of Heaven.

Satan and his angels were defeated in their civil war against God and were expelled to Hell. As for Satan and his followers, there is no hope but “torture without end” in this dark place that is like “a Dungeon horrible.”<sup>145</sup> Although Satan could not achieve his aim, in Rogers’ words he recovers after the defeat and begins to think that “all is not lost.” There is still one “Will” waiting to be conquered and this victory can be obtained by his:

... study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield ...<sup>146</sup>

Thus, Satan swears to seek victory against the “Tyranny of Heav’n” because he was removed from Heaven by the “Monarch in Heav’n” just as the parliament and parliamentarians were expelled from the scene during the Restoration.<sup>147</sup> Satan is committed to his fight against “God’s omnipotence.”<sup>148</sup> Therefore, he will not:

... bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deifie his power ...<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Rogers, John. “Milton, Power and Powerful Milton.” <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/milton/content/sessions.html>. Open Yale Project, Fall 2007. Web. 15 April 2011.

<sup>145</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, lines 61, 63, 66-7, pp. 5.

<sup>146</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, lines 106-8, pp. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, lines 124, 638, pp. 7, 24.

<sup>148</sup> Rogers, John. “Milton, Power and Powerful Milton.” <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/milton/content/sessions.html>. Open Yale Project, Fall 2007. Web. 15 April 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, lines 111-12, pp. 7.

Beelzebub, for instance, says to Satan that “here at last we shall be free” from “th’ Almighty” because he cannot drive them away from Hell so, he adds, it is “better to reign” here than to “serve in Heav’n.”<sup>150</sup>

Satan being against “God’s omnipotence” comes into being as a typically rebellious figure, and uses terms very much like Milton’s own.<sup>151</sup> So, like Milton, Satan thinks that God, the King, has established fear and a system of obedience in his realm. The King:

Sat on his Throne, upheld by old repute,  
Consent or custome, and his Regal State ...  
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.<sup>152</sup>

Milton’s Satan coexists with Milton during Milton’s fight for a republican Britain freed from “blind affections” and “customs.”<sup>153</sup> Although Milton lost his hope, lost the battle against the Restoration, with the living image of Satan he expresses again his commitment to freedom, and as Satan says:

For who can think Submission? Warr then, Warr.<sup>154</sup>

Milton, like Satan in this case, was not a man easily to give up and like Milton Satan is still powerful in this situation. We have seen Milton’s never ending challenge against Charles I with his “anti-monarchic propaganda”, *The Tenure of the King and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes*.<sup>155</sup> Then, later on, he seems to point his pen at Charles II both in *Paradise Lost* and in *Samson Agonistes*. Milton’s “power”

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<sup>150</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, lines 258-63, pp. 11-2.

<sup>151</sup> Rogers, John. “Milton, Power and Powerful Milton.” <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/milton/content/sessions.html>. Open Yale Project, Fall 2007. Web. 15 April 2011.

<sup>152</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, lines 639-42, pp. 25.

<sup>153</sup> Milton, John. *The Tenure of the Kings and Magistrates*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011.

<sup>154</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, line 661, pp. 25.

<sup>155</sup> Rogers, John. “Milton, Power and Powerful Milton.” <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/milton/content/sessions.html>. Open Yale Project, Fall 2007. Web. 15 April 2011.

therefore, as Rogers says, derives from his strong and determined attitude against superstition and tyranny that sustain by both Charles II and I.

Presenting Satan as the hero of the revolution is the first point of *Paradise Lost* we have analysed. Another aspect that *Paradise Lost* reflects is “to justify God’s ways to man.”<sup>156</sup> This is partly achieved in passages which are the products of the daily debates between the Arminians and the Calvinists over the theme of destiny. As an Arminian Milton puts his own understanding of destiny in God’s mouth:

... whose fault?  
Whose but his own? ...  
... I made him just and right,  
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.<sup>157</sup>

What Milton means to say is that human beings are born with free will, which gives us the choice to accept or refuse God’s grace. According to their choice they are either be saved or damned. So, Milton through God’s mouth emphasizes the importance of their choices:

So were created, nor can justly accuse  
Their maker, or their making, or their fate,  
As if predestination overruled  
Their will ...<sup>158</sup>

Milton underlines that people’s choices are the determinative factors of their fates. We choose how we act and God lets that happen. God, in his grace, keeps away from our decisions so man should not blame God for the things that happen. It is man’s own deeds that prepare their salvation or fall. God’s speech is on the side of Arminianism expressing that his own

Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book I), 2008, line 26, pp. 4.

<sup>157</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book III), 2008, lines 96-99, pp. 64.

<sup>158</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book III), 2008, lines 112-115, pp. 65.

<sup>159</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book III), 2008, line 119, pp. 65.

This is the point from which the clash between Predestinarianism and Arminianism comes. Predestinarianism puts the emphasis on “foreknowledge” while Arminianism refuses the influence of “foreknowledge” on our lives. For Predestinarians God, who is almighty and omnipotent, is the author of our destiny. However, for Arminians freedom of choice is the author of our fate because God limits his power to give us free will. Therefore, our choice determines our salvation or damnation. In Book IV, we come across the fact that even Satan has free will bestowed on him by God:

Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will  
Choose freely what it now so justly rues.<sup>160</sup>

It is clearly seen that Satan’s free will brings his own end. God took no part in his actions. According to his own choice Satan has paid the price and became cursed. Except from Satan it is archangel Raphael, who on more than one occasion warns Adam about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Thy judgement to do aught, which else free will, ...  
...  
And all the blessed: stand fast; to stand or fall  
Free in thy own arbitrament it lies.<sup>161</sup>

In Book IX, we see Adam repeating the warning he got from Raphael:

But God left free the will, for what obeys  
Reason, is free, and reason he made right ...<sup>162</sup>

Milton goes on mentioning the debate between the Calvinists and Arminians. For Calvinists, since God rules man’s fate, it is impossible to understand further God’s reason for his choice of some to salvation and some to damnation. For them one cannot question God’s reason because the human mind is limited to understand

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<sup>160</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book IV), 2008, lines 71-72, pp. 86.

<sup>161</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book VIII), 2008, lines 636, 640-641, pp. 205.

<sup>162</sup> Orgel, Stephen & Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *Paradise Lost* (Book IX), 2008, lines 351-352, pp. 216.

his way. For Arminians we choose to do good or bad so we meet the consequences of our choice. For this reason, the Arminians say, it is futile to put responsibility on God because even God's judgement is the consequence of our acts.

This is the aspect which connects the issue of free will with Milton's political views. Arminianism, with its emphasis on the incorporation of human choice into God's plans for man, allows Milton to see the disastrous end of the Commonwealth in terms of the failings of man. We have already seen that he found weaknesses in Oliver Cromwell. The Restoration did not prove that God had never had a special destiny for Britain. Because of man's weakness, Britain missed its highest, calling.

Milton later returns to a Biblical story whose roots lay in the story of Samson. The Biblical story, about which he had already written in 1647, and that was given its final shape in the Restoration, brings up the defeat of the Philistines and their god Dagon. This is a metaphor of Milton's hope that God will defeat superstition.



## CHAPTER XII

### MILTON STRUGGLING

Throughout his life Milton struggled against episcopacy and those who restricted natural rights like freedom of speech and thought. Even earlier he had published prolusions to make clear that he was not against reformers.<sup>163</sup> He also expressed his thoughts on clergy allegorically in *Lycidas*.<sup>164</sup> His pamphlets also are the key to his thoughts that made a change in his behaviour from a more traditional Puritan to an Independent.<sup>165</sup> As Cromwell's Latin Secretary Milton preserved his identity until his death.

Many years after, when Charles II removed the parliamentarians with his restoration to the throne, Milton was deeply affected.<sup>166</sup> The years that he spent fighting for liberty were futile and the nation now was silent on the subject. However, this nation spoke continuously against Oliver Cromwell. This is now something that Milton cannot put up with. So, at home feeling he is one of the prisoners of the Restoration he penned his great sorrow and agony in the form of a

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<sup>163</sup> Muir, 1955, pp. 26-8.

<sup>164</sup> Muir, 1955, pp. 44-7, 51.

<sup>165</sup> "The pamphlets on episcopacy, divorce, and the freedom of the press are more distinctively Miltonic, and they possess a grandeur which can hardly be matched outside the seventeenth century", Kenneth Muir, pp. 104.

<sup>166</sup> Roots, 1995, pp. 254-5.

tragedy: *Samson Agonistes*. He would like to present his own life in a work, which would become part of England's literary heritage.

John Milton associates his life with the story of Samson recorded in the Book of Judges. The tragic play based on this story begins with Samson's monologue

Meanwhile the men of Judah, to prevent  
The harrass of their Land, beset me round.  
I willingly, on some conditions, came  
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me  
To the uncircumcis'd, a welcome prey,  
Bound with two cords ...

We see Samson in chains in the dungeon, which is a reflection of Milton's imprisonment. Samson in Gath works at the mill with other slaves. This work as Samson says is lower than a slave that makes him feel like a beast. Then he cries quietly for what he was once and what he is now.<sup>167</sup> Now he is the prisoner of the Philistines and is no longer God's Nazarite but before he was the God's Nazarite and saviour of the Israelites.

His birth was foretold by an angel twice to his parents and God ordered them not to put a razor on his head; otherwise he would no longer be His Nazarite. To save Israel from the Philistines he tied three hundred foxes' tails and started a fire between the tails. The crops and the fields burnt and he became estranged from his first wife and her father. However, the Israelites condemned Samson because they thought the Philistines would become more furious. To decrease the Philistines' cruelty they decided to hand Samson over the Philistines. Three hundred Israelites came down to Gath and bound him with new cords.

But cords to me were threads  
Touched with the flame. On their whole Host I flew  
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd  
Their choicest youth. They only liv'd who fled ...

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<sup>167</sup> Chains symbolize limits and restrictions as Jean Jacques Rousseau signified in the first chapter of Book I in *Social Contract* In the first chapter of Book I Rousseau states that "man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains." These "chains" are "the constraints placed on the freedom of citizens ..."

Since Samson had long hair he was God's Nazarite so he easily tore the cords, as if they were flax. Samson then took an ass's jawbone and slaughtered a thousand men. The jawbone is Samson's "trivial weapon" that he used against the Philistines. Milton's trivial weapon was his pen that he used to write poems, prose and letters against the regime and its restrictions. Samson killed a thousand men with this weapon; Milton raised his voice against many men with this weapon. For Samson these Philistines are the "uncircumcis'd" who took him captive and for Milton the clergy and aristocracy are the principal enemies of God in restoration in England.<sup>168</sup>

But what more oft, in Nations grown corrupt,  
And by their vices brought to servitude,  
Than to love Bondage more then Liberty –  
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty?  
And to despise, or envy, or suspect  
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd  
As their Deliverer? If he aught begin,  
How frequent to desert him, and at last  
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds! ...

With these lines, Milton indicates that the nations that love servitude more than liberty are corrupt. For such nations, it is much easier to accept bondage than to demand liberty.

The nations who are not thankful to their leaders are also corrupt. Since they are misled by "their vices", they despise, are jealous of and suspect their saviours and thus cannot see that their leaders are sent by God.

It is clear that for Milton this is an example of the British nation. This nation, like the Israelites, was waiting to be saved. Although God sent His people their "Deliverer", Oliver Cromwell, they despised him, suspected him, envied him and isolated him. This nation thus became like the Israelites who were not thankful for those who had the "worthiest deeds."

Many loyal republicans decided that the reason why their cause had failed was that the Parliament and its supporters stopped acting virtuously and fell into dispute based on envy, suspicion, and greed. So, just as the Israelites isolated their saviour,

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<sup>168</sup> Schiffhorst, 1990, pp. 151.

Gideon, who fought against Midian and its Kings; Cromwell, God's "special favour", who fought against Royalists and monarchy, was also deserted.

So, the central issue in *Samson Agonistes* is the question of why God allows His servants to fail, and how this can be reconciled with God's power over events. On this issue, Milton sought to find why God had wanted Samson's capture and humiliation to happen. Samson's friends, represented by the Chorus, are convinced that God cannot be accused of injustice:

Just are the ways of God,  
And justifiable to Men.  
Unless there be who think not God at all.  
If any be, they walk obscure,  
For of such Doctrine never was there School,  
But the heart of the Fool,  
And no man therein Doctor but himself.

However, for some people who refuse to believe in God, there is no school to teach them the "Doctrine" to believe in God because they are "the fool" saying "there is no God."

The Chorus goes on to mention the much more numerous class of doubters:

Yet more there be who doubt His ways not just – [and]  
As to His own edicts, found contradicting –  
Then give the reins to wandring thought  
(Regardless of His glory's diminution).  
Till, by their own perplexities involv'd  
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,  
But never find self-satisfying solution

People who are sceptical about God and are always wondering about the reason for events also become tangled. Since they try to find an explanation, they fall into dispute, arguing persistently. Thus, they are never able to find satisfactory answers to their questions.

The Chorus tells Samson more about these doubters:

As if they would confine th' interminable,

And tie him to his own prescript,  
Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,  
And hath full right to exempt  
Whom so it pleases him by choice  
From National obstruction, without taint  
Of sin, or legal debt.  
For with his own Laws he can best dispence ...

The answer that the Chorus gives is that the human mind is not enough to understand the ways of God. There are reasons for the disasters that have happened. It is just that man, with his limited perceptions, cannot see these reasons.

God makes Laws for human beings. So, men have to obey these rules. Only God is exempt from Laws He makes. The conclusion the Chorus reaches is as follows:

Down, Reason, then! At least, Vain Reasonings down!

These statements of the Chorus signify that the apparent failures in life that men may question are ordered by God. Therefore it is often futile to look for a reason behind these incidents.

At this point Manoah comes. He is an example of a doubter because he also questions God when he sees his sons and says:

Alas, methinks whom God hath chosen once  
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,  
He should not so o'whelm, and as a thrall  
Subject him to so foul indignities,  
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

Manoah argues with the Lord because he is offended by what happened to Samson.<sup>169</sup> He accuses God of having chosen Samson first to bless and then to be a poor blind captive of his foes in the dungeon. Thus it is painful for him to see his son in this condition and he begs God to pardon his son's situation for the sake of his former honourable deeds.

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<sup>169</sup> Danielson, 1989, pp. 232.

Upon Manoah's words Samson tells his father not to blame God because it is Samson himself who brings his own fate:

Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father.  
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me  
But justly; I myself have brought them on  
Sole author I, sole cause, if aught seem vile ...

Samson says to his father he is the only author of his bad fortune. Samson's resolution expresses the lesson he has learnt from his mistakes.

... Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,  
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy ...  
Dalila,  
That specious Monster, my accomplisht snare.

He tells his father that the main act of his foolishness was Delilah whom he calls "a Canaanite." He criticises himself saying he should not have revealed his secret which was an irrational thing to do.

Samson's secret was his long hair which he uncovered to Delilah upon her insistence. Delilah together with the Philistines cut his long hair. When they saw Samson was out of power, they cut his eyes out and took him to Gath as a prisoner.

Samson now cannot forgive himself for the faults he made. He blames himself for the things that came upon him. For him Delilah is a "specious monster", and the "accomplished snare." Samson was so attached to her beauty that he could not see her real face. Delilah, like a serpent, penetrated his soul and tempted him. Like Delilah, Mary stabbed Milton in the back.

His marriage to Mary Powell was one of the tragedies in Milton's life. When Mary, a Royalist, experienced life with the strongly parliamentarian and puritanical Milton, she left him and stayed with her family who were Milton's enemies. This wounded Milton to the bottom of his heart and he could not forget this even when he

was reconciled with Mary.<sup>170</sup> However, no matter how pathetic seems his condition Samson has still hope:

This only hope relieves me, that the strife  
With me hath end: all the contest is now  
'Twi'xt God and Dagon ...  
Dagon must stoop, and shall e're long receive  
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him  
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,  
And with confusion blank his worshippers ...

Samson's struggle against the Philistines came to an end because as a captive of the Philistines he cannot do anything against them. Since Samson is now out of the picture, God will send no more agents to fight against the Philistines. Samson's "only hope" is that this entire contest is now a much simpler conflict between Dagon and God. Since God will fight against Dagon without His agent's help, this contest is a direct confrontation between God and His enemy. Dagon, whom Milton believes to be equivalent to the force of superstition and tyranny, has no chance of winning this contest because God's power will be no longer limited by mortal agents and because God always knows how to defeat His enemies. Therefore, this time God will win another contest striking the worshippers with confusion and destruction of Dagon in the end.

When Charles II was declared the King, people believed in his power. This is because the public was tired of civil wars and the wars that followed them. The King, whom they thought would bring order in the country, seemed their hope. These people were the perplexed worshippers in the King's church, which is characterised by superstition.

Samson's only hope that God will put end to the corruption and superstition in Philistine, turns out to be Milton's only hope that He will put an end to superstition and tyranny in Britain.

Manoah, relieved by his son's words, expresses his hope too:

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<sup>170</sup> Muir, 1955, pp. 65-66, 78.

With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words  
I as a Prophecy receive. For God  
(nothing more certain) will not long defer  
To vindicate the glory of his name  
Against all competition; nor will long  
Endure it doubtful, whether God be Lord, or Dagon ...

For Manoah there is still hope as the Lord will neither postpone justifying the “glory of his name” nor will the Israelites long doubt that God is Lord and Dagon is a mere idol.

This hope Kenneth Muir says is a Constitutional Monarchy since episcopacy was abolished.<sup>171</sup> In such a system, the rights of the king are shared by the parliament so the king’s power is limited. This restriction prevents the king from being a tyrant like Charles I used to be during his reign. Charles I was the reason for the Puritan Revolution with his excessive power over his subjects. With this hope, Manoah states that Charles II may agree to share his power with the members of parliament. This refers to the Declaration of Breda by Charles II who promised toleration to different religious sects in the country. Thus, Manoah leaves the stage to Delilah.

Milton’s tragic play *Samson Agonistes* is an example of what Milton was feeling for the Restoration Period. Being one of the defenders of the English Revolution, Milton in 1644 had mentioned his trust in his country with these statements:

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man  
after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks ...<sup>172</sup>

Unfortunately with rebirth of Monarchy Milton’s disappointment was clear. He was arrested but then pardoned. Samson’s work at the mill with other slaves seems to be Milton’s captivity surrounded by the King and his men. Britain, enslaved by the

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<sup>171</sup> “He [Milton] thought that the British Commonwealth was essentially the best in the world, and that the Bishops were busy undermining it. Even in the last of the pamphlets on episcopacy, written on the eve of the Civil War, Milton admits the King is the Lord’s Anointed, though Bishops, like Delilah, had wickedly shaved off ‘those bright and weighty tresses of his laws and just prerogatives.’ He still hoped that with the abolition of the Bishops the King would become a constitutional ruler”, Kenneth Muir, pp. 60.

<sup>172</sup> Saillens, 1964, pp. 329.



throne, is now corrupt. Milton, totally blind, was in depression for the entire attempt to create the Commonwealth now seemed useless.

Milton, due to the failure of the Republic, questions the nation's attitude towards this gift. Commonwealth was a gift sent by God but as people were sceptical about regime and its leader, it failed.

This failure on the other hand makes Milton cling to the Christian belief that God has a reason for allowing things to happen. So, he believed that God wanted the Commonwealth to fail. Although God had a reason, Milton cannot see God's reason because this is beyond his perception.

Although Milton is "eyeless" in Britain and is in grief, desperation and disappointment, he has his personal hope for the future of his country. Since Milton can fight no more being a captive of the monarchy, he bears his hope upon God. Milton knows that God is the defender of freedom and faith. In this fight, God's opponent is monarchy and as God's power is colossal, it is obvious that God will win this fight.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

We have seen that, particularly in his sonnets and shorter poems, Milton chose to make the world of politics the subject matter of poetry. The poems can be used as markers to reveal turning points in his career, on the basis of which a periodization of the development of his political outlook can be proposed.

At different times, Milton's Protestantism took different forms. In his youth Milton moved within Presbyterian circles in which there should be elders or ministers elected by the congregation instead of bishops elected by the king. Milton was at this early stage allied with Presbyterians, and shared their opposition to Anglo-Catholicism. His anti-prelatical tracts were published one after another, notably *Of Reformation* (1641) and *The Reason of Church-Government* (1641/2) are two of the best known. Thus, we hear Milton's Presbyterian views on the Established Church, as he states that there should be elders or ministers elected by the congregation instead of bishops elected by the king. Milton had always been in shaping himself, as he also said in *Defensio Secunda* that "my mind had always been stronger than my body." For this reason, first *Lycidas*, then his pamphlets, were just the beginning of the things he succeeded in making something new in every step of his life.

During the Puritan Revolution (1642-1651), which was started against the King and nobles, a different Milton came to the fore who this time began to publish

pamphlets celebrating the blissful revolution which created a nation which was “not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit...”, as he said in *Areopagitica* (1644). Milton saw in the revolution a way to set the Englishmen free from the bondage of the king and his followers because his nation and country, he believed, needed such refinement. We can say that Milton’s ideas during the Civil War were the products of his patriotism, his belief in his country and zealous nation taking part in this war.

Besides, Milton saw the revolution as the route that God wanted the nation to follow through the words of the Bible. For Milton the aim of Revolution was to perform God’s order set in Galatians 5:1, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” Milton believed in the justice of the revolution: “... what can conduce more to the beauty or glory of one’s country, than the recovery, not only of its civil but its religious liberty” (*Defensio Secunda*). In fact, Milton's models throughout his life were the Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah, Zechariah, and others. In other words, he saw himself as speaking to the nation on God’s behalf, through the medium of poetry. He frequently quotes from the Books of the Law, like Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, and he also used the prophecies in the Historical Books like Joshua and Judges. This knowledge he found in the Bible made Milton see himself as God’s agent, connecting the Commonwealth with the prophecies. In the *Second Defence*, he writes, “if God willed the success of such glorious achievements, it was equally agreeable to his will”, which also means that the Commonwealth in Milton’s opinion is the gift of God that is to be protected well.

As can be seen, the Revolution put responsibility on Milton’s shoulders. From now on Milton would speak out against the taboos because for him these accepted and unchangeable values were nothing but tyranny and superstition. Therefore, Milton came into being as a poet and a writer who wrote about the necessity for a whole change in the structure of government and of the church, which he would summarize as civil and religious liberty. Thus, it is obvious that Milton’s poetry and prose, evolving around these conceptions, have a strongly political element, rejecting notions of traditional authority and custom, and breaking down the rules. As John Rogers rightly points out, in his lecture on Milton,

everything to do with the poet is associated with power: his power as a writer is not distinguished from the political power of the ideas he held, ideas that changed the course of history in his lifetime.<sup>173</sup>

In fact, we can say that this is another fact that reveals the power of Milton. In the *Second Defence*, for example, he also compares himself to Appius Claudius, who “saved Italy from the formidable inroads of Pyrrhus” and to Cæcilius Metellus “the high priest, who lost his sight, while he saved, not only the city, but the palladium.” Therefore, Milton knew that fighting against the king but for a free country, he was as powerful as these men were. Making use of the Bible (the Geneva Bible), Milton found a way to define his dream and wish for the future of his country, which created Milton as the spokesman of the revolution. His *Second Defence* (1654), particularly the well-known autobiographical section, helps us to understand Milton’s view of his own public role. He calls himself a saviour who comes “to defend the dearest interests, not merely of one people, but of the whole human race, against the enemies of human liberty” and he adds that “I behold the nations of the earth recovering that liberty which they so long had lost.”

Thus, we can understand Milton had taken on responsibility to maintain the aim of the Revolution because this was the “will of Heaven” to be fulfilled. For this reason at the declaration of the Commonwealth, this public role turned to defending a free country, the Commonwealth, against its enemies. In the *Ready and Easy Way*, which was written in 1660, Milton shows that he has had a strong belief in the values of a republic:

... when monarchy was dissolved, the form of a commonwealth should have forthwith been framed, and the practice thereof immediately begun; that the people might have soon been satisfied and delighted with the decent order, ease, and benefit thereof ...

It is clear, therefore, that Milton’s political views determine the kind of poetry he writes to a large extent. His political views were in some ways remarkably consistent; nonetheless, it is possible to trace how they came into being, and how

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<sup>173</sup> Rogers, John. “Milton, Power and Powerful Milton.” <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/milton/content/sessions.html>. Open Yale Project, Fall 2007. Web. 15 April 2011.

they changed over the course of his lifetime. In broad terms, we can trace his developing political views through his poetry.

It seems that, although not yet anti-monarchist, Milton did have reservations from an early age about the general policies of the Stuart royal family. Indeed, some of his early poems fit into the culture of the monarchy, although from the beginning his sympathies are with the Puritans. In 1623, 1624, Milton celebrates with a translation of Psalms 136 and 114 the return of Prince Charles without a Spanish bride. In his Gunpowder Plot poems, he attacks the conspiracy as a threat to the king and nobles of England.

His objections were voiced clearly in 1637 when he wrote *Lycidas*, an essential and a major poem for establishing his attitude to the events which had happened before or were happening at the time. The poem is just a beginning of Milton's public opposition to those in authority. The period is important because for the first time he expresses his criticism of the direction the state church is taking. "I was church-outed by prelates" is a statement given in *The Reason of Church Government* (1641) explaining the reason of his quitting a career as an Anglican Church minister.

Coming to 1644, we see a new phase for Milton's state of mind. *Areopagitica* appears being his another vital prose work stating crucial points like freedom of expression, freedom of choice, and freedom of belief, new themes which come to be very important in Milton's thought. His work against licensing shows an emphasis on freedom which contrasts with the Presbyterian approach to society. By this time, Milton had published another important prose work *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), which was followed by his divorce pamphlets. These were greeted with widespread criticisms and calls for censorship.

The importance he gave to freedom from now on became a crucial theme in his writings. Milton clearly sets out this point of view in "On the New Forcers of Conscience" written in 1647. This poem forms Milton's ecclesiastical polity against the background of the Westminster Assembly, and the protest of the Five Dissenting Brethren. Milton steps forward being the pioneer of the allowance of the presence of

a variety of sects called the Non-conformists and states that everyone should be free in what they say, what they believe and what they think.

Now Milton becomes an Independent writer and a poet who shared the views of those in effective power who would declare the Commonwealth in 1649. The Pride's Purge was an occasion to celebrate that cleared the Parliament of the Presbyterians who wished for the king's return to the throne and who wished for an established church along Presbyterian lines. For Milton this was an important time, because he was elected as Secretary for Foreign Tongues in 1649, soon after which he published, at the request of his employers, *The Tenure of the Kings and Magistrates*, with *Eikonoklastes* in 1650. Milton was now an official spokesman of the Commonwealth, which, in terms of his work, meant more prose writing and less poetry. Milton attracted attention not only for his idealistic thoughts on Republicanism but also for his change in his style. He for the first time is aware of the fact that he is writing not for the élite alone, but for the people, persuading them of their role in a free Commonwealth without the excessive authority of the king and the state church.

With the sonnet "To the Lord General Cromwell" written in 1652, we find Milton for the first time confronting his former Independent friends who were now Independent conservatives, in a way acting like Presbyterians, who sought an alternative way for the collection of tithes. Milton is against tithes because the tax heightens the power of the state over the church. Milton writes in *Second Defence* against the clergy, who collect taxes, "have so little trust in God." Moreover, Milton says, they are "fed more than they feed others" because "they are stuffed with tythes", which is disapproved by the reformed churches. The sonnet "To Sir Henry Vane the Younger", published in the same year, makes clear the poet's concern that the Commonwealth was not effectively separating church and state. Milton's sonnets were published to awaken both the nation and its reliable men to draw attention to this matter.

Milton could even survive with his powerful vision the disastrous years 1659/60, when everything that had been abolished was readmitted. With the English

Convention the king was persuaded to come back. A huge crowd met their king and the restoration began. Milton did not leave his beloved country but continued his struggle against those who captured the freedom of conscience. We understand from Book I of *Paradise Lost* that he is still against the excessive authority of the king and is still courageous to struggle against monarchy :

We may with more successful hope resolve  
To wage by force or guile eternal war  
..., to our grand foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven

We also see his invincible hope and energy in *Samson Agonistes*. Milton by putting himself in place of Samson states his imprisonment in a restored Britain. Although he is totally “eyeless” and weak physically, he believes that he has the same old strength that could challenge kingship because this task is a “command from Heav’n to free my country.” His never-ending hope is reflected also in *Second Defence*, expressing that he is strong “in the proportion” he is weak and he can see clearly “in the proportion” he is blind. So, this statement clarifies that he sees himself powerful, like Samson who was able to put an end to the reign of the Philistines:

... He tugg’d, he shook, till down they came, and drew  
The whole roof after them with burst of thunder  
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath ...

In the lights of the events that have encouraged Milton to put a mirror to history, you will see the trace of his political thoughts that are shaped in his mind how and in what cases.

Milton, who was a liberal stating the separation of the Church from the state, brought up “the co-existence of different forms of Protestantism” along with “toleration.”<sup>174</sup> Milton, rejecting the idea of the authority of one church, says that every single church can perform their faith to God since He set us free. As long as

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<sup>174</sup> **Hobson, Theo.** “Credo: Milton’s vision for Church and State is our answer.” *The Times & The Sunday Times* October 31, 2008: N. p. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article5057656.ece>. Web. 02 February 2011.

the society enables the freedom, there exists freedom of conscience. Thus, as Milton says in *Second Defence*,

As long as the liberty of speech was no longer subject to control, all mouths began to be opened against the bishops; some complained of the vices of the individuals, others of those of the order that the government of the church should be according to the pattern of other churches, and particularly the word of God.

Milton, who makes a distinction between religion and civil power, has wanted civil liberty to develop without the pressure of the religion. The right of individuals has always come first for Milton, and for this reason; state should not be a measurement deciding one's faith. For this reason, Milton has tried to diminish the power of the State over religion because the State has its own norms and religion has its own norms. If they are combined then tyranny occurs. The sects cannot find a place to live in a society controlled by the State and religious power. There is then considered one common religious faith by the State and religion so the other sects are seen like a gangrene that makes the whole body ill. On the contrary, the sects are the signs that the country is alive. As Milton says about the benefits of diverse opinions, although each sect is different from another, no one can be the judge over the other. These sects should keep their existence, and like the "wheat and tares, grow together."<sup>175</sup> Thus, Milton expresses in *Of True Religion* that

If it be asked, how far they should be tolerated:  
I answer, doubtless equally, as being all protestants; that is, on all occasions to give account of their faith, either by arguing, preaching in their several assemblies, public writing, and the freedom of printing.<sup>176</sup>

Milton thus takes on a new responsibility on talking about the freedom of conscience. He has tried to educate the nation to become broad-minded people and this is similar to the tone he used in *Of Education* saying that the learners are to go over beyond their limits. Thus, Milton now teaches a nation how to show tolerance to

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<sup>175</sup> *King James Version*, Matthew 13:30. ("The Official King James Bible Online." <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>. N. p., n. d. Web. 05 April 2011).

<sup>176</sup> **Milton, John.** *Of True Religion*. Ed. by Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Vol. II. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1210/78225>. Web. 21 January 2011.



the sects. What is interesting is that even today, people need to be tolerant to each other on their faith but first duty is to be taken on by the state protecting both civil liberty and religious liberty. With freedom of conscience, the country has reached God's order as individual freedom is bestowed to the individuals. This means that God has His own reason for the things have happened. Although He knows the consequences of our acts, He retreats and watches. At the end, we become the writers of our actions.

Milton's thoughts on freedom keep their importance and high value even today. We live in a world surrounded by differing view points, much more than Milton's time, and each of these sects needs recognition and tolerance. In Milton's time, the pamphlet wars were a good example of these policies in action. Instead of prohibiting the unknown voices, everyone could have their say. So today, we should surpass Milton's ideas and carry his ideas further. We should not show intolerance to the sects that sound wrong to us because we may be able to learn much from these sects. This is how the culture in a country grows and becomes colourful.

As in the time of Milton, media are the most powerful means to introduce new ideas to the nation. So, again Milton states, there must also be freedom in licence, which means the publications ought to be free from restrictions. Otherwise, the jurisdiction of the state will act like a machine of censorship, prohibiting the ones that the State does not want to hear and allowing ones that will be accepted. Even the legislative, executive and juridical powers of the government come to lose their freedom, and will begin to make biased or unethical decisions in favour of the State. If the power of State is diminished, so is the religion, no one can judge the other over the faiths they believe.

Looking into the matter in the light of today, we once more realise that history repeats itself. Those who do not know their history well cannot know how to cope with similar situations tomorrow. So we understand clearly that literature is a mirror to history. These events became Milton's aspiration for his poetry, teaching people to be aware that their freedom cannot be taken away. Unlike Hobbes' describing the Commonwealth in the introductory chapter of the *Leviathan* as a body run by the

“magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution” punishing the evil; rewarding the good; Milton’s understanding of a Commonwealth is a Republic freed from all these bodies that act like judges leaving not the choice to the individual but to themselves.

When the executive, legislative and jurisdiction powers make their decisions side by side with the State, they kill the “reason it self, kill the Image of God.”<sup>177</sup> For this reason, Milton has always believed in this kind of democracy. For him the state should be established based on the good of the nation and the country so that it can be a healthy one serving for freedom of the individual rights.

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<sup>177</sup> **Milton, John.** *Areopagitica*. Ed. by Rufus *Wilmot Griswold*. Vol. I. Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1847. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1209>. Web. 21 January 2011.

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