

“Dominion Undeserved”:
the Development of John Milton’s Anti-Monarchism
by
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For my mother

And my late father

Who together taught me to think

—

*“The good of this world and the next is with knowledge, and the evil of this world and the next is
with ignorance.”*

Prophet Muhammad (a.s.)

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Abstract

This thesis presents a model of John Milton's anti-monarchical politics not yet articulated in any one body of work. As the de facto chief propagandist for the mid-seventeenth-century English Parliamentarians, John Milton published several republican-sympathetic treatises during the Protectorate period, 1649-1660. However, embedded in those years of prose are puzzling self-contradictions. Early in his polemical career, Milton views monarchs as benevolent rulers, quarrelling only with *tyrants*. Later, however, he completely denies kingship as a viable human government, and argues that kings are necessarily usurping tyrants. Years after his polemical career, the devout Christian portrays God and the Son as monarchs in *Paradise Lost*.

This thesis demonstrates that the above inconsistencies can be reconciled quite simply, by accounting for the fact that Milton's mind changed over time. It is thus organized to reflect Milton's intellectual development towards completely rejecting monarchy as a viable form of *human* government.

Chapter One explicates the early modern epistemology and theology underlying Milton's politics. Beginning with God-ordained human reason, it distills Miltonic Christian worship down to *rational obedience*. That is, because God creates humans with reason and free will, they are to demonstrate their character by rationally distinguishing and *choosing* between sin and good. Chapter One relies mainly on the 1644 tract *Areopagitica*, which articulates clearly Milton's epistemology of knowing "good by evil." *Paradise Lost* is also heavily invoked for its illustrations of the symbiosis between Milton's theories of knowledge and worship.

Chapter Two is the most substantial section of this thesis, both by volume and argument. It is organized around three primary sources—*The Tenure, Second Defence*, and *Readie and Easie Way*. It also engages with the two following scholarly conceptions of Milton's anti-monarchism. In *Divided Empire*, Robert Fallon argues that the anti-monarchical prose's inconsistencies are best addressed by a notion that Milton disliked only tyrants, not kings. Alternatively, Michael Bryson's essay posits that Milton opposed *all* kings, including a kingly God. He reconciles the contradictions by arguing that Milton writes both merely "to win" as a polemicist and imaginatively as a poet. Chapter Two enters the dialogue to demonstrate that while the poet began his polemical career certainly anti-tyrant but not certainly anti-king, his position on the crown *developed* up to the publication of *The Readie and Easie Way*, when Milton clearly justifies no kings besides God and the Son.

With Milton's politics settled, Chapter Three analyzes several important political images in *Paradise Lost*. The chapter is divided into three sections, each organized around one of the epic's curiosities: (I) The Son's Birthright; (II) Satan, the Republican King; (III) God's Kingship, and Monarchy in General. Examining *Paradise Lost* both elaborates on the political theory built in the preceding chapters and proves the interpretive efficacy of this thesis's evolutionary view.

By expansively reading Milton's corpus as the work-in-process of the learned intellectual's always-developing mind, seeming self-contradictions connect as building blocks.

Keywords: anti-monarchism, English Civil War, Milton and politics, early modern republicanism

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Short Titles

CPW: Milton, John. 1953-83. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. Edited by Don M Wolfe. 8 vols. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

All quotations of Milton's poetry are from *John Milton: The Complete Poems*, edited by John Leonard (1998), Penguin Classics. All quotations of Milton's prose are from *CPW*.



John Milton at the age of 62. Engraving from life by William Faithorne, from Milton's *History of Britain*, 1670. See (24).

INTRODUCTION

John Milton's hair was awfully long for a man who publicly defended king-killing. In mid-seventeenth-century England, there were two prominent political factions, both with hairstyles fitting for their names: the Royalist Cavaliers, and the Parliamentary Roundheads. It is puzzling why Milton—who vehemently argued against monarchy in defense of human liberties—would sport the locks of a Royalist. Equally curious is the fact that Milton's first volume of poetry, published on a Royalist's press in 1645, includes a masque written for "one of his majesties most honorable Privie Counsell" that details the same religious and human theory that the poet would eventually weaponize in his prosaic dissents against the whole institution of kingship. In *A Second Defence of the English People* (1654) Milton writes that he despises not monarchy, but tyranny. Later, however, in *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660), he argues quite universally that monarchy is the "natural adversary and oppressor of libertie" (CPW, 449). Yet again confoundingly, the devout Christian's perennial theodicy, *Paradise Lost* (1667), explicitly portrays God as heaven's monarch. These perceived inconsistencies pervading Milton's anti-monarchical political oeuvre have intrigued and invigorated the Miltonist scholarship for centuries.

My thesis, beginning with a study of John Milton's reason-driven theology, ventures to contribute a coherent, novel account of his dissent against the crown, encompassing prose and poetry. In the forthcoming pages, I posit that the apparent inconsistencies in Milton's anti-monarchical polemic are best reconciled through an evolutionary model not yet fully articulated in the scholarship, despite its reliance on one incredibly simple assumption: Milton's views

perhaps changed over time.¹ Upon *Paradise Lost*'s publication, the poet's theory on kingship has completely matured, and conceives acceptance for only two kings, God and the Son, who have been imitated endlessly by human tyrants usurping the holy title of monarch.

Considering this essay's subject, I find a fitting irony in the scholarly title, Miltonist, which I proudly bear. First an insult connoted as lawless and faithless in response to Milton's regicidal tracts, it now represents the vast score of scholars whose passions the gifted poet has captivated (McDowell 2020, 12). The truth is that while interpreting Milton grows increasingly challenging with every passing century, it has never been easy. Even his near-contemporary rivals struggled to faithfully judge the poet:

WHEN *Milton's* forfeit Life was in Debate,
 Some urg'd his Crimes, and some th'unsettled State;
Hyde paus d: now keen Resentment fill'd his Breast,
 Now Softness sooth'd, while Genius shone confest:
 At length the ling'ring Statesman thus his Thoughts exprest:
 When I consider with impartial View,
 The Crimes he wrought, the Good he yet may do
 His violated Faith, and Factions dire;
 His tow'ring Genius and poetic Fire;
 I blame the Rebel, but the Bard admire.
 Mercy unmerited his Muse may raise,

¹ It is difficult to claim originality in a centuries-old field of scholarship. I should note that in my research—which extends as far as the 1960s but mostly involves works completed in the 2000s—I have not encountered the account of Milton's anti-monarchism I set forth. Where applicable, I cite scholars whose works have influenced my thinking, both in agreement and not.

To sound his Monarch's, or his Maker's Praise. (Unknown 1752, 1-12).

The epigram above, likely penned by a Royalist around the year 1732, artfully captures the struggles of reconciling John Milton's poems, prose, and life which for so long have fueled Miltonist discourse. Throughout the turmoil of the English Civil War, the gifted intellectual was at once a poet, philosopher, polemicist, and theologian who remained staunchly committed to his views even amid threats such as imminent political persecution and religious alienation. Accordingly, only about fifty-eight years after Milton's death, the epigram's author struggles to judge the poet, whose "tow'ring Genius and poetic Fire" was obscured by the "crimes he wrought," and his "violated Faith." Two of his works were censored and publicly burned by King Charles II in 1660, only three months into the Restoration.² Moreover, a broader ban upon Milton's writing was imposed at Oxford University in 1683, though "it is probably unlikely that Oxford students, facing punishment for being found with unspecified books by 'Milton', would have handed in their copies of *Paradise Lost*" (McDowell 3). Milton wrote on a great variety of topics, but the most pressing matters of his time stemmed from struggles between the Church of England and reformist groups such as the Puritans, as well as those between the king and Parliament. Consequently, politics and religion were heavily intertwined and the line between the two was often blurred. In a sense, Milton and the progressive polemicists were virtually *required* to make an at least partly religiously driven justification for governmental reform. For example, in a paradox necessitating creative maneuver, an argument for religious toleration would likely incorporate some appeal to Christianity such as an innovative interpretation and mobilization of

² The two censored works being *The First* and *Second Defence of the English People*.

Biblical scriptures toward early modern ideals like inherent human rationality, freedom, or liberty.³

Between his 1608 birth and 1674 death, Milton lived through the final century of the Renaissance—a chaotic England struggling to determine its future— which certainly influenced his early modernist visions. Today, we retrospectively appreciate Milton as the determined intellectual and author of many great works including *Paradise Lost*, which is, by the standards of many, among the greatest poems written in English. Milton too from a young age saw himself in such a light. Most of his early life was dedicated to studying, advancing him so far ahead that he was likely suspended from his bachelor’s program at Christ’s College, Cambridge for being *too* smart and consequently disrespectful toward his tutor. He completed his education with a master’s degree from the University of Cambridge in 1632, and then spent several years independently studying both in England and on travels across Europe (concluding about 1639). Reflecting upon his study-consumed life, Milton writes in *Ad Patrem* (1637-8) a glowing appreciation for the humanist “universal man” he has been afforded the opportunity of becoming: one who, through his father’s support, has been permitted to know “all that heaven contains, and mother earth below the sky, and the air that flows between earth and sky, and whatever the water conceals, and the bright, tossing surface of the sea,” so long as he “chooses to learn about it” (ed. Leonard 1998, 578; translated). The poet knew early on that he had the

³ My use of “early modernism” refers to the intellectual movement (c. 1500-c. 1800) which took place during and after the European Renaissance, characterized by the expansion of humanist ideals and liberties such as freedom of the conscience, prioritization of the individual, and an emphasis on understanding the ways humanity’s past determines its present and future. Scholars have increasingly strayed away from “Renaissance” and toward “early modernism” as an expansive term, because the former ignores non-European revolutions of thought which occurred concurrently with those in Europe (Gerzic and Norrie 2018, 3). Early modernist ideas pervaded art, philosophy, religion, politics, and more. They underlie reformed Christianity (i.e., Protestantism), as well as contemporary liberalism, republicanism, and democracy.

financial and, more importantly, intellectual resources to succeed. Moreover, Milton so dedicated himself to his studies because, evidently in his prose and poetry, his understanding of the present and future was to be heavily informed by the past, especially in the epic tradition (McDowell 2020, 73).

At his core, Milton perceived that through determined study, he would execute his ultimate ambition of leaving “something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die” (*CPW, The Reason of Church-Government*, 810). While Milton was certainly working towards that product, England’s great epic poem, his poetic and polemical careers demonstrate that what he sought to produce extended far beyond an epic poem. His contributions address a broad suite including education, divorce, Church government, censorship and political liberties, kingship and regicide, and Christian theology. What Milton truly left behind in *Paradise Lost* is a testament to the principled intellect behind all his works, through which he made a significant impact on both contemporary England and the courses of religion, government, and human thought for centuries to come. Of the poet’s known influences, a particularly notable one is Thomas Jefferson’s referencing of Milton in the Declaration of Independence. Tanner and Collings (2006) note that “...in the first draft...the sentence that now reads ‘We hold these truths [...]’ was influenced by Milton’s blunt assertion in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* that ‘No man who knows ought, can be so stupid as to deny that all men were naturally born free.’” Milton was able to leave an intellectual mark upon human philosophy and society partly because he was writing in a moment of drastic political and religious tumult—both in England and the broader world.

Consequently, I find it imperative to provide a sense of Milton’s contemporary context. Particularly, the political and religious scenes of England in the 1640s-60s are noteworthy since

Milton was most publicly active as a polemicist during these decades. In 1604, the Stuart Monarchy was instituted with the passing of Queen Elizabeth I, who King James I of England succeeded. James I reigned for most of Milton's youth, but his son, King Charles I, who took the throne in 1625, was a notably fierce believer in the concept of monarchical divine right which justified kings to act entirely upon their own accord, accountable only to God. Accordingly, from 1629 to 1640, he dismissed Parliament entirely and charted Britain's trajectory himself. It was not until he needed additional army funding that he recalled Parliament. Responding to what Milton and other Parliamentarians took to be Charles's tyrannical rule, the First English Civil War (1642-1646) broke out between Parliament and the King, each of whom had assembled and trained an army. By 1645, it was decisive that the Parliamentary New Model Army, led by future Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell and Sir Thomas Fairfax, would win the war. The New Model very well embodied the ideological war Cromwell's troops fought: it represented the united nation instead of a region, and was hierarchically organized not by class or blood, but ability. As Cromwell put it, "I had rather have a plain, russet-coated Captain, that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call a Gentleman and is nothing else" (National Army Museum). Levellers, diggers, and similarly radical Protestant groups were among the ideologically motivated soldiers who secured a victory for the Army in 1646. By then, Milton had published several theologically influenced political tracts, including a lengthy defense of divorce on the grounds of marital incompatibility, arguments for the restructuring of the Church of England, and *Areopagitica*, an early modern appeal to the free mind and press rebutting the Censorship Act of 1643.⁴

⁴ See *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), *Of Reformation* (1641), and *The Reason of Church Government: Urg'd Against Prelaty* (1641).

After losing the First Civil War in 1646, King Charles I fled England, but continued to wreak havoc upon the country in a Second War by arousing Royalist armies to clash with their Roundhead counterparts. In 1649, however, following the conclusion of Charles I's Parliamentary trial, he was convicted of treason and beheaded publicly, thus beginning the period known as the Interregnum, when England was ruled by a republican Parliament.⁵ Upon the expectedly controversial beheading of Charles, Milton promptly published his first major anti-monarchical prose tract, titled *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (first ed. February 1649, second 1650). In it, Milton furiously defends, and even promotes, the killing of a tyrant-monarch on the grounds of both Christian duty and natural law. The piece garnered a diverse contemporary response, from fervent abhorrence to unequivocal endorsement, remaining a centerpiece of the poet's reputation and legacy for all sides of the debate. Also in (October) 1649, Milton published *Eikonoklastes*, the official, Parliamentarian-commissioned response to King Charles's defense tract *Eikon Basilike*. In *Eikonoklastes*, or *Image Breaker*, Milton draws upon much of the same argument from *The Tenure*, though he expands upon it with direct polemical responses to *Eikon Basilike*. In both *The Tenure* and *Eikonoklastes*, Milton, alongside a passion for humankind's divine image, conveys fiery hatred toward tyrants at the least and

⁵ There is long-standing scholarly debate as to the definition of "republicanism." Cécile Laborde (2013) notes that republicanism, "centered round ideals of political liberty, self-government, citizenship, equality, and virtue...migrated from...ancient Athenian and Roman roots to flourish in medieval and Renaissance Europe." In its more contemporary setting, Richard Dagger (2011) finds a common thread, "scholars agree, however, that republicanism rests on the conviction that government is not the domain of some ruler or small set of rulers, but is instead a public matter—the *res publica*—to be directed by self-governing citizens." In my thesis, I conform to Dagger's definition of the term, taken to signify a government which (1) derives its power from the people whom it represents, and (2) respects the rule of law (it is below, not above, the law). I do also explain, however, that I find it hasty to commit Milton wholly to any one political-theoretical thought such as republicanism, liberalism, or democratism. Milton himself refers to the Commonwealth as a republic generously throughout the prose.

monarchs at the most. These tracts were part of a larger suite of both anti-monarchical and pro-republican prose written by Milton during his post as Cromwell's Secretary of Foreign Tongues.

Unfortunately for Milton and his sympathizers, the seventeenth-century English experiment with republicanism failed following the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, when his son was appointed Lord Protector, but resigned in just nine months. The English citizenry increasingly yearned for monarchy's return as Parliament unraveled from within, and in 1660, the Interregnum was completed by the Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy through the coronation of King Charles II—Charles I's eldest son. About a month before the Restoration's fulfillment, Milton published *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660), an unequivocal attack against monarchy and last-ditch effort to sustain the Commonwealth. In it, the statesman writes visibly disappointed and frustrated with his countrymen for their ignorance of monarchy's brutal conditions—conditions that England had finally escaped eleven years earlier. By 1660, the poet had also suffered significant personal losses, including the deaths of his wife and newborn son, John, in 1652, as well as the completion of his blindness in the same year. Upon King Charles II's arrival, Milton was promptly imprisoned with the possibility of execution for his status as a high-profile defender of the Commonwealth and regicide. Likely through the advocacy of Andrew Marvell and other government officials close to Milton who had sustained their appointments under Charles II, he was eventually freed. Upon his freedom, Milton retired from writing political prose to compose his life's work, *Paradise Lost* (1667), followed by two relatively minor epics, *Paradise Regained* (1671) and *Samson Agonistes* (1671). Throughout his blindness, Milton's three daughters—whom he educated diligently—were the likely scribes of his works as well as his caretakers. The poet passed away in 1674.

England's mid-seventeenth century was a constant struggle between the king and Parliament which pervaded societal structure and dynamics deeply. Living in a state of persistent social flux, Milton—whose life was essentially dedicated to learning—understandably never seemed to conform to any one political, religious, or social group. Thus, my thesis will avoid categorizing him into a single ideology (i.e., liberalism, democratism) because of the complexity and vastness of the poet's political works and views. Many scholars have contextualized Milton's political philosophy among his contemporaries', and there exists a myriad of scholarly works arguing for Milton's placement into one school of thought. However, my readings find his thoughts both continually evolving and consistently difficult to classify. There are, however, certain tenets of his religious and political ideologies which I will demonstrate as identifiable and consistent across his works, such as an emphasis on human rationality and an uneasiness about kings. In my first and second chapters, I build a coherent framework of Milton's anti-monarchism starting with its rudimentary early modern theology; in the third, I further investigate that theory and apply it to *Paradise Lost's* images of heavenly kingship.

Chapter One endeavors to explicate the Christian theology which informs all of Milton's political views. The theory relies on a model of Christian service enabled by free choice, in which humans authentically worship God by employing divinely sanctioned reason to freely choose between virtue and sin in demonstration of their characters. I place a special stock in obedience, which Milton references moderately in the prose before heavily exploring in *Paradise Lost*. Obedience, which is a virtue in itself, also functions as a broader term representing the

conscious performance of a variety of more specific virtues such as temperance.⁶ At the core of Milton's Christian theology, I argue, is a rational obedience which depends heavily on reason for performance, particularly in the postlapsarian (i.e., after the Fall of Humankind) human context where sin is both tempting and difficult to discern from good. I also demonstrate that, for Milton, it was only through the Fall that humans were able to truly unlock the full potential of their reason, which was first limited by sin's absence in the utopian Garden of Eden. The rational worship theory worked out in Chapter One is an essential centerpiece of Milton's theology guiding not only the poet's religious views, but also his political ones discussed in Chapter Two.

The second chapter begins by asking whether Milton was ideologically opposed to all monarchs, or just tyrannical ones. It centers around three main works: *The Tenure*, *Second Defence*, and *Readie and Easie Way*. I begin the chapter by locating myself among a few scholars who have considered this question rigorously, then proceed to articulate my own distinct argument. I find the question of tyrants versus kings to be an excessively limiting binary, and argue for an evolutionary understanding of the poet's anti-monarchism, in which his views change over time and are never entirely at either side of the dichotomy. At the beginning of the Interregnum (*The Tenure*), Milton leaves theoretical room for kings and shuns only tyrants. However, by the publication of *The Readie and Easie Way*, the poet believes that all human monarchs necessarily act as usurping tyrants. However, transitioning to the third chapter, I cap

⁶ I take Miltonic "virtue" to be a broad term essentially meaning any rational choice made by humans in service of God. These choices range drastically in performance, but at their core, they all demonstrate one's conscious discipline and consequential Christian demeanor. A more basic definition of virtue refers to the response to the seven deadly sins with equal "virtues": (1) humility, (2) charity, (3) chastity, (4) gratitude, (5) temperance, (6) patience, and (7) diligence. At their roots, these seven virtues provoke the same purpose that Milton imparts upon humans, to *choose* good against sin.

my discussion of Milton's anti-monarchism with an important caveat: an emphasis on *human* monarchy's inevitable tyranny.

Chapter Three—taking *Paradise Lost* to express Milton's fully fleshed out political and religious theories—completes the developmental view set forth in Chapter Two, while also returning to questions and dilemmas posed in Chapter One. With Milton's monarchical politics largely settled, the chapter analyzes several noteworthy political images in *Paradise Lost*. These include the Son's coronation, Satan's republican rebellion, and God's monarchical devotion to justice. Chapter Three's investigation finds *The Readie and Easie Way*'s political theory vastly similar to *Paradise Lost*'s, though the latter's seamless combination of political theory and theology provides important insights unique to the poetic form. In turn, examining the epic both elaborates on the political theory built in the preceding chapters and tests the interpretive efficacy of this thesis's evolutionary view. By expansively reading Milton's corpus as the work-in-process of the learned intellectual's always-developing mind, what seem to be self-contradictions connect as building blocks.

CHAPTER I: RATIONAL OBEDIENCE

By the time *Areopagitica*—one of Milton’s earliest political tracts—was published, the poet had spent decades studying Christianity at its roots through the Reformation tradition of self-interpretation. He even learned, among other languages, Aramaic and Hebrew so that he could himself interpret ancient Old Testament scriptures and commentary. In an England (and Europe) where religion pervaded every aspect of the human experience through social systems and institutions, Milton’s ambition to leave a lasting mark on humanity almost necessitated that he develop an informed, personal understanding of Christianity. His polemical strategy often relies upon reinterpreting already accepted beliefs, theories, and histories (i.e., Christianity), in order to transform those justifications of unpleasant institutions and practices into indictments of the same. His theology—markedly distinct from any one Christian sect—is frequently applied in this approach, utilized in all the tracts promoting a commonwealth government. And so, I find myself both excited and obliged to spend this preparatory chapter analyzing the theological rudiments of reason, free choice, temperance, and obedience, striving toward a calculated model of Milton’s politics.

While Milton’s religious theory is difficult to characterize briefly, he, throughout all his works, depicts a belief that God ordained humanity with reason in order to allow individuals to express their goodness—or sinfulness—through freely willed actions. Many would not expect early modern reason to be at the center of Christianity, which is sometimes more-so reliant upon

(potentially irrational) *faith*.⁷⁸ The bulk of this chapter will be an investigation into the scaffolding Milton uses to maneuver reason out of Christian interpretation and into the core of human nature and religious worship. While the epistemology I articulate above—reason’s combination with free will allows authentic worship—may sound simple, I will analyze the significant nuances and applications that the poet addresses, each of which adds a new dimension of meaning to true worship. I refrain from discussing political implications until the second chapter because it is best to accomplish a firm grasp of the rational worship theory underlying all of Milton’s political texts before discussing anti-monarchical political theory itself. With this said, I begin the chapter with a very brief description of *Areopagitica*’s argumentation to prime for the eventual application of the first chapter’s analysis to the second and third.

⁷ Hebrews 11 on Faith: “Now faith is...the conviction of things not seen...By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (English Standard Version). Faith is a long-standing answer to the fact that humans cannot directly observe the God we are meant to worship. We are to have *faith* that he exists, seeing him through the world he created. Hebrews 11 exalts faith in the human-deity relationship, “and without faith it is impossible to please [God], for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Milton’s theology does not find faith to be an efficacious instrument for decision making on its own, but faith in God is an important element for obedience: how can one obey a God without believing he exists? But to Milton, we please God by more than simply possessing faith.

⁸ This chapter will provide a thorough understanding of Miltonic reason’s meaning and applications, but, in short, I take it that reason generally refers to the human mind’s ability to critically perceive and judge reality, often emphasizing the importance of conscience. Human reason has been important to generations of philosophers dating far before and after the early modern movement. Aristotle, who Milton cites often, at the outset of his 350 B.C.E. work *Nicomachean Ethics*, posits that the human being is a rational animal who engages with reason in the pursuit of happiness (I.13). Two centuries after Milton’s investigations of reason, Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote of morality’s Categorical Imperative, a “rationally necessary and unconditional principle that we must always follow despite any natural desires or inclinations we may have to the contrary” (Johnson and Cureton 2021). Reason and its product rationality have been the basis for definitions of human nature for millennia, though its motivations and implications—two important facets in definition—seem variable.

Areopagitica presents an early Milton mobilizing reason as a springboard for political argumentation in an assault against censorship of the press. His argument is multidimensional, though it centers around the sovereign identity a book carries: “for Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them” (CPW, 492). Milton’s characterization, however metaphorical, establishes books as living through the human intellect which creates them. Like God bestowing reason upon humanity, authors impart their own “living intellect” upon books. Importantly, Milton through parallel structure seems to conflate intellect and “a potencie of life,” indicating that thought, and thus, reason, are necessary faculties of the living. Having established that books are products and preservers of human intellect, Milton advances his argument by portraying intellect and reason complimentarily: “...as good almost kill a man as kill a good Book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God’s image; but he who destroys a good Booke, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye” (CPW, 492). God’s image is tied directly to reason (a facet of intellect) in a reconciliation of Protestant worship and free will. While many of his contemporaries struggled with the unclear boundary between God’s omnipotence and rigid predeterminism, Milton argues for the existence of free will as a gateway to the purest form of worship: rational obedience. By imposing censorship, Parliament restricts rational choice, thus shunning the “image of God” and hindering religious observance.

In Milton’s case, it is difficult to define reason without also considering its complement: free choice. As God explains to the Son while recounting the fallen angels’ origin in *Paradise Lost*, “...reason is also choice...” (3.108). By equating reasoning and choosing, Milton’s God emphasizes their complementary relationship: reason is an abstraction of thought informing

choice, a necessary facet of everyday life. Rafael elaborates on reason's practical application later in the epic during a conversation with Adam, "...that thou art happy, owe to God; / That thou continuest such, owe to thyself, / That is, to thy obedience; therein stand" (5.520-522).

Notably, Rafael begins by connecting happiness to religious obedience rooted in reason, modeled similarly to Aristotle's human reason in the pursuit of happiness. Humans are given the domain to live happily, though they must defend it through obedience, which, as I will demonstrate, is essentially the discipline of acting rationally.

Rafael's guidance stresses the importance of reason and free will for maintaining oneself. However, a more thorough definition of obedience is required to evaluate the relationship between freedom and maintenance, which he provides:

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 (5.524-530)

Milton's Rafael contends that humans are created good and through "nature free, not over-ruled by fate" (i.e., free will) they must labor obediently to maintain their goodness. Milton reconciles free will and divine omnipotence by conceding certain subject matters—particularly the beginning and end of life—solely to God's will. Michael corroborates this sharing of will between humans and God in Book XI following the Fall during conversation with Adam,

“...what thou livest / Live well; how long, or short, permit to Heaven” (5.553-554). He leaves ambiguous the meaning of “live well,” because each individual’s precise task following the Fall is to rationalize their own definition of “well,” and then demonstrate that understanding through “voluntary service,” “not necessitated.”

Because God expects humans to prove themselves through freely reasoned actions, he does not accept blind obedience.⁹ God’s account of the Angels’ fall, spoken to the Son, provides further insights:

Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.

...

What pleasure I from such obedience paid,

When will and reason (reason also is choice)

Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,

Made passive both, had served necessity,

Not me. They therefore, as to right belonged,

So were created, nor can justly accuse

Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,

As if predestination overruled (3.102-114)

God bases his judgment of the wicked angels on their freely made decision to fall, and expresses the connection between reason, choice, obedience, and freedom which Milton’s core theology is predicated on. “Obedience paid” in the absence of freedom to choose is worthless to God because it is not a demonstration of individual character. Free choice is the product of reason,

⁹ By *blind* obedience, I mean obedience that is not consciously processed through the faculty of reason before being demonstrated as choice.

and thus, any restraint placed upon reason inhibits worship. Through this framework, Milton builds much of his theology and, in turn, religio-politics.

This chapter's discussion has thus far been primarily concerned with expansive human virtue (i.e., obedience) and capacities (i.e., free will, choice, reason). Although obedience itself is a virtue, its distillation down to a variety of specialized virtues proves both more palatable for human exercise and instructive for my study. Of these specific practices, the poet most often cites *temperance*, "the rule of not too much..." (*Paradise Lost*, 11.531). Temperance was an especially important concept in the early modern, reformed Christian tradition as the movement rebutted against Catholic practices it perceived as excessive. The wide, blank margins of the English-translated Luther Bible (1534) vastly contrasted ornate Catholic Bibles written in Latin, full of interpretive notes.¹⁰ Protestant and Puritan Churches were often a small, simply built room, while Cathedrals were large displays of extravagant holy imagery, art, and architecture.

Writing in *Areopagitica*, Milton elaborates on the discipline of temperance:

I conceive, therefore, that when God did enlarge the universal diet of man's body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dieting and repasting of our minds; as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his own leading capacity. How great a virtue is temperance, how much of moment through the whole life of man! yet God commits the managing so great a trust, without particular law or prescription, wholly to the demeanour of every grown man. (*CPW*, 192)

By extending the metaphor of diet to the mind, Milton stresses the importance of consumption in all forms of temperance. Just as God "said without exception, Rise *Peter*, kill and eat, leaving the choice to each man's discretion" (*CPW*, *Areopagitica* 512), he left ambiguous the principles of

¹⁰ A noteworthy counterexample, the Geneva Bible (1560)—an English-translated Bible declaring itself Protestant—is full of partial commentary. It was taken seriously by sixteenth-century Protestants, and used by influential figures such as Cromwell, Donne, and Shakespeare. Milton's English-translated Bible of choice was probably the Geneva version. The point still stands, however, that reformed Bibles mostly did not contain notes in the margins. Another such example is the King James Version (1611), which contained few annotations or embellishments and was intended to be the Church of England's officially reformed text (Shoulson 2014).

knowledge's consumption, only generally instructing humans to *seek* it. Consequently, Milton regarded temperance highly because while humans are expected to continually adhere to it, God did not provide any "law or prescription" for its maintenance beyond abstractions such as "the rule of not too much." In such ambiguity, Milton rejoices at the opportunity to exercise intellect through free choice in demonstration of his "demeanour."

In *Comus: A Masque*, Milton's chaste protagonist, the Lady, is held captive by the tempter Comus in "a stately place, set out with all manner of deliciousness." As he unsuccessfully tempts her to break her temperance, she exclaims:

Thou canst touch the freedom of my mind
 With all thy charms, though this corporal rind
 Thou hast immancl'd, while Heav'n sees good (663-665)

Though she has been physically bound to an enchanted chair by Comus, the Lady—confident in her tempered virtue—articulates the mind's unique capability granted by its divine origin to resist worldly control. The Lady's speech is a textbook illustration of early modernism's holy reason which Milton prescribes to. The masque concludes with the Spirit's corroboration of Miltonic reason's role in judging humanity:

Mortals, that would follow me,
 Love Virtue; she alone is free.
 She can teach ye how to climb
 Higher than the sphery chime;
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her. (1018-1024)

To follow the Spirit in the climb to heaven is to practice virtue. Among the ambiguities of reason and temperance, the Spirit's epilogue is an assurance that meaningful Christian worship simply requires following virtue—applying reason to life through conscious discipline. The last two lines further exalt reason's role in God's judgment of humans: virtue itself sets the standard for goodness and heaven merely complies. Discussing the virtues of obedience and temperance is especially fruitful when taken in a pre-and-postlapsarian context.

In 1641, 19 years before the publication of *Paradise Lost*, Milton articulates what he perceives to be his life purpose, “that by labour and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life) joyn'd with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die” (*CPW, The Reason of Church-Government*, 810). As we continue to labor upon his works centuries later, any Miltonist would agree that the poet accomplished his goal. It is particularly informative that as he approached his life's culmination, Milton decided that his long-anticipated contribution to humanity would be his own telling of the Fall of humankind in epic form. The story carries such weight for Milton because it is the beginning of the rest of human nature underlying his religious and political ideologies. The Fall told in *Paradise Lost* is often referred to as a *felix culpa*, or fortunate fall, because through it, Milton unlocks the meaning of Christian worship and the fundamental human purpose. The poem thus begins appropriately, that in order to “...justify the ways of God to men,” (1.26), the poet will explore “...man's first disobedience...” (1.1). Underpinning Milton's theology is a great paradox: it is through disobedience that humans find the true practice of obedience.

Comparing obedience before and after the Fall yields insights into how Milton's contemporary human, afforded the full potential of reason, ought to serve God. My next analysis, building upon existing scholarship, argues that while Adam and Eve were always obedient,

before the Fall, *Miltonic* obedience was impossible in the absence of reason. Milton's rational epistemology relies upon an understanding of sin which was only revealed to humanity after its first transgression. In response to post-romantic claims that outward Christian obedience and inner reason are at odds with one another, Michael Schoenfeldt argues that:

...both before and after the Fall, moral authenticity and psychological autonomy emerge from the practices of obedience. What changes at the Fall is not so much the moral status of obedience as its political trajectory. Where before the Fall, obedience involves the relatively simple attention to a single prohibition, after the Fall it entails the performance of a range of uneasily graduated and interpretively elusive virtues. After the Fall, in other words, the object of obedience changes from a single imperative to whatever conduct a rigorous exercise of right reason determines. Obedience, then, demands rather than denies the active engagement of the inner life of reason. (Schoenfeldt 2003, 1)

Schoenfeldt astutely points out that obedience is constant both before and after the Fall, though its execution looks starkly different. Before the Fall, the sole required virtue was simple resistance from eating a single fruit. The Garden of Eden was, as the title of the epic suggests, a Paradise where all human desires could be met—or so it seemed. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve are seen in a pure, nude state, “So passed they naked on, nor shunned the sight / Of God or angel, for they thought no ill” (4.319-320). Though inherently subordinate to the ethereal powers by nature of their creation, the two in their pure “Simplicity and spotless innocence” have no reason to cover themselves (4.318). Satan too witnessing Eve's pleasant creation articulates the prelapsarian dynamic between God and humanity well:

O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold!
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanced

Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
 Not Spirits, yet to heavenly Spirits bright
 Little inferiour; whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
 In them divine resemblance, and such grace

The hand that formed them on their shape hath poured. (4.358-365)

Let us be sure to appreciate the charming comedy of Milton's Satan. Ironically crying "O Hell!" with seeming disbelief at the sight of paradise, he is so ridiculously stricken with sinister preoccupation that he cannot stand Adam and Eve's utopian happiness. I am sure Milton enjoyed himself writing this moment just as much as I enjoyed reading it. More importantly, note Satan's characterization of Adam and Eve: they are not elevated to the ethereality of angels and God, but also do contain some potency of divinity in their beings. An extension of the "grace [of] / The hand that formed them," they are a "little inferior" but maintain "divine resemblance." Such is the existence of humans: elevated through the divinity of their creation, but not entirely holy due to their "earth-born" nature. Because of their subordination, Adam and Eve are required to obey, but their innocent, almost-divine prelapsarian status, not yet unbridled by original sin, affords them comfort among purportedly superior beings to remain unclothed and unashamed—a metaphor for the transparency of their souls. It is not until after their fall that they cover their bodies before the ethereal powers and are introduced to the importance of temperance.

Milton did not perceive the Fall as a necessarily bad occurrence, for the culpa is a felix one because through it, humanity unlocks the full potential of reason, and in turn, true obedience. Such an obedience, Michael Schoenfeldt argues, is best defined as "the quotidian regulation of self by reference to an interiorized sense of moral obligation" (Schoenfeldt 2003, 16). His

expansive definition of obedience allows a model of prelapsarian autonomy wherein true obedience is possible without the postlapsarian intertwining of sin with good and consequential unlocking of reason. This is where Schoenfeldt and I certainly agree, that:

The Fall, then, entails not a transition from obedience to autonomy but rather a resituation of the virtue of obedience in terms of internal autonomy. No longer performed in relation to a single prohibition given from above, obedience must now respond to myriad laws, partial truths and gradual virtues, all glimpsed at best through the darkened glass of reason. (Schoenfeldt 2003, 16)

It is true that both before and after the Fall, Adam and Eve were obedient. But Schoenfeldt, who does not concede that Adam and Eve were reasonless *before* falling, neglects to point out the precise fortune of this shift in obedience. Equating obedient acts to “a single prohibition given from above” with those towards “myriad laws, partial truths and gradual virtues” ignores the activation of reason between the two. Schoenfeldt’s argument clearly states that reason facilitates postlapsarian obedience, but leaves ambiguous whether or not reason was possible before the Fall. And while I agree that Adam and Eve were always autonomously obedient, I contend that their obedience only became well-rooted in *reason* after they fell and were exposed to sin—at least, according to Milton’s definitions of reason and choice. Such is the fortune which I continually allude to and posit as being the center of Milton’s ethics: that once sin and good became intertwined in postlapsarian reality, humans assumed both the capacity and necessity to use reason in the performance of true Miltonic obedience. In *Areopagitica*, he articulates succinctly the relationship between sin-ridden reality and the “quotidian regulation of self” Schoenfeldt observes as obedience:

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,

and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed upon Psyche as an incessant labour. (*CPW*, 514)

Put simply, Milton's is the epistemology of knowing good through sin—acting virtuous because of original disobedience. The poet nods to such an epistemology as, following her creation, Adam explains to Eve the nature of their obedience:

he who requires

From us no other service than to keep

This one, this easy charge, of all the trees

In Paradise that bear delicious fruit

So various, not to taste that only Tree

Of Knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life (4.419-424)

He begins that the two of them must serve God by simply abstaining from consuming the Tree's fruit. Furthermore, he establishes an early model of choice by appealing to the many other trees that bear delicious fruit, thus proposing that they should *choose* to eat only the other fruits.

So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,

Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou knowest

God hath pronounced it death to taste that tree,

The only sign of our obedience left,

Among so many signs of power and rule

Conferred upon us, and dominion given

Over all other creatures that possess

Earth, air, and sea. Then let us not think hard

One easy prohibition, who enjoy

Free leave so large to all things else, and choice

Unlimited of manifold delights: (4.425-435)

Adam and Eve ultimately fall because they are ill-equipped to execute the “easy charge” of choice. In Milton’s epistemology, proper reason and choice rely upon an understanding of consequence which Adam and Eve do not possess until after they have fallen. Adam even foreshadows this fateful ignorance: he does not know “whate’er death is,” beyond “Some dreadful thing no doubt.” In fact, Adam so clearly engages in a circular, unfounded reasoning which Milton would object to: they must not eat the fruit because it causes death; death—whatever it is—must be something bad since God uses it as punishment; and thus we should avoid that most likely bad thing by obeying God. But his argument’s weakness is certainly not inexcusable. As Milton writes in *Areopagitica* (CPW, 512), “to the pure, all things are pure;” when one’s entire existence has been defined by “choice / Unlimited of manifold delights,” he is not able to effectively reason between purity and impurity. Hopefully, by now, my point is clear; Milton’s epistemology of knowing good through sin is made possible only by the Fall. Without the Fall, just as Adam and Eve were tempted into transgression so easily, humans would lack the opportunity and faculty to authentically employ reason and obedience through choice.

Before concluding Chapter One, I note the peculiar nature of an omnipotent God who demands voluntary service and obedience. Why does God seem so preoccupied with humans (freely) serving him? The third chapter investigates Milton’s confusing God thoroughly, but it is helpful to sooner consider the motif of semantic argumentation relating to the term “obedience” in *Paradise Lost*—one which “king” in the anti-monarchical tracts also reflects. It strikes me that Milton in *Paradise Lost* is attempting to reclaim the word “obedience” from earthly kings who have abused it to describe their relationship with the public. In *Eikon Basilike* (1649), King Charles I, rationalizing his holy army’s defeat in the Civil Wars, articulates the kingly seizure of

obedience which Milton refutes, “I pray God these may all meet in our hearts, and so dispose us to an happy conclusion of these Civil-Wars; that I may know better to obey God, and govern my people, and they may learn better to obey both God and me” (179). Charles, writing that the Civil Wars would best be concluded with his political power strengthened, appeals to divine right as he exalts himself into a position of supremacy: just as he obeys God, his citizenry should obey him. However, Charles’s idea of obedience underlying *Eikon Basilike* is far shallower than the model of Miltonic obedience we have uncovered in this chapter. Where Charles merely seeks his people to do as he says, Milton’s God asks humans to act as they feel inclined to.

The discussion above illustrates much more than the fact that Milton’s and Charles’s conceptions of obedience were at odds. As I will continue to prove, Milton’s early modern theology predisposed the poet to disapprove of monarchs. Obedience is just one example of how incompatible Milton’s theology is with tenets of monarchy like absolutism and divine right. However, I do not begin the next chapter with the claim that Milton was entirely anti-monarchical. Instead, I lay the ground for an informed discussion of anti-monarchism by connecting the theology articulated in Chapter One to Milton’s explanation of societies—the basis for government—in *The Tenure*. Just as Milton built his politics, I first lay the groundwork of the poet’s core moral theory driving his conceptions of human nature, then analyze how that theology sets standards for the governments serving societies.

CHAPTER II: KINGSHIP AND TYRANNY

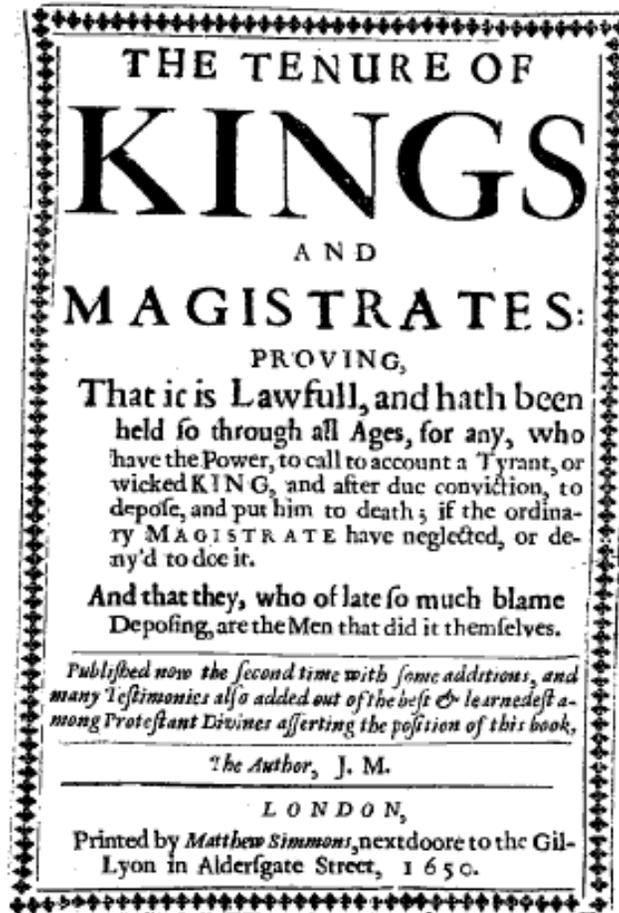
For good reason, the scholarship at present seems to be struggling with whether Milton's anti-monarchism was expansive to all kings, or simply tyrannical ones. For a writer as learned and sure of himself as Milton, there is a surprising inconsistency on this matter in the politics of his prose and *Paradise Lost*. There have been many smart attempts to make sense of it all—especially surrounding the monarchical God of *Paradise Lost*—which have informed my own perspective. Most influential upon my analysis have been Robert Fallon's book *Divided Empire* and Michael Bryson's essay, "'His Tyranny Who Reigns': The Biblical Roots of Divine Kingship and Milton's Rejection of 'Heav'n's King.'" Fallon posits that Milton argued exclusively against not kings, but tyrants. I find his work well-constructed and emblematic of that school of thought in its citation of much of the commonly used prose and poetry for his view. However, Fallon weighs too heavily Milton's earlier prose to prove his point, and struggles to credibly address *The Readie and Easie Way's* explicit dissent against *all* kings. Bryson alternatively supposes that the prose is not necessarily reflective of Milton's views due to its political nature: whether he agrees with it wholly, the polemicist simply uses the best argument for the ends he seeks to defend. While Bryson's argument is plausible at first, I find it hard to believe that an intellectual as staunch as Milton would risk his life and character—both of which he took very seriously—publishing views which were not actually his own, under his true name. Both Bryson and Fallon draw from William Empson's *Milton's God*, a work as radical as it is foundational to interpretation of *Paradise Lost*. Empson thinks that Milton's God seems so evil *because he is*, and Milton did the best he could (a pretty good job at that) but was unable to escape the fact that Christianity is fundamentally evil.

Fallon, Bryson, Empson, and their respective adherents all do an admirable job addressing the seemingly impossible tasks of reconciling the prose with the poetry and even the prose with itself. I agree with Fallon and Bryson, that the prose tracts are inconsistent in their portrayal of kingship. However, this chapter departs from existing scholarly efforts in order to develop an evolutionary view of Milton's anti-monarchism. Asking whether Milton disapproved only of tyrannical rulers or of all kings is a mistakenly binary question which ignores the poet's intense, evolving political and personal contexts. If it were not enough that he lived through the regicide and restoration of the Stuart monarchs and the accompanying English Civil War, the poet faced his wife's death, political imprisonment and near execution, the English Plague, and twenty-two years of complete blindness. Even without such a tumultuous life, it would not be unreasonable for Milton—whose self-articulated life purpose was essentially to learn about the world and express his findings—to have shifting views of the monarchy. I posit that while the poet began his polemical career certainly anti-tyrant but not certainly anti-king, his position on the crown developed until the publication of *Paradise Lost*, when it is clear that Milton does not believe that any kings besides God and the Son can be justified.

My proposed model of Milton's anti-monarchism is quite simple to prove. Starting with *Areopagitica* (1644) as a first glance into the poet's foundational politics, this chapter will illustrate Milton's shifting views through a coherent analysis of the most relevant texts other scholars, and I, have identified: *The Tenure* (1650), *Second Defence* (1654), and *Readie and Easie Way* (1660).¹¹ My sampling spans Milton's eleven most politically and polemically active years. Each of the tracts was written for its own occasion, and their temporal spacing makes them well-suited for understanding the poet's evolution of thought over time.

¹¹ When multiple editions of a tract exist, this thesis analyzes the final one. In this case, those are the second editions of both *The Tenure* and *The Readie and Easie Way*.

First, however, there is the young Milton, who has yet to attack the king formally in prose, in *Areopagitica* making a general appeal to the liberation and protection of the mind and the tongue, “give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience above all liberties” (*CPW*, 560). The poet’s goal in *Areopagitica* was to defend freedom of the press using Christianity—the precise weapon used to justify censorship. One of the main rationales for the Censorship Act of 1643 was that potentially heretical works could corrupt readers, and Parliament sought to protect the public from such danger. Milton turned Parliament’s justification on its head; his rebuttal was argued almost entirely in defense of free choice: censoring sin hindered the individual’s use of reason to reflect character. And since obedience to God relies on rational *choices* which must be made by individuals for themselves, the government was actually impeding authentic Christian worship. The argument made in *Areopagitica* should sound familiar given my effort to explore its underpinnings of choice and rational obedience in Chapter One, and it will continually play into this chapter’s development of Milton’s anti-monarchical religio-politics.



I. *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*

Posted above is the title page for *The Tenure*, which boldly states the tract’s ambition to justify the killing of a “tyrant, or wicked KING” by the constituency he is meant to serve, regardless of the lesser magistrates’ judgment. Most prominently displayed by way of full capitalization is the essay’s pointed target, “KINGS.” Accompanying the cover’s charged, unapologetic language are Milton’s initials (and the first edition featured “J. Milton”), which lend credit to the poet’s propensity to publish his own views. Milton certainly understood that by publishing under his name, the tract’s argument would be publicly attributed to him as reflections of character, intelligence, and credibility. So while there is a chance that he was, as Bryson puts it, “arguing to win,” much was at stake for Milton’s life and authentic identity in the

essay. *The Tenure* was first published two weeks after the 1649 regicide of King Charles I, though most of it was likely written during his trial. However, in 1650, Milton published a second edition of the text drawing more heavily upon Presbyterian-supported scriptures and authorities. Lowenstein provides a succinct account of the group: “they had firstly waged zealous war against Charles during the 1640s...then they had reversed course, supporting negotiations with the King, since he had agreed to accept Presbyterian religion in Scotland and establish it in England, and incited sedition against the Rump” (Loewenstein 2013, 243). In *The Tenure*, Milton is at war with not just tyranny, but also those who dissented from King Charles’s execution. While he refrains from attacking kings wholly, the tract contains important rudimentary objections to kingship’s most important defenses such as divine right and patriarchalism. In essence, *The Tenure*’s early political theory is incompatible with the realities of human kingship, an implication which will later be important in justifying his complete anti-monarchism.

In humanist fashion, *The Tenure*’s argumentation begins by asserting the theological principles underlying the first societies’ formations:

No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men were naturally borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey: and that they liv’d so. (CPW, 198)

“Being the image and resemblance of God himself” provides humans inherent freedom, as well as supremacy above other earthly creatures. The notion that humans were “born to command and not to obey” at first contradicts Chapter One’s emphasis on obedience, but Genesis 1:26 provides a swift reconciliation: “and God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over...every creeping thing that creepeth *upon the earth*” (emphasis mine).

Humans were born to both obey (God) and command (earthly creatures), and Milton's dual argument is unsurprisingly justified by the scriptures.

With the duality of human command and obedience established, Milton explains that societies exist as a postlapsarian measure of mutual protection:

Till from the root of *Adams* transgression, falling among themselves to doe wrong and violence, and foreseeing that such courses must needs tend to the destruction of them all, [humans] agreed to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance to such an agreement. Hence came Citties, Townes, and Common-wealths. (*CPW*, 199)

Societies were born out of necessity to protect against the “wrong and violence” which fallen humans—free to choose among sin and virtue, harm and care—inevitably inflict upon one another. Inherent in the Fall-rooted origin of societies is that they are necessary though inevitably flawed social institutions. It is thus no wonder that governments are defective: they are the products of humans.

After explaining the roots of society, Milton provides his account of why and how kingship came to be the chosen government:

And because no faith in all was found sufficiently binding, they saw it needfull to ordaine som authoritie, that might restrain by force and punishment what was violated against peace and common right. This autoritie and power of self-defence and preservation being originally and naturally in every one of them, and unitedly in them all, for ease, for order, and least each man should be his own partial Judge, they communicated and deriv'd either to one, whom for the eminence of his wisdom and integritie they chose above the

rest, or to more than one whom they thought of equal deserving: the first was call'd a King; the other magistrates. (*CPW*, 199)

Essentially, monarchy is rooted in a sort of meritocracy in which members of a public body choose their rulers based on their wisdom and integrity—qualities implied as indicative of the ability to uphold the mutualism underlying postlapsarian society. Even as he justifies the first kings, Milton considers the rudimentary human faculties he cited so heavily in *Areopagitica*. In electing a king or magistrates, he stresses that the “power of self-defence and preservation” is “naturally” within every human; each person acts as their “own partial judge” to *choose* who could satisfy the requirements for good governance. Milton’s model of choice-based meritocratic kingship places an emphasis on individuals, who “unitedly in them all,” are meant to, both inwardly and en masse, rationally choose a deserving leader. In the context of twenty-first-century representative politics, the poet’s idea seems almost obvious and unremarkable. However, his account of early societies and government emphasizes a revolutionary contract theory, in which the people *choose* their leaders, who are publicly accountable to none but the citizenry who conferred power upon them. The theory comes in direct opposition to centuries-old monarchical claims to divine right.

Milton begins the paragraph I analyze above with the vigorous proclamation that all humans “naturally were borne free,” and concludes it with a theory that societies and governments exist only in the interest of the citizenry behind them. Humans live in a confusingly set postlapsarian world where discerning sin and good is both challenging and imperative, necessitating rational choice—enabled by free will—to perform their fundamental purpose: obedience to God through action-based demonstration of character. In this fallen reality, they must protect against the wrongs they have inflicted and will continue to inflict upon each other,

thus establishing societies as a measure of mutual protection. However, mere mutual faith in one another was a weak binding force, giving rise to collectively and meritocratically chosen kings and magistrates, who not as “Lords or Maisters,” but as “Deputies and Commissioners” were meant to “execute” the will of the people (CPW, 199). Thus far, Milton has implicitly argued with seventeenth-century Royalist notions of absolutism and divine right, but he has yet to clarify an expansive stance on monarchy. The poet portrays himself wary of monarchs but leaves ambiguous whether he believes *any* king can be justified.

The Tenure has been cited as a foundational document for republicanism because of how heavily it demonstrates an early populist contract theory of government in which a king is not absolutely powerful, but is instead accountable to the people who he serves. One need not read very deeply into the piece to find Milton’s explicit rejection of monarchical absolutism:

It being thus manifest that the power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what its only derivative, transferr’d and committed to them in trust from the People, to the Common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be tak’n from them, without a violation of their natural birthright. (CPW, 202)

Milton commits himself to the view that government figures, albeit kings or magistrates, have no power beyond that willed to them by their people. Such a contract theory would be especially interesting to consider in the context of *Paradise Lost’s* kingly god and his servile angels, though that discussion is more relevant to this thesis’s third chapter. More currently important, note that even in the early *Tenure*, Milton begins significantly discrediting the power of kings (not just tyrants). The passage above valuably continues to provide the poet’s definition of kingship:

and seeing that from hence *Aristotle* and the best of political writers have defin'd a King, him who governs to the good and profit of his People, and not for his own ends (*CPW*, 202)

Milton's allusion to the Aristotelian king is drawn from from *Nicomachean Ethics*, wherein Aristotle writes that the relationship "between a king and his subjects depends on an excess of benefits conferred; for he confers benefits on his subjects if being a good man he cares for them with a view to their well-being, as a shepherd does for his sheep" (VIII, xi). Defining a king as one who looks after his people is quite simplistic, but also appeals to the poet's earlier contention that societies, and their leaders, exist by the need for mutual protection. Additionally, the broad objective of merely *attending to well-being* both functions as a bare minimum and accommodates many interpretative functions, such as allowing the incorporation of liberties into the model of government. With increasing clarity in *The Tenure*, Milton reduces the purpose of both societies and kings down to one fundamental and seemingly easy charge: to *care* for their citizenry. Having experienced the wrath of Charles I, it is understandable that Milton would doubt the monarchy's ability to uphold such a simple purpose.

But what is a tyrant? Fortunately, Milton also addresses this question quite directly in *The Tenure*: "a tyrant whether by wrong or by right coming to the Crown, is he who regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction: Thus *St. Basil* among others defines him" (*CPW*, 212). Similar to his invocation of Aristotle to define kings, Milton draws upon the definition of tyrant provided by St. Basil the Great, a Christian bishop of the late-300s. In both cases, he invokes an authority of the past to motivate revolutionary thought in the present. Also similar is the simplicity of tyrannical conditions. Where a king is meant to care for his people and uphold mutually afforded well-being, a tyrant reigns against the common good

only for himself. While societies eventually arrived at the necessity that kings simply “[execute] those Lawes which they the people had themselves made, or assented to,” a tyrant disregards law and acts upon his own accord (*CPW*, 200). Interestingly, the Miltonic model of tyranny is predicated on the image of an abusive king. Neglecting to discuss the possibility of non-monarchical tyranny, the poet aims his sights directly at kings to define the tyrant, likely because in Milton’s contemporary context, monarchs are the most tangible abusers of usurped political power:

And because his power is great, his will boundless and exorbitant, the fulfilling whereof is for the most part accompanied with innumerable wrong and oppressions of the people, murders massachers, rapes, adulteries, desolation, and subversion of Citties and whole Provinces, look how great a good and happiness a just King is, so great a mischief is a Tyrant; as hee the public father of his Countrie, so this the common enemy. (*CPW*, 212).

Tyrants, afforded the absolute power of monarchy, are especially dangerous because they are capable of committing mass harm.

Beyond illuminating the dangers of tyrannical rule, the quote above is also commonly cited (i.e., Fallon 1995, 31) as one of the earliest points where Milton draws a clear distinction between kings and tyrants. The line between king and tyrant was already noticeable in each of the term’s definitions, but the passage emphasizes that Milton views a tyrant purely based on what a king is *not*. In fact, he even establishes that tyrants are “the most dangerous enemies and subverters of Monarchy” (*CPW*, 216). Recognizing the relatedness of definition among Milton’s kings and tyrants is essential to understand Milton’s perception of the two subjects together; he judges both kings and tyrants on the same criteria. In his comparative evaluations, it seems that a necessary condition for tyrannical rule is the presence of a once-was king, but, to the credit of

Fallon, the poet has yet to claim in *The Tenure* that monarchy sufficiently equals tyranny. In other words, not all kings are tyrants at this stage in Milton's thought.

With an understanding of Milton's theories of societies, contract government, kingship, and tyranny, the ground is set to develop the anti-monarchism further through *The Tenure's* justification of King Charles's killing. In fact, Milton's entire defense of regicide (or, perhaps, tyrannicide) begins with, and depends on, the contract theory:

It follows lastly, that since the King or Magistrate holds his autoritie of the people, both originally and naturally for their own good in the first place, and not his own, then may the people as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retaine him or depose him though no Tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of free born Men, to be govern'd as seems to them best. (*CPW*, 206)

Because monarchs derive their power from humans and not God, the citizens of a king are allowed to depose him at any point, so long as they collectively deem his leadership other-than-optimal. Tyrannical status seems requisite for punishment by death, but not deposition. In my reading, Milton's justification for *regicide* relies upon appeals to ancient/Christian instances of the practice (*CPW*, 216-222), the scriptures and associated counter-argumentation against Presbyterian Royalists (*CPW*, 239-241), and a contract theory of government. The poet pursues the contract theory in great depth, continuing his justification with a Presbyterian-sponsored interpretation of the scriptures:

In the year 1546. *John Knox* a most famous Divine and the reformer of *Scotland* to the Presbyterian discipline, at a general Assembly maintained op'nly...that Subjects might & ought execute Gods judgements upon thir King: that the fact of *Jehu* and others against thir King having the ground of Gods ordinary command to put such and such offenders to

death was not extraordinary, but to be imitated of all that preferr'd the honour of God to the affect of flesh and wicked Princes; that Kings, if they offend, have no privilege to be exempted from the punishments of Law more than any other subject; so that if the King be a murderer...he should suffer, not as a King, but as an offender...according to the original institution of Common-welths. (*CPW*, 223-224)

With his political opponents in mind, Milton pits against the Presbyterians the argument of one of their own esteemed leaders-in-thought, John Knox. Knox's stance references the story of Jehu who, in the Old Testament's Book of Kings, was ordered by a prophet to kill tyrannical rulers of Israel, Ahab and Jehoram, subsequently becoming the land's king. Where earlier in the text Milton justified his contract theory more abstractly through postlapsarian societal structures and welfare, he now cites biblical scriptures to prove the theory's compatibility with Presbyterian Christianity. The newly added dimension also furthers the contract structure, which now justifies not only a king's deposition, but also regicide permissible and even promoted by God. Because the "Law was set above the Magistrate," kings have "no privilege to be exempted from the punishments of Law more than any other subject" (*CPW*, 202, 224). An ordinary member of society would face grave punishment for the high crimes a tyrant commits, and because a monarch is just as human as the people who confer power upon him, he should be subject to the same laws and punishments. In the first place, the law exists as a measure to restrict monarchs from excessive exercise of power (*CPW*, 198-200).

To conclude discussion of *The Tenure*, I return to the cover page, which states that the tract will justify the killing of a "Tyrant, or *wicked KING*" (italics mine, noting the need for the adjective). There is a recurring semantic dimension to Milton's anti-monarchism prevalent in *The Tenure*, and it will continue to underlie the argumentation of the *Second Defence* and *The*

Readie and Easie Way. In a sense, Milton in these tracts is almost fighting to reclaim the term king—like his struggle for “obedience” in Chapter One—from its earthly occupiers who have so often used it as a weapon of tyranny. Millenia of kings, most of them tyrannical, have diluted the term from its true essence of goodness. Therefore, the poet so carefully distinguishes the words king and tyrant in *The Tenure*. It then follows that at the tract’s 1650 publication, Milton believes not that all kings are tyrants, but that *wicked* (or “injury-inflicting,” or “lawless,” or “murderous,” or “idolatrous”) kings are tyrants (*CPW*, 224). While he vehemently argues for the killing of only tyrants, he also posits in the republican spirit that kings are nothing but executors of their people’s will, subject to the same law as their citizenry. In doing so, he rejects divine right and absolutism, two ever-important tenets of royalist thought. At the same time, though, he observes only patriarchal goodness in the true institution of kingship. Thus, the stage is set confusingly as we witness Milton grapple with a religio-political philosophy that is at once immediately relevant and complicated by millennia of history and scriptures. As the chapter turns its attention toward the *Second Defence* and *The Readie and Easie Way*, the chief question to consider is whether the poet believes that the benevolent monarchy he has come to accept in *The Tenure* is attainable in postlapsarian reality.

II. *A Second Defence of the English People*

The *Second Defence* arises out of a continental polemical discourse between Milton and French Royalists dissenting against the English regicide. It is a sequel to the *First Defence* (1651), which Milton published in response to Frenchman Claude Saumaise’s *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I*. Following the *First Defence*, an anonymous French-English author submitted to the discourse a new tract: *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Coelum* (1652, translated: *The Cry of the Royal Blood to Heaven*). The *Clamor* builds upon arguments favoring the holiness of kingship

and its divine right, alleging that the regicide was a crime against both God and Charles I. The author directly assaults Milton by name, claiming among other insults that his blindness was an act of divine retribution for the poet's republican sympathies. The fourth installment in the continental argument, the *Second* is a defense of both its author and his liberated Commonwealth. Although it is the longest of the three prose tracts principally examined in this chapter, it contributes the least theory to Milton's anti-monarchism, since, in the tract, the poet is principally concerned with arguing practically for his and his nation's innocence and attacking the character of his opponent.

While the author of the *Clamor* published anonymously, he behind the *First* and *Second Defence* appears proudly on the cover pages: "John Milton, Englishman." The Englishman writes mindfully that just as he speaks for both himself and his nation, he is addressing an audience far greater than a single political adversary, "...I have in the *First Defence* spoken out and shall in the *Second* speak again to the entire assembly and council of all the most influential men, cities, and nations everywhere" (*CPW*, 554). Executing his lofty charge, Milton quickly directs his reader to the irony in the *Clamor* author's anonymity:

Why is it that the attack which I, in a republic, am seen to make openly against kings, you, in a kingdom, and under the patronage of kings, do not dare to make against the republic, except furtively and by stealth? ... Do you fear kings will not be able to protect you? (*CPW*, 561)

The liberties he enjoys in the republic, such as freedom of expression, are not even guaranteed to Royalists supporting the French monarchy. Referencing his belief that kings have one fundamental charge, to simply care for their people, Milton points out that not even distinguished supporters of monarchical rule feel confident in kingly protection. Additionally implicit in his

interrogative line is a critique of the tendency for kings to encroach upon personal liberties, a motif critical to *The Readie and Easie Way*'s matured argumentation.

Later in the *Second Defence*, the poet, who "had so practiced [himself] from [his] youth...unable to disregard the laws of God and man," explains exactly why he chose to enter the English political polemic (*CPW*, 622):

[After addressing issues of the Church,] I directed my attention elsewhere, asking myself whether I could in any way advance the cause of true and substantial liberty...I observed that there are, in all, three varieties...ecclesiastical liberty, domestic or personal liberty, and civil liberty, and since I had already written about the first, while I saw that the magistrates were vigorously attending to the third, I took as my province the remaining one, the second or domestic kind. (*CPW*, 624)

Milton's devotion to personal liberty first led the gifted intellectual to concern himself with political nuances such as governmental approaches to divorce, education, and freedom of expression. However, as we know, Milton did eventually address broad civil structures and liberties (first in *The Tenure*). He explains that his transition toward articulating expansive political theories of governance (i.e, anti-monarchism) was initially motivated by a distrust in Parliament to regulate the king's power, rooted in the Presbyterians' politically motivated reversal of their stance on regicide (*CPW*, 626-627). He also understood how thoroughly intertwined civil and personal liberties were, and his dwindling faith in the civil realm necessitated rebuttal to protect the personal. In essence, when Milton's conception of human purpose and its derivative personal liberties were threatened and underrepresented in government, he felt obliged to step into the political discourse. These motives provide imperative context for extrapolating and interpreting the poet's anti-monarchical theory.

However, even in *The Tenure*, Milton “did not write or advise anything concerning Charles, but demonstrated what was permissible against tyrants” (CPW, 626). Against Bryson’s notion that Milton may have been merely “writing to win,” the poet explains that the tract was meant to be a mostly abstract justification of his views, not pointed at Charles and the Stuart sympathizers directly, though still practically applicable to England’s civil struggles. In *The Tenure*, Milton defends regicide on the grounds of contract theory and natural and religious laws: citizens have both the rights to depose rulers as they please and to punish tyrants by death for the harm they commit. He warmly appreciated true kingship, and distinguished tyrants as being opposite of kings. The *Second Defence* largely builds upon these themes, though they instead appear through relatively plain argumentation.

In the *Second Defence*, Milton remains timid about arguing expansively against monarchy, also relegating *The Tenure* to an investigation of only “tyrants” (CPW, 626). Thus, the most important contribution of the *Second Defence* to this chapter’s discussion of anti-monarchism is its blatant telling of Milton’s views on the crown. Most of the political theory regarding monarchs and tyrants in *The Tenure* was deduced through close reading. However, because he is arguing to a large audience skeptical of his convictions, Milton approaches the *Second Defence* with much more targeted, explicit prose. The poet’s candid mission thoroughly pervades the tract, making it a useful tool for gauging his political theory’s development in 1654. Early in the piece, he declares that he remains not a dissenter of all kings, but only tyrants. In fact, he admires the adversarial relationship between monarchs and tyrants:

The [divine] right which I deny to kings, I would dare to deny to the end in any legitimate kingdom whatsoever. No monarch could injure me without first condemning himself by the confession that he was a tyrant. If I attack tyrants, what is this to kings, whom I am

far from classing as tyrants? As a good man differs from a bad, so much, I hold, does a king differ from a tyrant. Hence it happens that a tyrant not only is not a king but is always an especially dangerous threat to kings. And surely one who glances at the records of history will find that more kings have been crushed and overthrown by tyrants than by their people. He who asserts, therefore, that tyrants must be abolished asserts, not that kings should be abolished, but the worst enemies of kings, the most dangerous, in fact, of all their foes. (*CPW*, 561)

Milton once again commits himself to a sort of limited monarchism, denying monarchs the absolutism of divine right, but also accepting the benevolent rule of a *true king*. He also repeats the belief that so long as a monarch harms his people even once, he has “condemned himself by the confession that he was a tyrant.” It is thus irrefutable that, in line with Fallon’s position, through 1654, Milton’s anti-monarchism would be better stated as anti-tyrannism. More than just tolerating monarchs, the poet demonstrates sincere appreciation for a king’s care for his people. But there is much more nuance in Milton’s vision of kingship than Fallon gives credit for, making the tyrant-king dichotomy mistakenly rigid.

It is increasingly clear that the “king” of Milton’s favorable monarchy only exists in a theoretical context—even if the poet himself has not yet realized or articulated that truth. In a sense, the contract-theory-abiding “king” who Milton appreciates would likely not be recognized as a monarch by most of seventeenth-century Europe, let alone the poet’s Royalist counterparts. He truly is, on some fronts, fighting a war of definitions. Directly following the explicit separation of kings and tyrants which I cited in the preceding paragraph, Milton dispels from his political theory any remaining semblance of acceptance for monarchical divine and absolute authority, thus completing the denial of typical earthly kingship:

The right which you assign to kings, to wit that whatever is their pleasure is right, is not a right, but a wrong, a crime, evil itself. With a gift so poisonous, rather than benign, you yourself become the murderer of those whom you proclaim to be above all violence and danger. You identify king with tyrant, if the same right belongs to each. For if the king does not use this right of his (and he will never use it as long as he shall be the king, not tyrant) it must be ascribed, not to the king, but to the man... Should anyone use it, as often as he wishes to be king, he would cease, for that length of time, to be a good man, so often he would prove himself no king. (*CPW*, 562)

The association of divine right, “a gift so poisonous,” with “violence and danger” illustrates the base of Milton’s qualms with the right (or “wrong”). Following the Stuart abuses, Milton clearly fears the capacity of absolute monarchs to commit mass harms and encroachments upon liberties. However, he takes his apprehensions a step further in the *Second Defence*. While *The Tenure* describes tyrants essentially as kings who commit harm, his definition becomes even more sensitive, arguing that if a monarch even *employs* divine right to act in whichever way “is their pleasure,” he becomes a tyrant. Furthermore, by prescribing this right to kings in the first place, Royalists effectively destroy the kingly image they seek to uphold. Such a logic demonstrates the inherent incompatibility of Milton’s “king” with the seventeenth-century contemporary one, but also maintains that Milton still accepts some form of human monarchy—however impractical it is.

In the final pages of the *Second Defence*, the Englishman, directly addressing his liberated nation, offers his readers guidance on the preservation of liberty. He connects inward rational virtue with civil and personal liberation, “if to be a slave is hard, and you do not wish it, learn to obey right reason, to master yourselves” (*CPW*, 684). In Milton’s address, “you,” is a

fascinatingly vague subject; it likely refers to his “fellow countrymen,” however, its ambiguity carries a dual lesson on liberties (*CPW*, 680). Reason is imperative in the liberation of both the self (personal) and the nation (civil). For the individual:

just as to be free is precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just, and temperate, careful of one’s property, aloof from others, and thus finally to be magnanimous and brave, so to be the opposite to these qualities is the same as to be a slave. (*CPW*, 684)¹²

In populist fashion, Milton’s liberated nation coheres through its citizens’ demeanors:

And by the customary judgement, and so to speak, just retaliation of God, it happens that a nation which cannot rule and govern itself, but has delivered itself into slavery to its own lusts, is enslaved also to other masters whom it does not choose, and serves not only voluntarily but also against its will. Such is the decree of law and of nature herself, that he who cannot control himself, who through poverty of intellect or madness cannot properly administer his own affairs, should not be his own master, but like a ward be given over to the power of another. (*CPW*, 684)

No matter the context, to be liberated is to observe the virtues of rational obedience: temperance, piety, etc. It is thus natural that when a nation loses control of its virtues, it becomes enslaved to its own lack of control. Toward the topic of the *Second Defence*, then, to abandon reason is to submit to unvirtuous slavery embodied in the tyranny of absolute monarchy. In fact, the seventeenth-century royal court itself resembled so few of the virtues Milton’s rational theology emphasizes. Its extravagant ceremonies were far from temperate, demands of reasonless “obedience” far from pious, levying of absolute power far from just, and treatment of its citizenry far from magnanimous. Just as Milton himself led his country to liberation with the

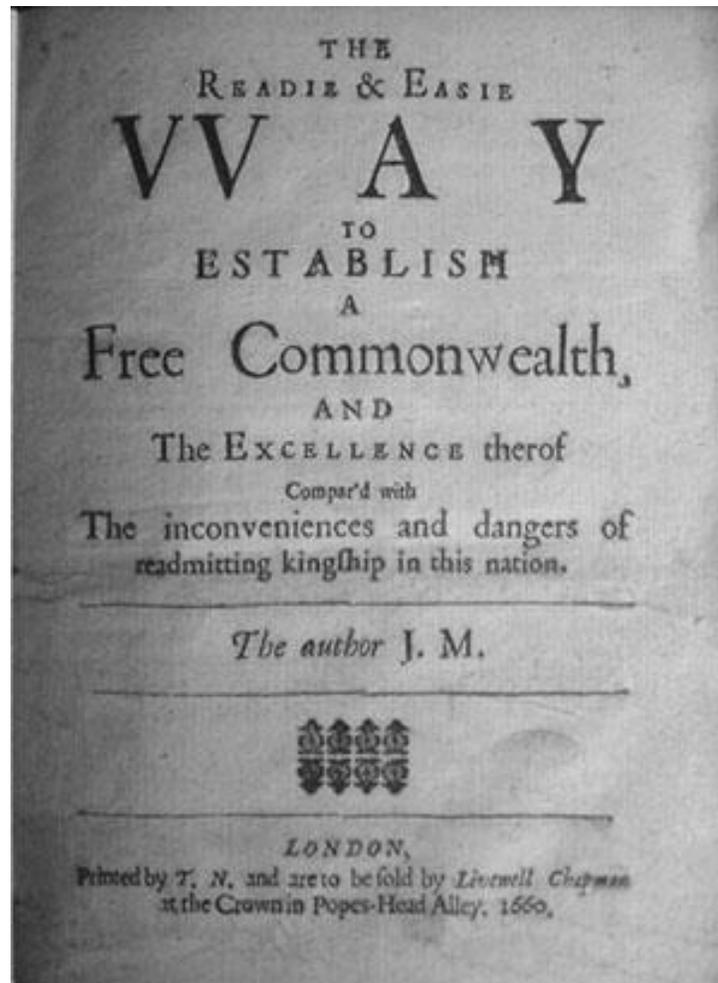
¹² Milton’s notion of slavery here refers to political slavery, not the labor-associated slavery we are contemporarily familiar with.

sword of his intellect, every citizen is charged with remaining rationally virtuous to protect their self and their nation from the dangers of political slavery. Though he has yet to unequivocally deny kingship, Milton's rhetoric in the *Second Defence* continues an arc from *The Tenure* that is accelerating towards the truth that Milton's "king" is no earthly king at all, and Milton's liberated nation is a republican society where personal liberty enables collective reasoning, inherently shielding citizens from the danger of enslavement under an absolute ruler.

III. *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*

By the time Milton publishes the second edition of *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660), Charles II—the son of Charles I—is en route to England, where he will reclaim the throne following Parliament's restoration of monarchy. The treatise is a last-ditch attempt by “*the author J.M.*” to dissuade his countrymen from their yearn for monarchy following the parliamentary republic's collapse. He critiques the institution of kingship for its incessant tendency to violate liberties, proposes his own *Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, invokes scriptural examples similar to the British's folly of Restoration, and finally concedes that his written commitment to the “*good Old Cause*” will likely fall upon deaf ears (or irrational minds) at this stage in the movement (CPW, 462). *The Readie and Easie Way* presents an anti-monarchism far from *The Tenure*'s. While the poet was uneasy to denounce kingship wholly in the earlier prose, his final political tract—published courageously in the face of grave and probable retribution from Charles II—is expansively intolerable of monarchy. Milton's complete distrust of monarchy as a form of human government pervades the tract down to its semantics; for the first time, he uses the terms “king” and “tyrant” essentially interchangeably. The title page below exemplifies well the newfound certainty in the poet's anti-monarchism. Eleven years apart, *The Tenure* presents itself against the “tyrant, or wicked

KING,” while the *Readie and Easie Way* strokes broadly concerning “the inconveniences and dangers of...kingship.”¹³



At this stage, Milton’s thoughts reflect the insights of his involvement in the Civil Wars and the failed Protectorate. These include the evils of tyrannical kingship, the Protectorate’s successes and failures, the persistent human urge for figure-headed government seen through Cromwell, and the equally persistent tendency towards corruption of fallen, absolutely authorized beings. His rhetoric has over time rotated around two liberties—civil and personal—and he cannot imagine a society where these two are not intertwined. Personal liberty is

¹³ Quotes selected from the title pages of each tract.

necessary for the performance of the poet's theology, but it thrives most when produced, protected, and promoted by civil liberty. Concerning the "inconveniences and dangers" of kingship, the *Readie and Easie Way* considers once and for all whether monarchical governments can support these liberties.

The piece promptly settles its chief consideration with an opening page quoting the Rump Parliament's March 1649 resolution to abolish monarchy, citing kingship, or "regal bondage," as "a government unnecessary, burdensom and dangerous" (*CPW*, 409). Invoking the Bible once again, Milton exposes the pathetic nature of England's historical commitment to kings, "...concerning him with no difference between a king and a god...as *Job* did to the Almightye, *to trust in him, though he slays us*" (*CPW*, 411).¹⁴ How, Milton asks, could the English be so blind to the previous aggressions of their monarchs? Juxtaposing kings with God, he gestures to a precursor of his now-full anti-monarchism: tensions between monarchical and Christian obedience. These demands to obey are competing and contradictory—one resting upon conscious reason and the other simple compliance, "...we could not serve two contrary masters, God and the king, or the king and that more supreme law, sworn in the first place to maintain, or safety and libertie" (*CPW*, 411). Note that Milton places not the tyrant, but the king, at polar odds with God. He shuns the monarchy's holy image, leaving no room for Christians to serve a king on earth while maintaining the "best part of [their] libertie, which is [their] religion" (*CPW*, 420).

Continuing the thread of incompatibility between monarchy and Christianity, Milton borrows from the Bible to argue that the premise of a king's supremacy over his people is sacrilegious:

¹⁴ See also Job 13:15, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust him."

God in much displeasure gave a king to the *Israelites*, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one: but *Christ* apparently forbids his disciples to admitt of any such heathenish government: *the kings of the gentiles*, saith he, *exercise lordship over them*; and they that *exercise authoritie upon them*, are call'd benefactors but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth. (CPW, 424)

The poet goes so far as to call monarchy a “heathenish” government, specifically citing the words of Christ against submitting to monarchical power. Such a motif—that no human has the right to exercise supreme authority over another—later appears generously in *Paradise Lost*. Furthermore, quite topical in 1660 England’s circumstances, he contends it a sin in its own right to wish oneself into the “snares” of regal servitude (CPW, 420). After discrediting monarchy, Milton mobilizes its unholy inequality to motivate his favored form of government:

And what government coms neerer to this precept of Christ, then a free Commonwealth; wherein they who are greatest, are perpetual servants and drudges to the public...not elevated above thir brethren; live soberly in their families, walk the streets as other men, may be spoken to freely, familiarly, without adoration. (CPW, 425)

Furnished with the Miltonic contract theory articulated more than a decade before *The Readie and Easie Way*’s publication, Milton’s imagined free Commonwealth imports Christ’s model of the “chief...that serveth” rather than a king who “exercises lordship...[and] authority.” Reflected in their title, government *servants* in the Commonwealth hold no special privilege beyond that of defending and promoting their citizens’ liberty. Additionally, Milton’s servant embodies no excess, contrasted with a king “who must be ador’d like a Demigod, with a dissolute and haughtie court about him, of vast expence and luxurie, masks and revels, to the debaushing of

our prime gentry” (*CPW*, 425). “Demigod” is a fitting, though undeservedly exalting, characterization of earthly kings, who claim absolute authority and divine right, mimicking and usurping God’s position for their own benefit. In their pursuit of godly status, kings stray away from God. For instance, tending to their fetishization of supremacy, they sustain a “haughtie court” representing the antithesis of temperance.

Milton furthers his argument towards the anti-Christian position of kingship by attacking the human condition of kings themselves:

I cannot but yet further admire on the other side, how any man who hath the true principles of justice and religion in him, can presume or take upon him to be a king and lord over his brethren...how can he display with such vanitie and ostentation his regal splendor so supereminently above other mortal men; or being a christian, can assume such extraordinarie honour and worship to himself. (*CPW*, 429)

The poet struggles to comprehend how any rational Christian could in the first place aspire to such a point of supremacy. Thus, he implies that monarchs are either irrational committers of mass harm, and therefore something besides Christian, or purposely and knowingly acting unjustly (an even worse form of non-Christian). Thus, he leaves no space for a human to at once be a king and adhere to Christianity.

It would be unwise to continue my analysis without noting the deep charge within Milton’s use of the term “worship.” Just as rational obedience is the essence of authentic Christian worship under Milton’s theology, fraudulent obedience is the image of monarchical worship. Kings do not serve, they are worshiped—which humans do not deserve. However, the fundamental truth behind Milton’s religio-politics is that only one being (and his sole progeny) deserves to be a monarch—to be worshiped. They, God and his Son, are the leaders of the

“kingdom of Christ our common King and Lord” (CPW, 429). Anyone else who attempts to rule over that kingdom, whether by claiming divine right or some other form of dangerous supremacy, practices “*gentilish imitations*” (CPW, 429).

Through his direct appeals to the scriptures, Milton emerges a strong opponent to monarchical government on the grounds that it is incompatible with religion. Implicit in that position is a resentment for monarchy’s limitation of the mind and personal liberties which enable rational Christian worship. Continuing a thread begun in *The Second Defence*, however, *The Readie and Easie Way* also presents many explicit anti-Royalist appeals to the free mind. For instance:

if we returne to Kingship, and soon repent, as undoubtedly we shall, when we begin to find the olde encroachments coming on by little and little upon our consciences, which must necessarily proceed from king and bishop united inseparably in one interest, we may be forc’d perhaps to fight over again [for]...the recoverie of our freedom (CPW, 423)

It is imperative to recall that by the time he wrote *The Readie and Easie Way*, Milton had, evidently in his corpus, been philosophizing on human freedom and equality for several decades. This chapter has drawn up Milton’s political theoretical trajectory by finding consistent threads of thought in what at first appear to be inconsistent works. Over time, Milton continually builds new dimensions into increasingly nuanced positions, all resting upon decades-old foundational epistemology and theology.

I have thus articulated the most explicit, fully developed form of Milton’s anti-monarchism, which hinges significantly on the contrast between earth and heaven—a point of exploration in the thesis’s next chapter concerning *Paradise Lost*’s heavenly monarch. By the time Milton’s tenure in government has finished and the Protectorate has failed, he has arrived at

the conclusion that the line between king and tyrant certainly exists, but is plainly too thin to be observed by imperfect, fallen humans (*CPW*, 449-450). He is confident that a human monarch is the “natural adversary and oppressor of libertie, though good yet far easier corruptible by the excess of his singular power and exaltation” (*CPW*, 449). He still maintains that kings are benevolent figures, but is faithless in humans to execute the charges of the complex government demanded by his understandings of religion and human nature. The only true monarchs, he concludes, are God and the Son. It only makes sense, then, that this thesis will transition to analyzing those two figures in their monarchical states of *Paradise Lost*.

CHAPTER III: THE POLITICS OF *PARADISE LOST*

Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,
 For regal sceptre then no more shall need,
 God shall be All in All.

- *Paradise Lost*, 3.339-341

Paradise Lost is an excitingly puzzling poem. An extensive critical discourse has, over the centuries, attempted to comprehend the theodicy's vivid portrayal of the Fall and its associated happenings. Particularly pertinent to my thesis is a challenging inquiry: how do we reconcile images of kingship in the prose with those of *Paradise Lost*? To be candid, that question is impossible to answer conclusively—as are so many of those concerning *Paradise Lost*. The epic's nature forces scholars into a vast abyss of assumptions, giving way to so many interpretive structures. I will address below the assumption most critical to this chapter's investigation.

Should we assume that *Paradise Lost* expresses the views of its poet? Relative to the prose, it is significantly more challenging to decide whether the story and messages of *Paradise Lost* are Milton's. Scholars generally tend to assume that the poet reflects his views through the poem, however, this only leads to debate as to *how* they are reflected. Among many others, Robert Fallon, William Empson, and Michael Bryson contribute three credible though contrasting arguments.¹⁵ My reading finds Milton the theodicean explaining his conceptions of not only the “ways of God to men,” but also of the ways of *humans to each other* (1.26).

¹⁵ I owe a distinguished acknowledgement to the late William Empson for *Milton's God*, his radical, well-informed book on *Paradise Lost*. In crafting my own views of the epic's politics, I have engaged heavily with his. He presents a position quite opposite to mine, but I would first and foremost advise his book to any of my readers who leave this chapter with an unsatiated curiosity about the conflicts and questions of *Paradise Lost*.

Through his own telling of the Book of Genesis, Milton addresses many of the same dilemmas which preoccupied him in the prose; it is as if the *poet* is writing to inform the *polemicist's* arguments with the utmost defense: the Christian origin story. I thus take the poem to be a natural continuation and justification of the anti-monarchism expressed in the prose, though Milton is much more tactful and nuanced in his political theory's presentation. Given *The Readie and Easie Way's* fully evolved notion that the only true kings are God and the Son, it follows that the two are monarchs in *Paradise Lost*, and interpreting them through Chapter Two's lens of monarchy yields important insights into what a king is, and how he acts.

In the scheme of Milton's political development, *Paradise Lost* is the final demonstration of his anti-monarchism. By examining the true kingship of God and the Son, then, this chapter will both challenge and advance the preceding one's argument. This is not to say that I present a conclusive political interpretation of *Paradise Lost*; rather, I simply hope to address a selection of passages which complicate or support this thesis's notion of Milton's anti-monarchism.

I. *The Son's Birthright*

Despite Milton's arguments directly against divine right and hereditary transfer of rule, the Heaven's Monarch bestows kingship upon his Son. This fact pattern initially seems contradictory with the prose's conception that magistrates ought to be chosen meritocratically. However portraying the Son as a king is a deeply rooted Christian tradition which the epic interprets through Miltonic politics. In fact, echoing notions of meritocracy from *The Tenure* and virtuous leadership from *The Readie and Easie Way*, the Son only becomes a king after demonstrating his virtue by volunteering to be incarnated and sacrificed to redeem humans of their original sin:

Because thou hast, though throned in highest bliss

Equal to God, and equally enjoying
 God-like fruition, quitted all to save
 A world from utter loss, and hast been found
 By merit more than birthright Son of God,
 Found worthiest to be so by being good,
 Far more than great or high; because in thee
 Love hath abounded more than glory abounds,
 Therefore thy humiliation shall exalt
 With thy manhood also to this throne;
 Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign
 Both God and man, Son both of God and man,
 Anointed universal King (3.305-317)

The Son becomes a king “by merit more than birthright.” Under the circumstances, “merit” refers to both the Son’s virtue of relinquishing his position “throned in highest bliss,” and his moral character, in which “love hath abounded more than glory abounds.” In fact, Milton previously alluded to the Son’s virtuous merit in *The Reddie and Easie Way*, “...our true and rightful and only to be expected King, *only worthie as he is our only Saviour*, the Messiah, the Christ” (CPW, 445; emphasis mine). The Son’s embodiment of benevolent kingship is strikingly similar to images and definitions of it in the prose. He leads out of voluntary, loving sacrifice, motivated not nearly by his own gain, but only the interests of those he serves. To earn his coronation, the Son demonstrates through choice the drastic lengths he is willing to take in order to execute the simple charge of caring for his citizenry, first portrayed by Milton in *The Tenure*. God, who is clearly wary of birthright, recognizes the Son’s virtuous servanthship and confers

kingship upon him accordingly. In theory, then, any of the ethereal bodies could have been appointed God's joint king—but none were as virtuously caring as the Son, who volunteered himself accountable for man's transgressions when the rest of "the Heav'nly choir stood mute" (III.217).¹⁶

Now is a fitting moment to note that Milton's political views are somewhat sublimated in *Paradise Lost*, as the poem was published following his near political execution upon the English Restoration. Especially in the first several books, which Milton expected censors to read most diligently, anti-monarchical expressions are mostly enshrouded in minutiae. One such example is the subtle juxtaposition of love with glory in the passage cited above, "in thee / love hath abounded more than glory abounds." The prose discussed in Chapter Two often found Milton criticizing human kings for their pursuit of personal glory over paternal care. Milton's true king, the Son, exhibits none of the corrupted motives which tyrant-monarchs fall to, and instead serves through love.

II. *Satan, the Republican King*

A great challenge of *Paradise Lost* is that Satan often makes the most convincing arguments; readers are often justifiably confused when the devil is the most agreeable character. At times, it even seems that Satan relates the most to Milton out of the epic's cast. For instance, when convincing Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, Satan articulates exactly Milton's epistemology

¹⁶ To the cautious reader, it warrants skepticism to whom the Son volunteers his service: the Father or humanity? However, in his announcement of self-sacrifice (3.227-265), the Son mentions the Father only twice. The first is quite inconsequential, and the second comes at the end of the speech, when he states that he hopes to return to heaven long after facing death to "see [the Father's] face, wherein no cloud / Of anger shall remain" (3.262-263). Yes, the Son hopes to relieve his father through his sacrifice. However, his truer motivation is stated earlier, "Account me man; I *for his sake* will leave / ... / ...and *for him* lastly die" (3.238-340, emphases mine). The narrator acknowledges the Son's motivation, too, in the description of post-speech silence, which "breathed immortal love / To mortal men" (3.276-277).

of knowing good through sin. Referring to God's prohibition of fruit from the "Tree / Of Knowledge, knowledge of both good and evil," the Serpent's speech reads as if it could have been written in *Areopagitica*:

For good unknown, sure is not had, or had
 And yet unknown, is not had at all.
 In plain then, what forbids he but to know,
 Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise? (9.751-759)

Book IX is not the first moment wherein Satan motivates a proposition of substantial sin with Miltonic reasoning. Conveniently for this chapter's purpose, Book V features Satan expressing Milton's republican, anti-monarchical political theory to rally fellow angels in rebellion to God's rule, after God has "beg[a]t" the Son (5.603). God had instructed the angels to bow and sing in the new being's presence, treating the Son as they do his Father. Meeting in confidence—if confidence exists in the kingdom of an omniscient ruler—Satan encourages the other angels to rebel with a provoking question, "But what if better counsels might erect / Our minds and teach us to cast off this yoke?" (5.785-786). From the outset of his speech, Satan already seems to have read the anti-monarchical tracts from Chapter Two as he bases his persuasion on the mind and its "counsels" of reason. Developing his case, the defective angel invokes the connection between choice, freedom, liberty, and laws:

know yourselves
 Natives and sons of Heav'n possessed before
 By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
 Equally free; for orders and degrees
 Jar not with liberty, but well consist. (5.789-793)

Similarly to Milton's assertions of human freedom (e.g., *Areopagitica* and *The Tenure*), Satan presupposes that God created angels equally with free will, thus necessitating choice.

Additionally, combining freedom, consciousness, and choice yields liberties meant to be respected and promoted by laws, or "orders and degrees." In *The Tenure*, Milton places the magistrate below bodies of law meant to be the foremost reflectors and protectors of human liberties. Later, *The Readie and Easie Way* positions human kings as the natural oppressors of liberty. Continuing to borrow from Milton, Satan precisely appropriates these arguments to motivate rebellion:

Who can in reason then or right assume
 Monarchy over such as live by right
 His equals, if in power and splendour less,
 In freedom equal? or can introduce
 Law and edict on us, who without law
 Err not, much less for this to be our Lord,
 And look for adoration to th' abuse
 Of those imperial titles which assert
 Our being ordained to govern, not to serve (5.794-802)

Just as the poet takes monarchy to be irrational and anti-Christian in *The Readie and Easie Way*, Satan finds it *unreasonable* for one to assume kingship over his equals.¹⁷ Relying on the purpose of societies and governments set forth in *The Tenure*—to protect against interpersonal harm caused by fallen human mistakes—he argues that there is no justification for God to govern his angels, "who without law / Err not." The final tenet of his position rests in the Monarch's ironic

¹⁷ Satan's supposition that the angels are equal with the Son and Father is questionable. After all, God created the angels, who do bow to him and the Son.

demand for a “haughtie court” to appreciate “th’ abuse” he exerts upon ethereal bodies whose spiritual exaltation afforded an ordinance “to govern, not to serve.”¹⁸ Satan thus concludes his republican argument with the most consistent notion in Milton’s politics: rather than *ruling*, true leaders *serve* through a contract theory of government. They place themselves not above the law, but below it, on equal footing with—or below—their people.

Satan clearly expresses politics markedly similar to Milton’s, but why would the poet choose to author himself into the theodicy through the devil? In answering this question, I present two key understandings. The first acknowledges that Milton was the chief propagandist for the Parliamentarians, and his politics were thus essentially those of the English Civil War’s anti-Royalist movement. In turn, Satan articulates a theory attributable to a broader body of political actors—not just Milton; the devil could represent Milton, or any other republican proponent of the Protectorate. Second, both generally and in Milton’s theology, action is the ultimate demonstration of demeanor and intent, rather than speech. And while Satan *seems* to incite a republican rebellion, the truth is that he unfaithfully appropriates the republican cause for his own gain. Intent is in implementation. He attempts to facilitate democratic government of Hell in Book II, but increasingly accumulates power throughout the epic, ultimately deciding the fallen angels’ fate himself. Satan’s usurping begins with shadily influencing the democratic process by feeding Beelzebub ideas to argue as his own when the devils are deciding their course after arriving in Hell. By the end of the epic, Satan is mostly referred to as a king, and the characters of Hell’s earlier democratic council are fully absent from both decision-making and

¹⁸ For more on Satan’s (and Milton’s) view of the “haughtie court,” see also *The Radies and Easie Way*’s account of kings, “who must be ador’d like a Demigod, with a dissolute and haughtie court about him, of vast expence and luxurie, masks and revels, to the debaushing of our prime gentry” (*CPW*, 425).

the epic as a whole. In essence, Satan fled God's rule out of republican sentiment, only to form his own kingdom disregarding the rebellion's cause.

Satan's trajectory as the leader of a violent, ideologically motivated, ultimately failing republican rebellion against monarchy appears eerily similar to that of Oliver Cromwell. Over his tenure as Lord Protector, Cromwell continually amassed power, which was only finally relinquished upon his death. Already dissatisfied with Cromwell's tendency toward absolute power (though still far from it), many original Parliamentarians became skeptical of the Protectorate's future when Richard Cromwell succeeded his father. Milton and his sympathizers may have struggled for the "*good Old Cause*," but something of kingship's sort once again consumed Great Britain—whether by the rule of the Cromwell Lords Protector or the Stuart kings (*CPW*, 462).

Even *if* Satan was rightly motivated at his rebellion's outset, he fell victim to the same faults (i.e., greed) as fallen humans who necessarily become tyrants when tempted with excessive political authority. While heaven's kings rule out of love, Satan's rational rebellion turns into a quest for sinful revenge with "the grisly king" at its head (4.819). Tempting Eve into the Fall, Satan acts not out of care for the Hell-dwelling compatriots he is meant to serve, but of jealous hatred for heaven and still-innocent humanity. In some senses, Satan serves as Milton's reminder to humanity that the pitfalls of tyranny are not limited to monarchical causes; the republican argument, too, can be both misappropriated and poorly executed towards tyranny.

III. God's Kingship, and Monarchy in General

Paradise Lost's God is a puzzling character. Milton's acceptance of God and Christ as kings in *The Redie and Easie Way* alleviates some interpretive struggle, but making sense of him remains challenging because he is not an especially charismatic character. I hope to briefly

demonstrate that while his personality may be at times dislikable, *Paradise Lost's* God is a just and benevolent king who respects his citizenry.

In Chapter One, I allude to the quintessential conflict of the Fall both generally and in *Paradise Lost*: if Adam and Eve were unable to execute rational decision making due to their involuntary ignorance of sin, why would God hold them accountable for their fall? The fact that God punishes Adam and Eve for their transgression initially may lend itself to a sort of tyrannism, wherein God's retribution is motivated by self-assurance of authority. However, I do not find this to be the case. Instead, I advocate for an understanding of God's actions motivated by justice and accountability in the context of the *felix culpa* Milton aims to construct.

I begin with justice. God's conception of justice is rather conventional: when a rule is broken, the prescribed punishment is delivered. In the Fall's case, God provided that if Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they and their progeny would be punished by death. As God shares humankind's future with the Son in Book III, he begins by explaining that though he is omnipotent, he respects the freedom of the ethereal and human beings by only exercising omniscience:

They therefore as to right belonged,
 So were created, nor can justly accuse
 Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
 As if predestination overruled
 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,

Which had no less provided certain unforeknown. (3.111-119)

To be absolved from responsibility for the angelic and human falls, God must first establish that the beings have a freely willed agency which he declines to interfere with. That is exactly what he articulates in the lines above. Although he is the creator, he does not practice predestination, instead leaving humans and angels to choose their own future. Recall from Chapter One: God is fundamentally motivated against predestination so as to allow beings to meaningfully reflect their character through rational, freely willed obedience. Such a structure of obedient worship furnishes efficacy in both human performance and divine reception. Thus, distanced from obsession with absolutism, God demands a more complex, human-empowering obedience than the earthly monarch. The prelapsarian command to merely “not eat the fruit” is the most straightforward, elementary prescription God provides in *Paradise Lost*. Once the capacity for reason has been unlocked, Milton’s God prescribes much more ambiguous laws which necessitate the fully informed function of reason, such as temperance, or “the rule of not too much” (11.531).

Essentially, God demands rational obedience, and restrains himself to omniscience to preserve the authenticity of that demand. Thus, he is well-positioned to exercise justice and accountability, which he elaborates upon in his explanation of the Fall:

I formed them free, and free they must remain,
 Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
 Their nature, and revoke the high decree
 Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
 Their freedom; they themselves ordained their Fall.
 The first sort by their own suggestion fell,

Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls deceived
 By the other first: man therefore shall find grace;
 The other none: in mercy and justice both,
 Through Heav'n and earth, so shall my glory excel,
 But mercy first and last shall brightest shine (3.124-134)

The deity suggests that if he were to prevent his creations from falling, he would “revoke the high decree” of their freedom, thus crossing a line towards omnipotence which he refuses to. These are the grounds for his allowing of the Fall. Even so, it remains that God subjected Adam and Eve to a prescription they were unable to rationally respond to, leading to their Fall. The poem never directly answers this conflict, but it does provide evidence that God is aware of the situation’s unfairness, and he adjusts his model of justice accordingly.¹⁹ In his explanation, God alludes to a key distinction for the application of justice to fallen angels and humans. The ethereal former fell “self-tempted, self-depraved,” whereas humanity “falls deceived by the other first.” Milton’s God therefore distinguishes two categories of sin: self-created and externally influenced. To God, Satan’s fall is more deplorable than Eve’s because Satan was self-motivated,

¹⁹ I should note that God need not act *fairly* to act *justly*. Put simply, “...‘justice’ denotes conduct that is morally required, whereas “fairness” denotes an evaluative judgment as to whether this conduct is morally praiseworthy” (Goldman and Cropanzano 2014). If God sets a moral principle (i.e., eating the fruit is bad and thereby punishable by death) and merely enforces it, he acts justly. It is another question whether he acts fairly in enforcing that. I may perhaps argue that God acts partially fairly by adjusting his punishment to account for humanity’s ignorance, but the general premise of punishing a person for something they are not wholly accountable for does not seem morally praiseworthy. Then again, it could be considered morally praiseworthy in the context of the *felix culpa* since God uses the Fall as a tool to unlock the mind’s rational potential. God certainly seems interested in morality beyond justice. This question, like so many others in this chapter, is very much worth contemplating but easily descends into inconclusive tautology.

while Eve fell to the deception of another. Self-sin implies a defective conscience—an infected nature.

God punishes the fallen angels and humans according to the distinction between self-induced and externally influenced sin. Accordingly, he follows a rigid model of justice about devils, offering them no path to salvation. The humans, however, receive the generous sacrifice of the Son, who satisfies justice's call for death. "Die he or Justice must..." says God, "...unless for him / Some other able, and as willing, pay / The rigid satisfaction, death for death" (3.210-212). God acknowledges the "rigid satisfaction" justice demands, but does not stop there. Beyond the duty of justice, he offers a workaround so that humans, redeemed, can "stand / on even grounds against [their] mortal foe" (3.178-179).²⁰ It is important to note that God acts far beyond the duty of justice in providing the opportunity for humanity to survive the Fall and once again stand upright. Contemporarily, we might say that God acts *fairly*, but he himself calls it "mercy." God leaves his speech with a striking exaltation of mercy above glory, "...so shall my glory excel, / But mercy first and last shall brightest shine" (3.133-134). Just as the Son's coronation highlighted love more than glory, God's actions do excel his glory but cardinally illuminate his merciful nature. I need not deliberate too heavily on this in the vein of Milton's anti-monarchism; the thread is quite obvious: how often would monarchs such as the Stuarts advance mercy ahead of glory?

At this point, some might be tempted to ask why God relies so heavily on justice—to the point that it forces him to act somewhat unfairly in punishing Adam and Eve. Why must the

²⁰ In Chapter I, I asked why, in the first place, God demands obedient service. While the question is not fully answered in *Paradise Lost*, God provides the beginnings of a notion that humans are indebted to God for his merciful provision of a second chance: "By me [(God)] upheld, that he may know how frail / His fall'n condition is, and to me owe / All his deliverance, and to none but me" (3.180-183).

omnipotent, supposedly merciful and benevolent deity adhere to “The rigid satisfaction, death for death?” The answer joins two precepts of Milton’s theology already established in this thesis: divine restraint to omniscience and the epistemology of good by evil. First, and foremost, God must maintain that he will not interfere with his creatures’ free will. Second, adhering to justice means setting a precedent that *sin is bad*. Adam and Eve have no notion of what “death” means before the Fall, let alone an understanding of how the abstraction of sin functions. God essentially sets an example by enforcing the rules of his universe: *sinning is bad, and if you do it, I will not use my powers to completely bail you out*. Once again, we have arrived at Milton’s *felix culpa*. In Chapter One, if Adam and Eve did not Fall, humans would never unlock the potential of reason. Furthermore, if Adam and Eve *did* fall but God did not punish them, reason would still be inhibited. In both scenarios, with reason limited, humanity would lack the faculties to truly serve. God finds a middle ground in the *felix culpa* wherein justice is satisfied, humanity lives, and humans gain an understanding of sin necessary for rational obedience.

I have spent this subsection analyzing God’s just treatment of the Fall so deeply with the hope that it would inform Milton’s decision to make God a king after writing a decade of anti-monarchical prose. The Fall’s unfairness is arguably God’s worst association to the end that it places his benevolent, merciful rule in question, but Milton does not seem materially bothered by it in the poem. He stays true to his belief that kings rule in the best interest of their kingdom, constructing God’s governance around that definition.

To conclude the discussion of monarchy in *Paradise Lost*, I gesture to the theodicy’s most overtly anti-monarchical moment, buried in Book XII where censors would have stopped reading. As Michael relays to Adam selections of future human history, the angel arrives at the rise of monarchy in earth’s first king, Nimrod:

till one shall rise
 Of proud ambitious heart, who not content
 With fair equality, fraternal state,
 Will arrogate dominion undeserved
 Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
 Concord and law of Nature from the earth,
 Hunting (and men not beasts shall be his game)
 With war and hostile snare such as refuse
 Subjection to his empire tyrannous (12.24-32)

Michael's articulation provides a beautifully succinct view of Milton's finally developed anti-monarchical political theory from Chapter Two. As Nimrod takes office, his "ambitious heart" inherently ambitions to faulty ends as he commands from an "underserved post" breaking the natural, Christian law of "fair equality." Over time, he is forced into tyranny to maintain power, "hunting" those who refuse subjection.

Based on the above, it seems that Michael attended Satan's book club meeting about *The Redie and Easie Way*, and Adam's response portrays that he did too:

O execrable son so to aspire
 Above his brethren, to himself assuming
 Authority usurped, from God not giv'n:
 He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
 Dominion absolute; that right we hold
 By his donation; but man over men
 He made not lord; such title to himself

Reserving, human left from human free. (12.64-71)

Adam agrees with Michael's evaluation of kingship and builds into it a Miltonic denial of divine right. Nimrod usurped his authority in imitation of God, who gave no human dominion over the divine kingdom. Invoking *The Tenure*, Adam acknowledges that humans are supreme only to lesser creatures of God's empire, eloquently concluding with the distinction that "man over men / He made not lord:" "human left from human free." Adam and Michael together articulate Milton's final anti-monarchism: no human can rightly aspire to kingship over his equals.

This chapter has ventured into the highly ambiguous universe of *Paradise Lost* with hopes of finding political meaning to supplement Milton's anti-monarchism extrapolated in Chapter Two. I reiterate that I do not mean to portray any interpretations in this chapter as conclusive—none of the questions posed herein can be answered conclusively.

The political treatises analyzed in the preceding chapter concern themselves almost wholly with the ways of humans to each other: how should fallen humans govern themselves? The theodicy of this chapter tackles that aim, but more importantly, also addresses "the ways of God to men" (1.26). Milton, therefore, has more leeway for theoretical originalism in the prose than the epic, since certain events and circumstances *must* be present in the poet's telling of Genesis. The Son must be exalted. Lucifer and his rebels must fall. Eve must be tempted into eating the fruit. Adam and Eve must be punished. The Son must be incarnated and sacrificed to redeem man. It is simply up to Milton to place them in a context sensible to him and his theology. He does so artfully and, I think, faithfully to the anti-monarchism laid in Chapter Two, which rests upon the interwoven theories of religion and knowledge of Chapter One.

Paradise Lost is the great culmination of Milton's lifelong intellectual development, and reading it as such uniquely illuminates both the poem and the works that precede it.

CONCLUSION

For therein stands the office of a king,
 His honour, virtue, merit, and chief praise,
 That for the public all this weight he bears.
 Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
 Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king—
 Which every wise and virtuous man attains;
 And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
 Cities of men, or headstrong multitudes,
 Subject himself to anarchy within,
 Or lawless passions in him, which he serves.

- *Paradise Regained* (1671), 2.463-472

At a recent lecture, Dr. Joseph Moshenska relayed an interesting thought that “when you read Milton’s works, you get the sense that he is trying to *do something to you*.”²¹ Milton’s life was an endless dialogue between philosophy and practice. He thought, and thought, and thought, until he was ready to write those thoughts into reality. By writing, he meant to challenge his reader away from passivity, into the same incessant philosophizing which consumed and motivated him; to the poet, the best-lived life was the conscious one. Of course, it is obvious that Milton wants us to agree with him—especially in the prose—though only if we have arrived at the answers ourselves. For, according to Milton’s epistemology, a thought irrationally formed is no authentic thought at all.

²¹ The lecture was delivered virtually on February 14, 2022, in Professor Michael Schoenfeldt’s course, *English 469: Milton*, at the University of Michigan. Moshenska spoke of his forthcoming biography, *Making Darkness Light: A Life of John Milton*.

The beautiful part of Milton's corpus, too, is that he thinks along with the reader through his authorial presence. In *Lycidas*, we join the young poet in pensive grief as we consider the cruelty of young death. Once again in *Comus*, we together seek an understanding of virtue's practice in the face of temptation: an investigation of temperance, a struggle defining reformed Christian worship. *Paradise Lost* presents Milton juggling ancient history, contemporary reality, biblical scriptures, his own theology, and more—all while attempting to explain *everything* in one story. Each of the prose tracts presents its own well-developed argument, wherein the polemicist expectedly seems much less contemplative than the earlier poet. But taking an expansive view of the treatises, as my thesis does, once again allows us to follow Milton's developing thoughts. At once, we observe not only what Milton himself believed, but also what contemplations he hoped we would consider, and which answers he hoped we would find sensible. Both of those elements continually evolved upon each other.

In his political tracts, Milton fires on all cylinders of his humanist studies—from classical mythology to biblical studies—to urge the English toward a better way of governance and life. Even in *Paradise Lost*, his most experimental work, Milton writes to provoke his reader along a confusing, introspective journey. The contemporary issues Milton's treatises addressed decades before *Paradise Lost*'s publication find their way into the epic in creative, thought-provoking ways. All of this is to say that the poet's philosophical development which I examined in relation to his anti-monarchism was certainly not limited to political theory. Each of his works build into one another, just as his thoughts did. With this notion in mind, the three chapters of this thesis together demonstrate that by allowing Milton's anti-monarchical political theory the leeway to develop over time, what initially appear to be theoretical inconsistencies become building blocks.

In its effort to develop a model of Milton's anti-monarchism coherent throughout his lifetime, this thesis begins with an explication of the poet's theology, centering around rational obedience and the epistemology of knowing "good by evil" (CPW, 514). As my first chapter finds, Milton so valued reason because, through its exercise, humans could meaningfully demonstrate their character to God through *action*. The transition from Chapter One to Chapter Two—from apolitical theology to political theory—reflects the way Milton himself developed. His early stages as a polemicist mostly concern religion and related topics; he does not criticize the monarchy in writing until 1649's *The Tenure*, the first of three tracts examined in my second and most substantial chapter. *The Tenure* maintains a tight separation between kingship and tyranny, though the poet seems generally unsure of his political theory. Shining boldly through *The Tenure*, however, is a confident denial of divine right in favor of a revolutionary contract theory of government. These two tenets find themselves at the core of his anti-monarchism throughout the eleven years of prose studied in Chapter Two, as well as *Paradise Lost*. With his ideological base settled, Milton's anti-Royalist argument becomes increasingly nuanced over the decade as he gradually realizes that a human can never successfully fulfill the duties of a king. In the mid-1650's, he extrapolates three liberties (ecclesiastical, personal, and civil) from his worldview and theology, finding kingship to be a government unfit to defend the civil one.

The 1660 publication of *The Readie and Easie Way* illustrates the mistaken binary between kingship and tyranny which Chapter Two is predicated on. The tract clearly demonstrates that if one does not analyze *The Tenure* and the *Second Defence* with Milton's intellectual development towards *The Readie and Easie Way* in mind, he appears at once anti-monarchical and a Royalist. However, the second chapter concludes with the Miltonic king's separation from humanity: God and Christ are the only true kings, and any other "monarch" is a

usurping imitator. In fact, *The Readie and Easie Way* holds true to *The Tenure*, where Milton defined kings as those who care for their people, and tyrants as the opposite. It is simply that when he wrote the first of the two, he was unsure if a human could execute that charge, and when he wrote the last, he knew that the fallen state of humanity rendered kingship a necessarily “heathenish” government. Chapter Three builds upon the evolution of thought articulated here with selected analyses of *Paradise Lost*’s political moments. It finds non-birthright justification for Christ’s elevation to kingship, a kingly Satan misappropriating republican arguments toward tyrannical governance, and benevolent justice in God’s rule.

This thesis concerns itself with a rather ambitious goal. However, the difficulties associated with developing a coherent model of John Milton’s political theory present opportunities, not impediments, for scholarly discourse. My thesis engages principally with R. Fallon, Bryson, and Empson, but many captivated my research from the vast score of Miltonists who have attempted to answer the same questions as I. Considering my contribution to the scholarship, I am satisfied that this thesis provides an account of Milton’s developing political theory which I could not find fully articulated in any one body of work. My survey covers the length of 1635 to 1667, encompassing the most active years of Milton’s writing career. Forward looking, I hope that my model of the poet’s political theory will be built upon, and its weaknesses addressed. Particularly, my thesis has explained *how* Milton’s theory develops—the progression of his thoughts, demonstrated through his corpus—but has not conjectured *why* his mind changed. Worthy of an entire thesis itself, contextualizing this developmental model biographically and historically could secure the theoretical building blocks further.

EPILOGUE

“They define a republic to be a government of laws, and not of men.”

- John Adams, *Novanglus* No. 7

As I write the final words of this thesis, I am reminded that many of the perennial human questions and problems Milton faced nearly four centuries ago remain relevant today. In the United States of America—the foremost manifestation of republican, anti-monarchical government—the political process still falls victim to the same corruptions which Milton’s politics refuted, though they are dressed differently. For instance, while radically more democratic, the President of the United States is a figurehead just as the seventeenth-century English king was. An eerie motif of public idolatry has followed the Office of the President for centuries, wherein faith is often placed not in the President's representative service, but mere demographic sympathies such as partisanship. While Milton’s works directly concerned monarchy, they address the irrational, un-ideological politics of idolization just as poignantly. As Milton would argue, our best government is one vested in representative, collective, rational decision-making. In essence, Milton wrote not of monarchy, freedom of the press, education, divorce, or church government. He wrote to apply epistemology, theology, morality, and other humanities to society. Accordingly, the lessons of Milton’s writing are timeless.

I gesture to the example of the Presidential figurehead not to criticize American politics, which are markedly efficient. Rather, it is a reminder that no matter how far society seems to progress, further advancement is always possible. And the best way forward is sometimes found behind us.

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