

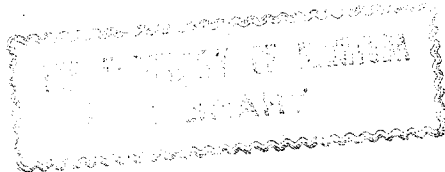
On THE PURITAN ELEMENT IN THE

WORKS OF JOHN MILTON

(1608 - 1674)

by

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P R E F A C E .

The following thesis is an attempt to arrive at a reasoned conclusion concerning these questions:

- (1) To what extent did Milton himself portray the Puritan character?
- (2) What development and modification does Milton's Puritanism undergo during the course of his long and somewhat chequered life?

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THE PURITAN ELEMENT IN THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

CHAPTER I.

Milton's Early Life and Training (1608-1625)

It is a moot question whether heredity or environment be the stronger factor in making us what we are. In the case of John Milton heredity and environment worked harmoniously together to produce the man and the poet as we know him in his writings.

The Miltons were people of firmly-held opinions. The poet's grandfather, a ranger of Shotover Park near Oxford, had been a bigoted Roman Catholic. His son, John Milton the elder, who became the father of the Puritan poet John Milton, embraced and held fast to the Reformed religion, even in the face of being disinherited by his bigoted father. In the poet himself we see the same tenacity of religious and political conviction.

The poet's father had adopted the Puritan form of the Reformed religion and all his friends were of the same shade of opinion. Puritanism had begun with the dissolution of the smaller monasteries in 1536. In Queen Elizabeth's reign, a spirit of revolt had produced a withdrawing from the orthodox Church of England of many bishops and clergy, who conducted worship with any congregation that they could gather, adopting the Genevan

(Calvinistic) Service Book. Others used Knox's Prayer Book and favored Presbyterianism. As Puritanism gained ground, the anger of the Church of England ecclesiastics who championed conformity was aroused and prosecution and imprisonment were meted out to recalcitrant Puritans. Four years before John Milton's birth (1604) was held the Hampton Court Conference.. a conference forced upon James I by the strength of Puritanical opinion, for James I, in love with his idea of Divine Right of Kings and consequently, of Bishops, was the avowed champion of the conforming Church of England, and had no more affection for Puritans than for Presbyterians.

The Hampton Court Conference was of importance to the Puritan cause in England because the direct outcome of the meetings was the Authorized Version of the Bible published in 1611. "A striking testimony to its essential greatness is the fact that, instead of a cause of division in this land of sectarianism, it has ever been a bond between the different sects, for it was soon adopted by the Puritans, and preferred even to the Geneva." 'The Age of Shakespeare' - Seccombe and Allen, p.223.

James I, however, detested the Puritans because of their revolt from the orthodox Episcopal Church, and in 1607 Archbishop Bancroft, with the King's connivance, began the persecutions of the Puritans, which continued throughout the whole period of Stuart domination, led to the expatriation of the

of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620, and largely contributed to the determined and successful efforts of the Parliamentarians during the Civil War.

It was into a home of this Puritanical character that John Milton was born in 1608. It is certain that the Authorised Version of the Bible was the book to which he first turned, for throughout his works his knowledge of the Bible is displayed. Another book, which was very popular among the Puritans was Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas' Divine Weeks (published 1605 and 6). This had a Scriptural basis which commended it to the Puritans and no doubt Milton read it, as a boy.

Milton's home was not, however, devoid of innocent pleasures. "Puritanism already had its stronghold in the homes of the citizens of London and a reverent seriousness, which had in it nothing of moroseness or gloom, coloured the home-life of Milton's childhood". 'Age of Milton' by Masterman, p.2.

Music was the favourite pastime of the poet's father, who, as a musician, took rank with Dowland, Gibbons and Ford. Taught by him, Milton became a skilful organist; all his life Milton appreciated and enjoyed music. In this particular he was not so strict a Puritan as many to whom a church organ was anathema.

Milton says of his parents (Prose Works Vol.I, p.254)

"My father was distinguished by the undeviating integrity of his life: my mother by the esteem in which she was held and the alms which she bestowed. My father destined me from a child to the pursuits of literature. He had me daily instructed in the Grammar School and by other masters at home".

(Defensio Secunda).

His earliest tutor, Thomas Young, was "a Puritan in Essex", a Scotch Presbyterian minister, afterwards Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, who was driven out of England because of his religious views. From the affectionate character of Milton's letters to him written from Cambridge, 1625, it is clear that he had great influence over the poet, and the austerity of the poet's view of life is due to Young's teaching and example.

As a schoolboy he was a hard student, for he tells us in the Second Defence of the People of England (Vol.I. p.254) "My appetite for knowledge was so voracious, that, from twelve years of age, I hardly ever left my studies, or went to bed before midnight". Hence he had little time or inclination to indulge in the frivolities of his more careless school-fellows, and his religious convictions grew deeper.

CHAPTER II.

Cambridge, Horton and Travels 1625-1639.

On February 12th, 1625, Milton was admitted a lesser pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge. He was only sixteen years of age, and had come direct from a Puritan home into a large university where all sorts and conditions of men were congregated. His tutor, William Chappelle, afterwards Dean of Cashel and Bishop of Cork, was a High Churchman, with whom Milton had little in common. Milton's aloofness and delicacy of feeling procured for him the nickname of "The Lady of Christ's".

Milton's father had sent him to Cambridge with the idea that the poet should become a clergyman of the Church of England. In the "Apology for Smectymnus" (Prose Works III p.122) he says "That care was ever had of me, with my earliest capacity, not to be negligently trained in the precepts of the Christian religion": and in his "Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty" (Prose Vol.II p.482) we find "The Church to whose service, by the intention of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child and of my own resolution till coming to some maturity of years and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that would retch, must either straight perjure or straight split his faith; I

thought it better to prefer blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing".

During Milton's residence at Cambridge (1625-1632) many important events took place in England, both as regards politics and religion. 1627 saw the unsuccessful expedition of Buckingham to La Rochelle which was followed by his assassination by the fanatic Felton in 1628. The death of Buckingham was hailed as a victory by the Puritans and was followed by the Petition of Right being accepted by Charles I.

In the same year William Laud was appointed Bishop of London. He began at once to press forward the High Church ideas with which he was obsessed; particularly the elaborate ritual, chanting, music, and vestments grew in use by those who desired preferment. Laud's "beauty of holiness" was steadily opposed by the Puritans, and no doubt Milton himself by this time had abandoned the idea of taking holy orders, because his training and predilections were opposed to such "prelacy".

He seems to have been encouraged in this decision by the spectacle of "So many of the young divines and those in next aptitude for divinity seen on the stage, writhing and unbending their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trinculoes, buffeons and bawds" (Prose III 114 and 115)

But up to the time of his admission as B.A. (March 29th 1629) Milton's Puritanism was rather in the nature of a protest against the endless ceremonial and ritual of the High Church or Laudian party than against the doctrines of the Church of England, for he signed "willingly and exanimò" the three articles of assent to the Royal Supremacy, the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles. On taking his M.A. degree in July, 1632, he subscribed to the same three articles.

In December 1631, or early in 1632, he sent a memorable letter (to a friend who had been calling him to account for his apparent indifference to his work in life) in which was enclosed his Sonnet "On Being arrived at the Age of 23". This poem is of importance to our purpose in establishing how far Milton himself portrays the Puritan character, in that it contains the following lines:

" Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Towards 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 give expression to Milton's Puritanic seriousness and sense of responsibility for the profitable use of his lifetime. In further evidence of his seriousness and steadiness of purpose,

despite his seeming indifference to a definite career we have (Apology for Smectymnuus - Prose III. p. 118). "He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem: that is a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men and famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that is praiseworthy. These reasons, together with a certain niceness of nature, an honest haughtiness, and self esteem either of what I was, or what I might be..... and lastly modesty..... all these uniting the supply of their natural aid together, kept me still above those low descents of mind, beneath which he must deject and plunge himself, that can agree to saleable and unlawful prostitutions".

In 1632 Milton retired from Christ's College. "The fellows of that college signified many ways how much better it would content them that I would stay" (Prose III. p.111). He retired to his father's house at Horton where he remained for five years, engaged in study.

In 1633 Laud was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Religious controversies were fast growing to bitterness, aggravated by the cruel persecutions used by the dominant Church party against the Puritans. In 1630 Dr. Leighton was publicly whipped, had his ear cut off and his nose slit, by order of the

Star Chamber, because he had published a book against Episcopacy. This is but one example of the methods adopted by Wentworth and Laud to carry out their "Thorough" Policy and to silence hostile criticism.

The murmurs of discontent with which men saw the tightening of Laud's grip over ecclesiastical affairs must have disturbed Milton's quiet village life, for they colour the plot of "Comus" and break in thunder in "Lycidas". The date of the writing of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" is uncertain; probably they were written during the earlier years of Milton's stay at Horton. The two poems are complementary. In them Milton sets before himself the occupations, amusements, and associations of a life led in accordance with the cheerful traditions of "Merry England" in contrast to those of an existence more thoughtful, retired and subdued. Both "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are expressions of differing moods of Milton, and the former no more portrays the reckless gallantry of the Godless cavalier than does the latter show the bigoted austerity of the Puritan" (Eng. Poems by Jno. Milton, Clarendon Press, Introduction, p.XLI).

J. H. B. Masterman in the "Age of Milton" p.16. says of these poems:- "The happiness of 'L'Allegro' is as far removed from the boisterous gaiety of the Cavalier gallant as is the most sober contemplative life of 'Il Penseroso' from the moroseness of the extreme Puritan". Mark Pattison in his handbook

upon Milton (E.M. of L. Series pp. 28 and 29) says of the two poems:- "In Milton, nature is not put forward as the poet's theme. His theme is man, in the two contrasted moods of joyous emotion or grave reflection. The shifting scenery ministers to the varying mood Milton in these two idylls has recorded a day of twenty-four hours. But he has not registered the phenomena: he places us at the standpoint of the man before whom they deploy. And the man, joyous or melancholy, is not a bare spectator of them; he is the student, compounded of sensibility and intelligence of whom we are not told that he saw so and so, or that he felt so, but with whom we are made co-partners of his thoughts and feelings. Description melts into emotion, and contemplation bodies itself in imagery. All the charm of rural life is there, but it is not tendered to us in the form of a landscape: the scenery is subordinated to the human figure in the centre."

Milton's environment while he was engaged in writing these poems may give us some data upon which to base our decision respecting how far they bear upon his Puritanism. He was living "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife", free from pecuniary worry or controversial disturbance. His pursuits were literary (he tells us that he read upwards of eighty authors in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English during the Horton period) and congenial. Hence these poems bear the impress of the circumstances under which they were written. Milton, for the

time being, at any rate, feels emancipated from the onus of taking either the Episcopal side or espousing actively the cause of the opposed Puritans. The poems plainly are the fruits of the labour of love and are written purely for art's sake and without ulterior motive.

Milton's friends were chiefly of the Cavalier party, e.g. Sir Henry Wootton and Henry Lawes, and "Comus" which was acted at Ludlow at Michaelmas 1634 was dedicated to Viscount Brackley, son and heir apparent to the Earl of Bridgewater.

"Comus" is the first of Milton's poems where Puritanism shows clear signs of its influence. Milton calls it "a mask". It is really an allegory in which he shows that pleasure and purity are two opposite principles in continual conflict. Comus is unmistakably the spirit of the time - the mocking, sensual, dissolute spirit which reigned at the court of the Stuarts, where coarse jokes passed current for wit, and lewd verses were accepted as poetry.

Against this spirit of the time Milton sets up the ideal of purity ("Comus" pp.380-384). "He that has light within his own clear breast

May sit i' th' centre and enjoy bright day:

But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts

Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;

Himself is his own dungeon".

By the Lady "fixed and motionless" Milton plainly means the Church of England, which, by the efforts of Laud had become

reduced to a state of tranquil immobility. The gorgeous ritual and ecclesiastical tyranny which are associated with Laud, and which he was fond of calling "the beauty of holiness" appear in "Comus" as "the stately palace set out with all manner of deliciousness". Milton, who himself had been "church-outed by the prelates" viewed with indignation and alarm the tactics of the Laudian party. Hence the sorcerer's cup commended by wile and threat to the Lady's lips indicated the enforcing by fine and imprisonment attendance at the established church - an attack upon religious liberty which Milton, who was growing more markedly Puritanical, bitterly resented.

The teaching of the whole masque is summed up in
"Comus" pp. 1019-1022

"Love Virtue: she alone is free;
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery clime;
Of if Virtue feeble were
Heaven itself would stoop to her".

The death of Edward King on August 10th, 1637 led to the publication of "Lycidas". King, although younger than Milton and an inferior scholar, had been made a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, through political influence. Hence there is no reason to suppose that Milton had an overwhelming love for him, or inordinate sorrow because of his untimely death. The

poem "Lycidas" was written with a two-fold purpose. It was a conventional elegy upon a fellow member of the University, written in imitation of Theocritus and Vergil; but it was also a potent satire upon the "corrupted clergy then in their height". One of the unfortunate results of Laud's reliance on secular authority for the enforcement of religious uniformity was that the so-called Arminian party soon came to include in its ranks all those clergy who were willing to subordinate principle to self interest and "scramble at the shearer's feast". Thus what was good in the movement grew to be associated with so much that was undoubtedly and even repulsively evil, that men like Milton were driven more and more into active opposition to the whole episcopal system. The motive which actuated Milton in writing "Lycidas" (ll. 113-131) was the feeling of disgust at the religious intolerance of Laud and the unworthiness of the conforming clergy, - a feeling rapidly spreading and intensifying among the Puritans.

"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain
Arow of such as for their bellies' sake,
Creep and intrude and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.

Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
But swell with wind, and the rank mist they draw
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said;
But that two-handled engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more".

By the "grim wolf" which "daily devours apace" Milton means the Roman Catholic church, which, through the connivance of the uxorious Charles I and the favour of Henrietta Maria, was making serious efforts to secure proselytes to the old religion.

We see, therefore, that Milton's Puritanism was becoming more outspoken and urgent. In "Comus" he was content to veil his religious convictions under an allegory. In "Lycidas" he speaks his mind with no uncertain voice.

The death of his mother, April 3rd 1637, and the marriage of his younger brother caused a disturbance in Milton's quiet life at Horton. In his letter to Charles Deedati, dated London September 23rd, 1637 (Milton's Prose III p.495) he says that his design is "to take chambers in one of the inns of court, where I may enjoy more comfort when I choose to stay at home, and have a more elegant society when I choose to go abroad". But early in 1638 he set out "to see the world".

Italy at the time of Milton's visit was still the centre of European art and thought. Although towns had lost their freedom and literature its freshness and virility, though the Renaissance had spent its force as an inspiring influence and had made men sceptical in religion and pagan in morals, yet the memories and traditions of the great age still lingered in Florence and Rome.

Milton has given us an account of his continental journey in his "Defensio Secunda". The boldness of his advocacy of the Puritan form of religion shows no diminution when abroad, for he says (Milton's Prose Vol.I p.256): "It was a rule which I laid down for myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion: but if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare

it without any reserve or fear. I returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and for the space of two months I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery".

He abandoned his tour and returned to England early in 1639 "for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, while my fellow citizens were fighting for liberty at home".

CHAPTER III.

Milton's Controversial Works and Sonnets.

1639-1660.

On his return to England Milton did not at once take any active part in the struggle for liberty which was commencing. He took a house in Aldersgate to supervise the education of his two nephews. But, when the controversy concerning episcopacy grew hot (Prose, I p.258) "as I had from my youth studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that if ever I wished to be of use, 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 my industry to this one important object" (Second Defence).

Milton engaged in controversial writings from a sense of duty only and not from inclination, for in his "Reason of Church Government urged against the Prelaty" (Prose, Vol.II p.477) he says:- "I should not choose this manner of writing wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account, but of my left hand".

Again in the same tractate (Prose, Vol.II p.495) he says: "With what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these (i.e. the hope of writing an immortal poem) and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hearse disputed."

The whole number of Milton's political writings is twenty-five. Of these twenty-one are in English and four in Latin. The period during which they appeared (1641-1660) was perhaps the greatest pamphleteering age in English history, because old institutions were being reconstructed and old traditions being remodelled. Most of Milton's pamphlets were called into being to rebut the arguments of opponents, were hastily put together, are strongly partizan, and often are scurrilously abusive. Milton's pamphlets are in three groups:

(1) Ecclesiastical pamphlets.

- 1641 { (a) Of Reformation in England.
(b) Prelatical Episcopacy.
(c) Reason of Church Government
(d) Animadversions
(e) Apology for Smectyanus
(published in January or February 1642)

(2) Pamphlets on behalf of Domestic Liberty.

- 1644 { (a) Areopagitica
(b) Letter to Hartlib
(c) Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce

(2) Pamphlets on behalf of Domestic Liberty.

1644 (a) Martin Bucer's Judgment.

1645 { (e) Tetrachordon
(f) Colasterion.

(3) Pamphlets on Behalf of Civil Liberty.

1649 { (a) Tenure of Kings and Magistrates
(b) Eikonoklastes

1651 (c) Defensio pro Populo Anglicano

1654 (d) Defensio Secunda.

(e) Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes
1659 { (f) Way to Remove Hirelings.
(g) Brief Declaration of Free Commonwealth.
(h) Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free
Commonwealth.

I. Milton's Attitude towards the Church.

Milton took part in the ecclesiastical controversy from a sense of duty and because his Puritan hatred of slavish ritual urged him to do all in his power to secure the downfall of the tyranny of Laud and his associates. "The vigour of the parliament had begun to humble the pride of the bishops", and Milton "thought that on these topics, to the consideration of which I was led solely by my love of truth, and my reverence

for Christianity, I should not probably write worse than those who were contending only for their own emoluments and usurpations" (Second Defence, Prose I. p.258).

His first pamphlet "Of Reformation in England and the Causes that have hitherto hindered it" was published in 1641 and is divided into two books. The causes of the non-completion of the reformation of the church are "the exactions and tyranny of the bishops". Like all Milton's pamphlets, liberty is the underlying idea pervading this tractate. He wished to see the reformation of the church completed by the abolition of bishops and of all those ritualistic practices which to the Puritan were alike unnecessary to sincere worship and which savoured of abhorred "popery".

His zeal for purity in worship is expressed in many places in this pamphlet. Perhaps the most outspoken of all occurs near the beginning. (Prose, Vol.II, pp.364 and 365).

"Sad it is to think how that Doctrine of the Gospel, planted by teachers divinely inspired and by them winnowed and sifted, from the chaff of overdated ceremonies, and refined to such a spiritual height, and temper of purity, and knowledge of the Creator, that the body, with all the circumstances of time and place, were purified by the affections of the regenerate soul and nothing left impure but sin; Faith needing not the weak, and fallible office of the senses, to be either the ushers or interpreters of heavenly mysteries, save where our

Lord himself in his Sacraments ordained; that such a doctrine should through the grossness and blindness of her professors, and the fraud of deceitful traditions, drag so downwards, as to backslide one way into the Jewish beggary of old east rudiments, and stumble forward another way into the new-vomited paganism of sensual idolatry, attributing purity or impurity to things indifferent, that they might bring the inward acts of the spirit to the outward and customary eye-service of the body, as if they could make God earthly and fleshly, because they could not make themselves heavenly and spiritual; they began to draw down all the divine intercourse betwixt God and the soul, yea, the very shape of God himself, into an exterior and bodily form, urgently pretending a necessity and obligation of joining the body in a formal reverence and worship circumscribed; they hallowed it, they fumed up, they sprinkled it, they bedecked it, not in robes of pure innocency, but of pure linen, with other deformed and fantastic dresses, in palls and mitres, gold, and geegaws fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe, or the Sam flamin's vestry; then was the priest set to can his motions and his postures, his liturgies and his luries, till the soul by this means of overbodying herself, given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wing apace downward: and finding the ease she had from her visible and sensuous colleague, the body, in performance of religious duties, her pinions now broken, and flagging, shifted off from

herself the labour of high soaring any more, forget her heavenly flight, and left the dull and droiling carcass to plod on in the old road, and drudging trade of outward conformity".

The union of the ecclesiastical party with the dissolute Court party of Charles I had been condemned by Milton in "Comus". This joining of two forces of evil was at once dreaded and hated by the Puritans. James I, encouraged by the bishops, had instituted "The Book of Sports" which was re-enjoined by Charles I in 1633. The divines who counselled it did so in the hope that the pastimes enjoined would hinder the people from talking critically on matters of Church and State and from resorting to conventicles. Upon the Puritans it had an effect directly opposite to the one sought by the Royalists. Milton voices the feelings of the Puritans (Prose Vol.II, p.40) who clearly saw through the manoeuvre of Charles:

"I know not what drift the prelates had, whose brokers they were to prepare and supply us either for a foreign invasion or domestic oppression: but this I am sure, they took the ready way to despoil us both of manhood and grace at once, upon that day which God's law, and even our own reason hath ~~sanctified~~ consecrated..... at such a time that men should be plucked from their soberest and saddest thoughts, and by bishops, the pretended fathers of the church, instigated, by

public edict, and with earnest endeavour pushed forward to gaming, jigging, wassailing, and mixed dancing, is a horror to think."

As we see in the second book of the "Reformation", Milton's Puritanism had led him on far enough earnestly to advocate the establishment of the presbyterian form of church government (Vol.II p.416) "the universal votes of Christ's congregation, and fellowly and friendly yoke of a teaching and laborious ministry".

In the same year, Hall, Bishop of Norwich, published his "Humble Remonstrance in favour of Episcopacy" which was immediately answered by five Puritan ~~xxx~~ divines in a work entitled (from the initials of their names) "Smectymnus". Archbishop Ussher undertook to confute them in his "Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy". Milton here re-entered the arena with a "Treatise on Prelatical Episcopacy". In this Milton, by quotations from the early fathers of the Church, endeavors to prove that a bishop was nothing more than a president of the elders () and had no separate and superior jurisdiction over the rest. This treatise shows us that Milton was regarding presbyterianism with increasing favour.

Milton's next contribution to the controversy was "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty" also

published in 1641. Charles I's episcopal war with the Scots (1638 and 1639) had rendered both the government and the Church of England unpopular. Milton, in this, as in the preceding pamphlet, advocates presbyterianism, as being more consistent in his opinion, with those popular political institutions which it was his earnest desire to see established. In the first book he shows that "Prelaty was not set up for the Prevention of Schism, as is pretended" and states (Prose II p. 461) "Instead of finding Prelaty an impeacher of schism or faction, the more I search, the more I grow into all persuasion to think rather that faction and she, as with a spousal ring, are wedded together, never to be divorced".

In the preface of the second book of the Reason of Church Government (Prose II p.475) he gives his reason for having taken part in the controversy: "For me, I have determined to play up as the best treasure and solace of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me, the honest liberty of free speech from my youth, where I shall think it available in so dear a concernment as the church's good." He gives very eloquently the Puritan's views on the extravagance, the mischief-making, and the uselessness of bishops and shows that bishops are not a source of strength, but of weakness to the monarchy.

His "Animadversions on Bishop Hall's Defence of the Humble Remonstrance" is written in the form of a dialogue, in which Milton ridicules his opponent in the style of the religious polemics of that age.

His "Apology for Smectynnuus", which appeared in 1642, was written to defend the Puritan cause against Bishop Hall and his son. No doubt the fact that Thomas Young, his old tutor, was one of the Puritan divines added weight to Milton's attack upon the Episcopalians. He says (Prose Vol. III, p.95): "I resolved to stand on that side where I saw both the plain authority leading, and the reason of justice and equity persuading." He continues (III p.98): "I thought it my duty, if not to myself, yet to the religious cause I had in hand, not to leave on my garment the least spot or blemish in good name, so long as God should give me to say that which might wipe it off; lest these disgraces which I ought to suffer, if it so befall me, for my religion, through my default religion be made liable to suffer for me".

Milton's attitude (up to the completion of his "Apology for Smectynnuus") towards the Church of his day was that he was an outspoken Puritan with strong leanings towards Presbyterianism, as being least repugnant to the spirit of the Gospels and as offering the readiest means of union with the

reformed churches in Europe.

II. Milton's Attitude towards Freedom of Speech and on
Education.

The "Areopagitica; a speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing" was dedicated to the Parliament of England and published in 1644. Its design was to convince the Presbyterians, who had secured the reins of power and were imitating the intolerance for which they had condemned the bishops, - of the iniquity and impolicy of endeavouring the suppression of opinions by force. (Prose II p.95) "Give me the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties". This pamphlet, apart from its transcendent value as an eloquent plea for freedom of speech and of the press, is of especial interest to us for the purposes of this thesis, because it marks a definite stage in the development of Milton's religious opinions. It indicates that Milton now adhered to that section of the Independent party that had come to regard with disfavour any ordained ministry, and had cast off all idea of national religious uniformity e.g. (Prose II p.97): "We do not see that while we still affect by all means a rigid external formality, we may as soon fall again into a gross conforming stupidity, a stark

and dead congelment of 'wood and hay and stubble' forced and frozen together, which is more to the sudden degenerating of a church than many subdichotomies of petty schisms".

Again (Prose II p.99): "If they be of those whom God hath fitted for the special use of these times with eminent and ample gifts, and these perhaps neither among the priests, nor among the pharisees, and we, in the haste of a precipitant zeal, shall make no distinction, but resolve to stop their mouths, because we fear they come with new and dangerous opinions, as we commonly forejudge them ere we understand them; no less than wee to us, while thinking thus to defend the Gospel, we are found the persecutors".

Milton's short tractate "To Master Samuel Hartlib on Education" was also published in 1644. In it he lays down the purpose of education (Prose III p.464) "The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection".

Again (Prose III p.467): "I call therefore a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war".

III. Milton's Attitude towards Divorce".

Milton himself gives us his purpose in writing his four divorce tractates, which appeared in 1644 and 1645 in his "Second Defence" (Prose I p. 259): "I explained my sentiments, not only concerning the solemnization of the marriage, but the dissolution, if circumstances rendered it necessary for he in vain makes a vaunt of liberty in the senate or in the forum, who languishes under the vilest servitude to an inferior at home". He pronounces his own apology for his Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (Prose III p.178): "For me as far as my part leads me, I have already my greatest gain, assurance and inward satisfaction to have done in this nothing unworthy of an honest life, and studies well employed". He argued throughout these treatises that incompatibility of temper is sufficient ground for a divorce.

The assembly at Westminster took alarm and accused him before the House of Lords: "but that house, whether approving the doctrine or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him".

Milton's own comments upon the reception of his "Tetrachordon" are given in Sonnet VI (lines 1 - 4)

"A book was writ of late called Tetrachordon and woven close, both matter, form and style; The subject new: it walked the town awhile, numbering good intellects; now seldom pored on

and in Sonnet VII:

"I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of an ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs.
As when those kinds that were transformed to frogs
Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.
But this is got by casting pearl to hogs,
That bawl for freedom in their senseless need,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
License they mean when they cry liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they rove we see
For all this waste of wealth, and loss of blood".

The scoffing reception of his *Diverse Tractates* by the vulgar and Milton's discrediting by the Presbyterians in consequence of their publication led Milton still farther away from sympathy with even the Puritans and more into accord with the extremists among the Independents.

IV. Milton's Attitude towards the Politics of His time
(1649-1659)

Milton had led the literary attack on the bishops as the advanced guard of tyranny; he had been provoked to the assertion of his right of putting a summary end to his

domestic unhappiness; but his public career did not fairly begin till after the execution of Charles I Jan. 30th, 1649. He now came forward once more as the champion of the Puritan cause. The Puritan triumph was not unalloyed. The odium of the execution was thrown by the Presbyterians upon the victorious Independents, and Milton's "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" was the retort to the cavillers at that Act "of highest justice". In the Second Defence (Prose I p.260) he says: "But when at length some Presbyterian ministers... most tumultuously clamoured against the sentence and did all in their power to prevent the execution I thought that it became me to oppose such a glaring falsehood; and accordingly without any immediate or personal application to Charles, I shewed, in an abstract consideration of the question, what might lawfully be done against tyrants... That book did not make its appearance until after the death of Charles". Milton proves in this pamphlet that the tyranny exercised by Charles was ~~subversive~~ of the just and lawful liberty of the English people, and that the law alone must prevail, because a king is not above the law and only holds his position by the will of his subjects.

His disgust at the Presbyterian faction appears in his "Sennet on the New Forces of Conscience under the Long Parliament" which was written either in 1646 or 1647.

(11. 13-20)

"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 preventive shears
Clip your phylacteries, though balk your ears,
And succour our just fears;
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,
New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large".

Much excitement was caused by the publication of a work purporting to have been written by Charles, and entitled "Eikon, Basilike, or the Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings". On March 15th, 1649, the Council of State, alive to the danger of a royalist reaction, had appointed Milton Secretary for Foreign Tongues. He was commissioned to reply to the "Eikon" and "opposed the Iconoclast to his Icon. I did not insult over fallen majesty, as is pretended; I only preferred queen Truth to king Charles" (Prose I p. 261).

At the conclusion of his preface to Eikonoclastes (Prose Vol. I p. 317) Milton says: "This therefore we may conclude to be a high honour done us from God, and a special mark of his favour, whom he hath selected as the sole remainder, after all these changes and commotions, to stand upright and steadfast

in his cause; dignified with the defence of truth and public liberty."

The whole of "Eikonoclastes" is a vindication of the Puritan point of view in regarding Charles I, not as a martyr, but as a public malefactor who had suffered justly for his offences. "The happiness of a nation consists in true religion, piety, justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude, and the contempt of avarice and ambition. They in whomsoever these virtues dwell eminently, need not kings to make them happy, but are the architects of their own happiness; and whether to themselves or others, are no less than kings."
(Prose I p.455)

From the evidence of the "Eikonoclastes" it is clear that Milton was a republican in his political opinion and an Independent as regards his Puritanism. (Prose, Vol.I page 421)
"Christian liberty, purchased with the death of our Redeemer, and established by the sending of his free Spirit to inhabit in us, is not now to depend upon the doubtful consent of any earthly monarch; nor to be again fettered with a presumptuous negative voice, tyrannical to the parliament, but much more tyrannical to the church of God.

Milton's next prose work was imposed upon him by order of the Council. He was commanded (Jan. 8th, 1650) "to prepare something in answer to the book of Salmasius" - the Defensio

Regia. Milton's rejoinder was the famous "Defensio pro Populo Anglicano". Living in republican times and breathing a republican atmosphere, all Milton's sympathies were with the people. In the "Defensio" Milton ridicules the arguments of the Professor of Leyden and establishes the sovereign power of the people e.g. (Prose Vol.I p.179):

"For even in an interregnum the authority of the parliament is in being, and (than which nothing is more common in our histories) they have often made a free choice of a successor, without regard to an hereditary descent. In short the parliament is the supreme council of the nation, constituted and appointed by a most free people, and armed with ample power and authority, for this end and purpose; viz. to consult together upon the most weightly affairs of the kingdom; the king was appointed to put their laws in execution".

For his "Defensio" Milton received the thanks of the Council, June 18th, 1651. He had sacrificed his sight in his devotion to his "noble task" and had done so deliberately. "My medical attendants clearly announced that if I did engage in the work, it (the sight of his remaining eye) would be irreparably lost, their premonitions caused no hesitation and inspired no dismay" (Second Defence, Prose I p.238)

His intrepidity of spirit and Puritanical religious fervour under the affliction are shown in Sonnet XV ("On His Blindness") 9-14 (pub.1652?)

"God doth not need

Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait".

and in Sennet XVII (To Cyriak Skinner - Upon His Blindness)
(Pub. 1655) (v.6-12).

"Yet I argue not

Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate one jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up, and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask
- The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side".

When Peter Du Moulin (afterwards prebendary of
Canterbury) wrote his "Regii Sanguinis Clamor" (1652) Milton
in the Second Defence of the English People fastened the
authorship upon More, a French minister who had the care of
the publication, and relentlessly exposed the scandals of his
private life. In this pamphlet, Milton is far more vituperat-
ive than in any other; but its great interest lies in the
exposition of his own thoughts and the narrative of his career.
Towards the end he gives sketches of the great Parliamentarians,

Cromwell, Fleetwood, Lambert and Fairfax.

In his panegyric upon Cromwell (Prose II. 290) Milton eloquently pleads for fuller and more perfect liberty:-

"You cannot be truly free unless we are free too; for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave. But if you, who have hitherto been the patron and tutelary genius of liberty, if you, who are exceeded by no one in justice, in piety, and in goodness, should hereafter invade that liberty which you have defended, your conduct must be fatally operative, not only against the cause of liberty, but the general interests of piety and virtue."

Again in the conclusion, addressing the people of England, he shows that the ideal of Puritanism is at one with perfect political liberty (Prose I p.298)

"Know that to be free is the same thing as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate and just, to be frugal and abstinent and lastly, to be magnanimous and brave".

Milton, although blind, continued to act as Latin Secretary, having as his assistant Andrew Marvell, whom, as early as February 1653, he had recommended to President Bradshaw. He retained his interest in public affairs and unavailingly strove to turn the current of public feeling (which set steadily towards the restoration of the Stuarts) with pamphlets.

After the death of Oliver Cromwell, Sept. 3rd, 1658, confusion and disorder arose and the populace clamoured for the recall of the exiled Charles II.

In politics, Milton, from 1654 onwards had become an Oliverian. He saw that Oliver Cromwell was the only man who could save England from relapsing into a monarchy ruled by the Stuarts. On Cromwell's death, the army was the most powerful body in England, but petty jealousies among the officers made a stable government impossible. In his pamphlet "On the Ruptures of the Commonwealth" (written in Oct. 1659) Milton advised (Prose Vol.II, p.104 and 105) : "Liberty of conscience to all professing Scripture to be the rule of their faith and worship; and the abjuration of a single person." Either the (Long) Parliament was to be restored - with the proviso that "hirelings should be removed from the church - or a council of state which would "grant liberty of conscience and the necessary consequence thereof, the removal of a forced maintenance from ministers", should be chosen to carry on the government.

General Monck declared for a "free" parliament, Charles II signed the Declaration of Breda, and was restored on May 29th 1660. Even when the Restoration was inevitable, Milton addressed his "Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth" to General Monck. In it he gives a resume of

the course of events which led to the establishment of the Commonwealth, points out the manifold disadvantages of backsliding into a kingship and recommends a perpetual parliament, which, with the aid of the more perfect education of the people, would ensure "peace, justice, plentiful trade and all prosperity". He concludes (Prose II p.138):

"What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not called amiss 'The Good Old Cause'; if it seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, than convincing to backsliders.... May, though what I have spoke should happen... to be the last words of our expiring liberty".

Thus Milton's attitude toward the politics of his times was that of a Puritan, progressive and reasonable, who moved onward from Puritan to Presbyterian, from Presbyterian to Independent, and in the light of his political experience became a republican and last an Oliverian. As the mainspring and keynote of his life was liberty, so all his political writings were devoted to the task of educating public opinion to appreciate and embrace a larger and fuller measure of liberty,- religious, domestic, and political.

CHAPTER IV.

The Period of the Last Poems 1660-1674.

Milton had never been a man to engage in easy friendships. Andrew Marvell, his assistant in the Latin Secretaryship, and Thomas Ellwood, the Quaker, were two of the most intimate. His blindness handicapped him in social intercourse. To the Restoration he owed the loss of position, wealth, and, for a time personal safety. "The mental isolation in which the great poet lived his life is a remarkable feature of his biography. It was not only after the Restoration that he appears lonely and friendless; it was much the same during the previous period of the Parliament and the Protectorate" (Mark Pattison: Milton, E.M. of L.S.).

Another cause which had a marked influence upon the form which his masterpieces should take was his intellectual superiority to his contemporaries. He knew that "the good old Cause" of Puritanism was lost. He saw men who had been held in high esteem by the Parliamentarians deserting to the winning side of ribaldry and reaction. He regarded himself as the one Puritan who had kept the faith and continued steadfast. Hence he held himself aloof in proud disdain, asking help or sympathy from none.

His days were passed almost in solitude, far apart from hearing Ellwood or his daughters read to him, and from dictating to an amanuensis, he had no company. Thus he grew more and more intrespective.

He had amassed a vast store of Biblical and classical learning. He had for many years held the purpose of producing an epic poem, and even as early as 1642 his choice of subject had inclined towards a religious theme. He regarded the composition of this poem as the consummation of his highest ambitions. "Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader that for some years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine.... but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and send out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases." (Reason of Church Govt. Prose II p.481) .

Professor Raleigh of Oxford (in his work on "Milton" p.91) says: "The attractions of the theme of 'Paradise Lost' to Milton's mind were twofold. First, it was a sacred subject, which offered an opportunity of leading poetry back to its divine allegiance, and by the creation of a new species of epic gave a way of escape from the danger of too close an imitation of the ancients. Secondly, in the Garden of Eden he might

present to an age which was over-run with a corrupt religion and governed by a decadent court, the picture of a religion without a church, of life in its primitive simplicity and of patriarchal worship without the noisome accretions of later ceremonial.

In "Paradise Lost" "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes" Milton gives us the sublimation of his religious experience, stated calmly, and intended for the consolation of his Puritan fellow-sufferers.

"Paradise Lost" is the production of two great movements- Puritanism and the Renaissance. The form and imagery of the poem are classical, but the theme and in many instances the language is the outcome of the life-long religious studies of the poet.

Some critics have asserted that "Paradise Lost" is a political allegory. Thus Robertson Butler in his book "Milton and Puritanism" (page 100) gives the following "interpretation":

- (a) The first human pair typify the simplicity and purity of the early English Protestantism with its uncorrupted worship and direct communion with God free from ecclesiastical intermediates.
- (b) Satan and his retainers invading the abode of peace are the corrupt agents working mischief in the English church
- (c) The underground stream by which Satan enters Eden is figurative of the secret plots by means of which the cause of Protestantism was being undermined.

- (d) The poet, using the enlightening agency of the press, likens himself to Uriel coming on a sunbeam to give notice of approaching danger.
- (e) Hell typifies the Inquisition, and Michael stands for Cromwell.
- (f) The Divine Son represents the Heaven-sent power by which the forces of hell were to be overthrown and the way prepared for a Paradise Regained.

As far as the poem itself goes, Milton gives no indication that he intended it as any other than a religious poem "to justify the ways of God to man". At the time of the publication of *Paradise Lost* (1667), Milton was an old man. He had little comfort in his own home, for his own daughters were undutiful and unkind, and it was but natural that the poet's thoughts should turn to the consolations of religion for their own sake; and that his epic is to be accepted and read with its plain meaning.

In the text of *Paradise Lost* we meet with many examples of Milton's Puritanism. Thus his disgust at the practices of the corrupt Restoration clergy, who had supplanted the more devout Puritan ministers, appears in passages reminiscent of his "Lycidas" such as *Paradise Lost* IV 183 and 193:

"as when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching when shepherds pen their flock at eve
In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,
Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold;
Or as a thief bent to unhoard the cash
Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
Cross-barred and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs or o'er the tiles;
So clomb this first grand thief into God's fold:
So since into his church lewd hirelings climb".

and in Paradise Lost XII 508-542:

"Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
To their own vile advantages shall turn
Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
With superstitions and traditions taint,
Left only in those written records pure,
Though not but by the Spirit understood.
Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
Places and titles, and with these to join
Secular power: though feigning still to act
By spiritual, to themselves appropriating
The spirit of God, promised alike and given
To all believers; and from that pretence,

Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
On every conscience: laws which none shall find
Left them enrolled, or what the Spirit within
Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then

But force the Spirit of grace itself, and bind
His consort Liberty? What, but unbuild
His living temples, built by faith to stand,
Their own faith not another's: for on earth
Who against faith and conscience can be heard
Infallible? Yet many will presume

Whence heavy persecution shall arise

On all who in the worship persevere
Of Spirit and Truth; the rest, far greater part,
Religion satisfied: Truth shall retire
Be stuck with slanderous darts and works of faith
Rarely be found. So shall the world go on
To good malignant, to bad men benign,
Under her own weight groaning till the day
Appear of respiration to the just
And vengeance to the wicked."

The Puritans, following the teachings of Calvin,
held strongly the doctrine of Predestination. It is of interest
in tracing Milton's religious progress to notice that in the
"Paradise Lost" as also in his last treatise "De Christina

Doctrina" he rejects the doctrine entirely, e.g. P.L. Book III
112-125:

"they therefore as to right belonged,
So were created: nor can justly accuse
Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination over-ruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge: they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
They trespass; authors to themselves in all
Both what they judge and what they choose; for so
I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves."

and also Paradise Lost Book V. 524-534.

God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee, but to persevere
He left it in thy power, ordained thy will
By nature free, not over-ruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity;
Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated, such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how

Can hearts not free, be tried whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?"

Milton, though he did "bate no jot of heart or hope",
could not avoid feeling discouraged at the destruction of all
for which he, above the majority of his fellow Puritans, had
laboured so hard and so long. As he grew to realise how
completely the "good old Cause" was lost he says P.L. IX 5-10

"I now must change
These notes to tragic; foul distrust and breach
Disloyal on the part of man, revolt
And disobedience; on the part of Heaven
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke".

The sturdy independence which had been a marked
characteristic of Milton all his life remained to support him
in the neglect and poverty of his later years. He would not
stoop to curry favour with those in power and his opinion of
the pomp and circumstance of courts is shown in P.L. V. 353-357:

"In himself was all his state,
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
On princes, when their rich retinues long
Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold

"Dazzles the crowd and sets them all agape".

There is little doubt that Milton regarded the Restoration as fatal to British liberty, and became more and more alienated from all who supported Charles II. Hence there is a particular application of P.L. XII 83-101:

"Yet know withal

Since thy original lapse, true Liberty
Is lost, which always with right Reason dwells
Twinned and from her hath no dividual being;
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From Reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free. Therefore since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God in judgment just
Subjects him from without to violent lords;
Who oft as undeservedly inthral
His outward freedom. Tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.
Yet sometimes nations will decline so low
From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong
But justice and some fatal curse annexed,
Deprives them of their outward liberty,
Their inward lost".

In 1671 were published together the "Paradise Regained" and the "Samson Agonistes". In them Milton seems to place before the Puritans two alternatives, either the victory of patience and self-repression, or the triumph of revenge. But by his own life he shows that his own choice is the Divine overcoming of evil by good. In both poems, Milton shows plainly that his convictions, both religious and political, remain constant to the ideal of his earlier manhood. Thus in P.R. II 466-475:

"Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires and fears, is more a king:
Which every wise and virtuous man attains;

.....

But to guide nations in the way of truth
By saving doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright"

At the same time, he is fully conscious that his labours have been in vain and that he is (S.A. 68-82):

"Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary or decrepit age!
Light the prime work of God is extinct
And all her various objects of delight
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased.

"Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
They creep, yet see. I dark in light, exposed
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong.
Within doors, or without, still as a fool
In power of others, never in my own;
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon.
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!"

In addition to blindness the decrepitude of old age
was coming upon the old Puritan (S.A. 592-598):

"Nor th' other light of life continue long
But yield to double darkness, nigh at hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
In all her functions weary of herself
My race of glory run and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them at rest".

Milton, too, had been made aware of the fines and
punishments inflicted upon the living Puritans (S.A. 687-696):

"Nor only dost degrade them or remit
To life obscured, which was a fair dismissal
But throwest them lower than thou didst exalt them high.

..... Oft leavest them to the hostile sword
..... Or to unjust tribunals under charge of times
And condemnation of the ungrateful multitude."

This multitude he describes with bitter scorn (in P.R. III
50-57) as:

"A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things vulgar, and well weighed, scarce worth the praise
They praise and they admire they know not what
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
And what delight to be by such extolled
Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise
His lot who dares be singularly good".

The fury of the Royalists was even directed against
the bodies of the dead regicides, Cromwell, Ireton, etc. who were
(S.A. 103-105):

"Buried, yet not exempt
By privilege of death and burial
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs."

Thus Milton, conscious of the frustration of all his
hopes that he was going to leave England in the enjoyment of
religious and political freedom, and speaking from his own
bitter experience says (S.A. 268-276):

"But what more oft in nations grown corrupt
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty;
And to despise or envy or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour raised
As their deliverer; if he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds".

CHAPTER V.

The Conclusion.

From all the evidence which we have been able to assemble, John Milton was born of Puritan parents and passed his early years under Puritanical influences. By virtue of his university training, his sound common sense and the broadening influence of his continental travels, he escaped the danger of becoming and remaining narrow and fanatical. His religious and political experiences, combined with his own assiduous studies, led to his continuous mental development. Hence we find him advancing from Puritan to Presbyterian, from Presbyterian to Independent in religious opinions. In politics, he was at first indifferent Royalist, then, under the pressure of times, he became a republican, and at last developed into an Oliverian.

His withdrawal from political activity and his blindness left his convictions unchanged. As he had labored for larger and fuller civil and religious freedom in his youth and prime, so liberty in its truest sense remained the watchword and main interest of his old age.

Thus John Milton was the highest type of Puritan, and his works embody all that is noblest, and hence all that has been permanent, in the movement.

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