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"HIS TYRANNY WHO REIGNS": THE BIBLICAL ROOTS OF DIVINE KINGSHIP AND MILTON'S REJECTION OF "HEAVN'S KING"

Michael Bryson

Kingdom and magistracy, whether supreme or subordinate, is without difference called "a human ordinance."

John Milton, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*

I. MILTON AND HIS CRITICS

READING MILTON'S POETRY and prose side by side raises profound questions that tend to recur. Why does John Milton, the anti-monarchical rebel who in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* defends before all of Europe the beheading of Charles I, subsequently choose to portray God as a king in *Paradise Lost*? Why does the man who declares by way of condemnation in *Eikonoklastes* that monarchy was founded by Nimrod, "the first that hunted after Faction" (YP 3:466), seem to confound his own position by later depicting the Father as an unabashed monarch?¹ One prominent answer to questions of this nature has been that Milton (the political thinker) rejects Charles's earthly kingship while Milton (the orthodox Christian) simultaneously accepts—even embraces—God's heavenly kingship.

Tensions between Milton's representations of heavenly and earthly kingship, however, are not so much purged as *highlighted* by the strenuous and often contorted arguments put forth to reconcile Milton's parallel portrayals of Charles I and the heavenly king. One such argument insists that there is no parallel whatsoever, or, at the very least, that those who find such a parallel are not to be taken seriously; Joan Bennett, in *Reviving Liberty*, insists that finding such a parallel is "Romantic." According to Bennett, "Romantic attempts to link his God with Charles I as monarchs and Satan with Cromwell and Milton as revolutionaries are widely considered to have been mistaken," a statement that seems to imply that the widely held or widely rejected nature of an idea somehow constitutes evidence of the truth or falsity of the idea itself.²

Another well-known and influential reaction is that of Stevie Davies, who, in *Images of Kingship in "Paradise Lost,"* offers a curious description of

Milton and his project: "England's defender of the regicide, whose epic concerns a rebellion against the monarchy of Heaven together with a defense of that monarchy."³ To resolve apparent opposition between the political Milton and the theological Milton, and to answer the question of why Milton would impute to his poetic Father the very royal image that he found so repugnant in nonpoetic "real life," Davies elaborates upon a distinction between "oriental" and "feudal" monarchies. The final implication of her arguments is that Satan's monarchy, depicted in terms of "oriental" despotism, is tyrannical, whereas the Father's "western" monarchy is ideal.

Robert Fallon takes a slightly different approach. He suggests that Milton actually has no problem with kingship at all. What Milton does detest, according to Fallon, is the Stuart monarchy. Fallon argues from the fact that Milton had nothing to say about "Philip IV of Spain, Louis XIV of France, John IV of Portugal, Charles X of Sweden, and Frederick III of Denmark," not to mention other absolute rulers with whose regimes Milton would have had at least a passing familiarity in his role as Latin secretary. Somewhat surprisingly, given the evidence of Milton's prose writings, Fallon maintains that "Milton did not reject *all* kings but reserved his condemnation for those who used their power tyrannically." In support of his contention, Fallon declares that the evidence of Milton's prose is "questionable" as a basis for evaluating his attitudes toward monarchy.⁴

In evaluating the evidence of Milton's prose, I believe that it is of the utmost importance to keep in mind that Milton is writing to win. His prose is a competitive instrument, and as such it may seem to present inconsistent views of Milton's theological and political attitudes, especially on the matter of kingship. Reuben Sanchez reminds us that Milton's prose involved shifting self-presentational strategies: "Milton's self-presentation varies from prose tract to prose tract because of the type of argument he makes and the type of persona he creates for the better persuasiveness of that argument. The persona and decorum [and, I would add, the emphasis] of a given tract, therefore, are particular aspects of Milton's response to an immediate occasion."⁵ Milton's persona, decorum, and rhetorical emphasis are in some sense the equivalent of battle strategies or game plans; individual elements of Milton's overall belief system are subordinated to the goal of winning whatever argument in which he is involved. The tepid—and somewhat embarrassing—defense of Jero-boam in *A Defence of the People of England* is an excellent example of how Milton, in the pursuit of victory, will make a move that would, in a less immediately agonistic circumstance, be repellent to him. Thus, I think it is problematic at best to focus, as Fallon does, on Milton's flattering of Queen Christina in *A Second Defence*, a strategy Milton pursues in an attempt to advertise and consolidate what he considered to be his triumph over Salmasius.

Quoting from *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Fallon suggests that Milton approves of "just" kings; however, when Milton says, "look how great a good and happiness a just King is, so great a mischeife is a Tyrant" (YP 3:212), this statement is offered in the polemical context of a crisis-ridden nation deposing, and executing, a single unjust king. In and of itself, this passage is not an argument for or against *kingship*; Milton's consistency is not so easily undermined.⁶ By the time Milton pens the above-quoted phrase from *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, he has already outlined a teleology by which he makes clear his opinion that kingship is a regrettable consequence of the Fall. The rare individual may be a "just" king; but kingship itself is a curse.

In support of his suggestion that Milton rejected only such kings as failed to steer clear of despotism, Fallon, like Davies, suggests that the kingship of heaven is a kind of Platonic archetype, a transcendent reality of monarchy (for which Milton secretly pined) of which earthly kingships are pale and presumptuous imitations:

The Kingdom of Heaven had to be seen as the most splendid imaginable with all the institutions of royal rule carried out to their most dazzling extremes, its subjects more numerous, their praise more exalted, their obedience more unswerving, their knees more willingly bent, and their devotion more profound than any earthly monarch could possibly command. . . . in showing how God rules, [Milton] drew a picture of government truly sublime and warned temporal rulers not to reach for it.⁷

Heaven could not possibly be more oppressive, wearying, and grindingly contemptuous of its vassals than could the Stuart monarchy—except in the formulation that Fallon here suggests is Milton's own.

Painting heaven as an impossibly glorious monarchy is the move of a closet (or open) royalist, a move more befitting Robert Filmer and Thomas Hobbes than Milton. G. Wilson Knight (though he would have argued that Milton's heaven was a model for human monarchy to imitate, rather than a model intended to shame human monarchy out of existence) constructed much this kind of royalist Milton in the service of arguments designed, in part, as a professorial rallying cry in the British war effort against Hitler. Knight argued that Milton was a defender of constitutional monarchy, claimed that Milton's attitude, even during the Republican years, was "sympathetic to the idea of royalty," and resorted to an argument similar to that of Robert Fallon: Milton said nothing derogatory about numerous monarchs and had praise for Queen Christina of Sweden.⁸ Though Milton writes to Christina that he has not "uttered a word against kings, but only against tyrants" (YP 4:604), it should not be forgotten that Milton is writing here less out of principle than out of polemical purpose, writing both to consolidate and extend the rhetori-

cal victory over Salmasius achieved with the earlier *Defence of the People of England*.

The odd thing about a monarchical picture of heaven, wedded as it is to a larger claim that Milton opposed only bad or tyrannical monarchies, is that a heaven in which "all the institutions of royal rule [are] carried out to their most dazzling extremes" is a heaven worse than the Stuart monarchy, not better. The fawning and scraping, bowing and continual praise singing of such a heaven is not something "truly sublime," but something oppressive, frightening, and deplorable. In *Paradise Lost*, none of the characters who live (or lived) under heaven's monarchy denies its oppressive nature. When Satan characterizes heaven as a place of cringing and servile adoration, significantly, the unfallen angels *do not disagree*. When Satan accuses Gabriel of having "practis'd distances to cringe" in heaven, Gabriel responds with a taunt of his own: "who more than thou / Once fawn'd and cring'd and servilely adore'd / Heav'n's awful Monarch?" (*Paradise Lost* 4.945, 958-60). Empson has characterized this taunt as evidence of "a very unattractive Heaven," one in which wincing, flinching, and genuflecting have become so ingrained in their angelic (and demonic) practitioners that those who are sycophantic point accusing fingers at the obsequious.⁹

Milton's description in *The Ready and Easy Way* of the fawning and cringing that take place in the court of a human king is of a piece with the angelic and demonic descriptions of heaven in *Paradise Lost*: "a king must be ador'd like a Demigod, with a dissolute and haughtie court about him . . . to pageant himself up and down in progress *among the perpetual bowings and cringings of an abject people*" (YP 7:425-26; emphasis added). How Milton could possibly have imagined that by using "the very practices that he deplored in temporal monarchy" he would be able to "create a King of Heaven so glorious and a court so splendid that it put his idolatrous imitators to shame"¹⁰ is a point none of the aforementioned critics adequately addresses. There is something almost Gnostic about such a view of Milton's purposes, something that goes far beyond Milton's own paradigmatic epistemology of knowing good by knowing evil, and which enters the territory of imagining good by exaggerating the known terms of evil. By this logic, God is simply an impossibly powerful Charles I.

Nevertheless, Fallon has identified something important here: Milton's poetic God is an impossibly powerful tyrannical figure. However, Milton is not creating such an image of God in order to put "idolatrous imitators to shame," but to express his contempt for idolatry itself. Idolatry is worship of an image, the confusion of a representation with that which is represented, and for Milton the image of God as a wildly exaggerated temporal monarch would be one neither to be worshipped, nor to be admired, nor revered. I

believe that Milton offers the monarchical image as an object of contempt, not an object of reverence.

I must emphasize, however, that the Father whom Milton presents in *Paradise Lost* should not be perceived as identical to the Father described in *De Doctrina Christiana*.¹¹ In writing *Paradise Lost*, or any work in which the figure of God appears, Milton works with images and conceptions of God that may not always be used in an attempt to try to define what God is. I contend, in fact, that Milton's image of the Father in *Paradise Lost* is an attempt to portray what God is not. I think we must be extremely cautious about assuming that Milton's poetic representations of the Father are intended to be synonymous with whatever concept or concepts Milton identifies elsewhere with the word "God." The God of Milton's theology is not identical to the Father in Milton's poetry. Each is merely an image, a way of imagining God. Imagining God has been one of the central difficulties of Christianity since the Gnostics. When they posited the creator of the physical world as evil, the Gnostics were arguing that this god was, for all intents and purposes, actually the devil.¹² However, despite the assiduous labors of such church fathers as Hyppolytus, Tertullian, and Augustine, Gnostic doubts about the Christian God have resolutely refused to be dispelled throughout the ages. The Gnostic image of an evil god has not died; as late as the nineteenth century, Gnostic images continued to appear. William Blake's demiurgic creations Urizen and Nobodaddy manifest the continuing poetic energy and the historical staying power of the idea of divine evil. But the Gnostics accused the creator of the physical world, not to defame, but to defend another image of God. When they argued that the creator is a dark and evil demiurge, the Gnostics were trying to account for the existence of evil in the world while simultaneously placing the blame for that evil on something or someone other than the supreme divinity. The Gnostic move is familiar enough: credit for all good is given to the supreme God, and blame for all evil is placed on a "devil."

The real question, then, that separates the "Orthodox" from the "Gnostic" is not, "Is God good?" but "How is God to be imagined so that his goodness is made obvious?" For both Gnostic and Orthodox early Christians, the goodness of the supreme God was simply assumed. What was at issue was not God's goodness, but the way in which that supreme God was to be imagined. The Orthodox, who clung to the idea that physical creation was good, imagined God as the creator of the physical universe. The Gnostic, who regarded flesh and the physical creation as evil, imagined God as a being higher than the demiurge who created the imperfect earth and the sinful human condition. Each group imagined the other's god as evil; each group believed the other's god to be, in actuality, a devil. But each group also

imagined its own god in terms it perceived as good. In essence, each group invented its own arguments to prove that "God" is not the devil.

John Milton was not a Gnostic. For him, certainly, physical creation was not evil. But like the Gnostics, Milton rejected the god imagined by many of his contemporaries. In a discussion of predestination, Milton rejects the way that some imagine the deity: "There are some people, however, who... assert that God is, in himself, the cause and author of sin.... If I should attempt to refute them, it would be like inventing a long argument to prove that God is not the Devil" (YP 6:166). In *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Milton invents a long argument to prove that God is not the devil. Milton creates a separate god—the moral equivalent of the Gnostics' creator god—in order to reject not physical creation, but monarchy. Kings and kingship; a "heathenish government" given to the people of God as a punishment and, according to Milton, absolutely forbidden to Christians by Christ himself, the institution of monarchy came to be for Milton what the physical was to the Gnostics—a result of evil and the invention of the devil. To imagine God as a king was, for Milton, to imagine God as if he *were* the devil.

Milton's greater and lesser epics are an indictment and rejection of a God imagined in terms of military and monarchical power. For Milton, God is not the devil, but in being conceived in terms of human kingship and the all-too-human desires for power and glory, God has been scandalously and blasphemously imagined in such a way as to be nearly indistinguishable from the devil. Milton pounds this point home by making the Father in *Paradise Lost* his sublime artistic rendering of the execrable tendency to conceive of God in satanic terms. The Father is not Milton's illustration of how God is, but Milton's scathing critique of how, all too often, God is imagined. Similarly, Milton's "long argument to prove that God is not the Devil" does not address what God is, but how God is imagined. Milton writes to reimagine God.

In his prose, Milton departs from ancient—and not-so-ancient—authorities in outlining a teleology by which it becomes clear that monarchy is inherently corrupt.¹³ For Milton, the superiority of monarchy to other forms of government is not self-evident (as it was for the classical and medieval writers), and monarchy is the result of the degradation and deterioration of mankind set in motion by the Fall. Milton increasingly comes to emphasize, both in his prose and his poetry, that the real perversion is not the existence of kings (good or bad), but of kingship itself. The fact that Milton has no particular criticism of monarchs from Spain, France, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, or other countries outside of England is irrelevant. For Milton, England is the country that really and truly matters in a way that none of these other nations can possibly matter.¹⁴

Quite simply, for Milton, England is—or has the opportunity to be—the

new chosen nation of God, the new Israel.¹⁵ In *Areopagitica*, Milton makes his notion of England's special status abundantly clear: God reveals truth "first to his English-men" (YP 2:553), and England is "a City of refuge" (YP 2:553), a "mansion house of liberty" (YP 2:554), and "a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies" (YP 2:554). England, for Milton, had been chosen by God as a special possession, a light to the rest of the world.¹⁶ Abject cringing and fawning servility in the face of the challenges of freedom rendered Milton's countrymen incapable of living up to the rigors of such an ideal, and the dying cries of liberty in Milton's *Ready and Easy Way* attest to this miserable failure of God's "English-men." But during the time in which Milton is writing such antimonarchical tracts as *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *Eikonoklastes*, and *A Defence of the People of England*, the failure of England has not yet become evident, and Milton has, as yet, no reason to abandon his optimistic view of the English as the newly chosen people of God.

Milton is neither isolated nor particularly radical in adopting the view that England is the modern version of Israel, a new special possession of God. Millenarianism, a movement that had been gaining strength in England since the fifteenth century, had reached a fevered pitch by the 1640s, and Milton is merely the best-remembered and most eloquent spokesman for a spiritual mood that had swept through the time and place in which he lived. Writing in *Areopagitica* that the nation of England was "chos'n before any other, that out of her as out of *Sion* should be proclam'd and sounded forth die first tidings and trumpet of Reformation" (YP 2:552), Milton identifies England with Israel in a manner similar to contemporaries such as Arise Evans, John Reeve, and Lodowick Muggleton (men to the right and to the left of Milton both politically and theologically). In Milton's day, such hopes fed into phenomena as various as the Leveller fight against enclosures of land (echoing the Israelite provision of the Jubilee year, in which lands and properties were returned to their original owners), the Fifth Monarchists' belief that a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ was imminent, and the Diggers' claim that the poor should be able to cultivate common land (based, in part, on the Israelite provision of gleaning—picking up grain fallen on the ground in the normal course of the harvest).

Regardless, however, of the extent to which Milton's millenarianism is a shared phenomenon among his contemporaries, by the time Milton likens England to Israel, it seems no longer possible to fathom either how Milton could regard heavenly kingship as "a picture of government truly sublime,"¹⁷ or how Milton could himself go on to pen anything other than a wholesale rejection of kingship as a foreign imposition. Christopher Hill has argued that the popular myth of the Norman Yoke posited an originally democratic and nonmonarchical constitution as die native English model of society and gov-

ernment. According to this line of reasoning, monarchy was imposed by the invading Normans in 1066, and thus monarchy is an alien institution, and overturning the Stuart monarchy throws off the chains of a foreign tyranny.¹⁸ I do not believe that Milton would refuse such a notion—especially since it appears in his antimonarchical tracts and his *History of Britain*—nor do I believe that Milton could have failed to see the analogy between the myth of the Norman Yoke, with its narrative of kingship as a foreign innovation and imposition, and the biblical narratives of the eventual fall of the Israelites from a commonwealth into kingship "in the manner of all the nations." Davies's suggestion that feudal kingship would have been not only acceptable, but also beautiful, in the eyes of the Milton who writes *Paradise Lost* cannot be reconciled with a view of England as the new Israel. Fallon's contention that because Milton did not specifically reject foreign kings, therefore Milton did not reject kingship also cannot stand up to the test administered by Milton's equation of England with Israel. England should not have kings because Israel was not to have kings.

Kings were given to Israel as a punishment, not as a blessing. Furthermore, the fact that the nations surrounding Israel had kings was a sign of their alienation and estrangement from God; the fact that Moab had a king was—or should have been—irrelevant to Israel. God's rejection of kingship in Israel was a rejection of *kingship*. Similarly, Milton's condemnation of kings and kingship in England is tantamount to a censure of kingship everywhere. Like Moab, such European nations as Spain, France, and Portugal are alienated and estranged from God. There would be no point in condemning the sins of nations already rejected by God.

I suggest, by way of contrast to the readings of Davies, Fallon, and Bennett, that the pervasive and historically problematic images of divine kingship in *Paradise Lost* may be reconciled with Milton's increasingly emphatic opposition to the institution of monarchy by viewing kingship itself through a historical lens different from the perspectives offered by the above-mentioned critics—one demonstrably near and dear to Milton himself. The earliest portions of the Hebrew Bible (those portions least "corrupted" in Milton's eyes¹⁹) reveal that the roots of heavenly kingship are no less "oriental"—and therefore, in the terms of Daviess analysis, no more "despotic"—than are the roots of the satanic monarchy so vividly realized in *Paradise Lost*. Early biblical narratives, in fact, offer ample evidence that conceiving of God in monarchical terms is a human custom, one that according to the Bible originated not with the people of the "true" God, but with those peoples who worshipped the "false" gods of the nations. Specifically because Milton makes a point of using biblical precedents (validated by his "internal scripture of the Holy Spirit" [YP 6:587]) to overthrow human

"custom" in practically every argument he ever makes, it seems not only possible, but obvious, that he could and would employ the same tactic in the service of a complete poetic rejection of kingship.

II. THE SCRIPTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF GOD AS KING

In writing about both heavenly and earthly realms, I believe that Milton's encyclopedic biblical knowledge leads him ultimately to a position more consistent—and more radical, both theologically and politically—than the partial or tepid condemnations of monarchy commonly ascribed to him by modern interpreters. Milton's passions and positions are never halfhearted; what Milton looses on earth, he looses in heaven. Ultimately, drawing from a rich and complex palette of biblical history and political radicalism, Milton in *Paradise Lost* paints God as a king, not in order to provide a perfect model of the monarchy he abhors, but instead to subject the human custom of comingling the sacred and the profane—divinity and monarchy—to a devastating critique.

Milton is, of course, at least as aware as any of his Bible-reading contemporaries that kingship began in rebellion. In fact, his proficiency in the original languages of the Bible likely makes him more acutely aware of the original biblical nature of kingship than his more limited, theologically and politically jingoistic contemporaries. Milton maintains that for the public interpretation of Scripture, "[t]he requisites are linguistic ability, knowledge of the original sources, consideration of the overall intent" (YP 6:582); as a result of his own ability, knowledge, and consideration, Milton could have been only too aware that the first appearance of the word *mamlakah* (or "kingdom") in the Hebrew scriptures is not in reference to Yahweh, but to Nimrod, "a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Genesis 10:9), whose "kingdom was Babel" (Gen. 10:10).²⁰ In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton notes this verse explicitly, calling Nimrod "the first that founded Monarchy" (YP 3:466) and later referring to him as "the first King," while noting that "*the beginning of his Kingdom was Babel*" (YP 3:598). Let us be clear about what Milton does *not* say here; he does not say that Nimrod is die first pale imitator of "a King of Heaven so glorious and a court so splendid that it put his idolatrous imitators to shame." Milton does not say that Nimrod is the first that founded human monarchy as an imitation of divine monarchy. Milton does not say that Nimrod got out of bed one morning to declare that "to him shall bow / All knees" (PL 5.607-8) on earth because God had long ago made a similar demand in heaven, and Nimrod thought he himself might like to be the object of that knee-crooking servitude. Milton does not qualify the simple statement that Nimrod was "the first that founded monarchy" except by

preceding it with the phrase, "reputed by ancient Tradition" (YP 3:466). However, in this instance the firm biblical support for the characterization of Nimrod as a monarch puts Milton's often uncertain relationship to tradition and authority to rest. He does not contest traditions opinion of Nimrod, which agrees with the Bible's opinion, and with his own opinion. Milton's thorough awareness of the biblical background leads inexorably to a series of realizations: first, that kingship is a foreign ("heathenish") invention that walks hand-in-hand with tyranny;²² second, that the title *melekh* or "king" is not applied to Yahweh in the Hebrew scriptures until after the kingship of Nimrod; third, that the concept of God as a king comes from human customs of kingship; and fourth, that the model of kingship therefore flows from Man to God, not from God to Man.

The essentially foreign nature of kingship (considered from the points of view outlined in the earliest biblical narratives) is illustrated by a consideration of other Near Middle East deities. The Ammonite deity Molech is a king. El Elyon—the deity of city dwellers like Melchizedek, the king of Salem who invokes him—is conceived of in Syro-Palestinian mythology as a king. The roots of kingship are, in fact, bound up with the roots of cities themselves; Nimrod, the tyrant who as the first biblical king is described by Milton as "first that hunted after faction," was also a builder of multiple cities: Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Ninevah, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen.

In direct contrast to the city-dwelling worshipers of monarchical gods, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwell in tents, each living as "a stranger and a sojourner" (Gen. 23:4) in the land of Canaan, each worshipping a god specifically not conceived in terms of kingship. Significantly, though Adam names everything with which God presents him (Gen. 1:19, 2:20), he does not use the title *melekh* or "King" in reference to God himself. God is not yet conceived in terms of kingship at this early stage of biblical narrative; throughout Genesis, it is only humans, and specifically humans not in the service of Yahweh, who make use of the term *melekh*. It is not until after the years of Egyptian captivity that Yahweh comes to be referred to as a king. Exodus 15:18 declares that Yahweh "shall reign [*malak*] forever." In the years between Joseph and Moses, something fundamental has changed in the way Yahweh is imagined.

Baruch Halpern explains how this imaginative change may likely have come about. Halpern maintains that Yahweh becomes "king" by delivering the Israelites from Egypt: "In return for a promise of fealty, he [Yahweh] vows to liberate the Israelites from Egypt *and* to settle them in a fruitful land."²³ Halpern suggests a parallel between Yahweh and Marduk in the way each deity achieves the rank of king: though the stories take place on different levels—Marduk's in the assembly of the Annunaki (the collected gods),

and Yahweh's in the human realm of Egypt and Canaan—the parallels are striking: "the suzerain contracts to rescue the assembly; he . . . demonstrates his capacity by some sign or test; and he is enthroned on a permanent basis."²⁴ Both Marduk and Yahweh win their respective kingships by successfully playing the role of Divine Warrior: Marduk's victory is over Tiamat, while Yahweh's is over the pharaoh of Egypt.

It is through this role as Divine Warrior that Yahweh's kingship is established and eventually made "universal." According to Halpern, "such poems as Judges 5:9-13, Deuteronomy 33:2-5, Exodus j.5, and Psalm 44:1-5 . . . make use of the myth of the Divine Warrior in their imagery," and such use follows a typical pattern: Yahweh "rescued Israel from its foes, as the Divine Warrior rescued the world from Chaos; therefore [Yahweh] has gained kingship over Israel, as the Divine Warrior earned dominion over the cosmos."²⁵

Yahweh's "kingship" emerges during the critical interval between Joseph and Moses; because the God of Israel is a successful Divine Warrior, rescuing Israel from its enemies, he is acclaimed as king, not only of Israel, but also of all the earth. Psalm 47 is a striking example of this pattern of divine acclamation: "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (1-3).

The Divine Warrior pattern, however, is (like kingship itself) a foreign import. Marduk is the god of Nimrod, not the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Though the biblical account of the "spirit of God" moving across the surface of the waters, the *Tehom* of Genesis 1, retains mythic echoes of the epic struggle between Marduk and Tiamat (a goddess whose name is associated in the *Enuma Elish* with the saltwaters of the ocean), it has been almost completely "nativized" in a way that the elevation of the one-time Bedouin deity to universal kingship cannot be.²⁶

Kingship, then, begins as an adoption of the ways of foreign nations, nations not in the service of Yahweh. Yahweh's promises to Abraham at Genesis 17:1-6 that "kings [*melekh*] shall come out of thee," along with his later promises to Jacob that kings shall descend from him (at Genesis 35:11, 12, and 36:9, 15-43), acknowledge that many of the descendants of these men (Ishmael, for example) will not be among the chosen people. Yahweh's promises are also a reflection of the thoroughly "Canaanized" monarchical regimes of David and the later kings of the northern and southern kingdoms under whom the Hebrew scriptures were written and compiled. Kingship remains a sign of the corrupting influence of living among nations not in the service of Yahweh. The provision of kingship at Deuteronomy 17:14-20 is not a recommendation from God that the Israelites adopt a king; rather, it is

an after-the-fact justification for kingship during the reign of Josiah (c. 640-609 B.C.E.).

Violence, decay, and the corrupting influence on God's people of living among the nations are nowhere more outstandingly illustrated in the Bible than in the Book of Judges, the last three chapters of which are almost a straight "propaganda piece" for kingship. Possibly written sometime during the reign of the Judean king Josiah, Judges ends with the simple statement, "In those days, there was no king in Israel." This nearly constant refrain in the latter half of Judges lays all corruption and disorder at the feet of the failure of the Judges-period Israelites to adopt the monarchical hierarchies of the surrounding nations.

The urge to centralize is already present in the narrative, however, before this refrain appears. In Judges 8:22-23, Gideon refuses the offer of kingship over Israel, both for himself and for his sons. In refusing kingship for himself, Gideon says to the people, "I will not rule [*mashal*] over you, the Lord will rule [*mashal*] over you." Gideon's son, Abimelech—whose name means "my father is king"—did briefly attempt to reign as a king (and his name suggests that perhaps Gideon had second thoughts about the people's offer). In this early portion of the Judges narrative, a refusal of kingship is considered virtuous, a sign of a healthy and ongoing relationship with Yahweh, the true God. Even here, however, the influence of the surrounding nations with their human and divine kings can be seen taking root in Israelite soil. The primary "king" is now Yahweh. The image of God has already become corrupted, becoming like the images of deity held by the surrounding nations, and this is the first step toward the eventual adoption of human monarchy "like all the nations."

Despite Gideon's refusal of a crown, the Israelites will not be put off permanently in their quest for a centralized, king-based system of governance. 1 Samuel 8 recounts the demand of the elders of Israel that a king rule over them after the manner of the surrounding nations. Samuel tries to tell them that this is not such a good idea, listing a virtual catalog of monarchical abuses that will inevitably follow: the king will take the sons of the people to serve as charioteers and warriors; he will take the daughters of the people to serve as bakers and housekeepers; the king will take the best lands for himself and will tax the produce of all remaining lands. Still, the people insist on having a human king. After telling Samuel that the Israelites have not rejected Samuel but the Lord God himself, Yahweh tells Samuel to grant the request of the people. Thus Saul is anointed as the first king of Israel. Saul is set on his throne by a wrathful God who uses this first Israelite monarch to punish a people who had demanded a king.

With Israel's shift from a commonwealth (what Milton refers to in *Ten-*

ure of Kings and Magistrates as God's "own ancient government" [YP 3:236]) to human kingship, the practice of imagining Yahweh as a king becomes permanently entrenched. The prominence of this image of Yahweh as a king is, in fact, one of the most notable features of the Psalms. The Psalmist prays to "my King, and my God" at 5:2. Yahweh is the "Lord of hosts ... the King of glory" at 24:10, and "sitteth King for ever" at 29:10. He is "Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God" at 84:3. His "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" at 145:i3-

Nor is God dethroned by the rise of early Christianity. In fact, the image of God as king in the Greek scriptures deepens and extends the pattern seen in the preceding Hebrew examples. 1 Timothy 1:17 proclaims *God basilei ton aionon*, or "king eternal." Conceiving of the Christian God *as forever* a king places him squarely alongside such king-gods as Marduk (declared king of the gods in the *Enuma Elish* prior to his defeat of Tiamat and his creation of Man), and Molech (the king-god of the Ammonites). Matthew 5:35, which describes heaven as the throne of God, refers to Jerusalem as the city of the great king (*basileus*). The adoption of the early Canaanite imagery (specifically the imagery of Molech and Nimrod as kings) and the association with Nimrod as a founder and ruler of cities are now complete. Yahweh (as well as the Christian "Father" based thereon) as king is in fact a portrait drawn from the "oriental" models of Molech, Marduk, and Nimrod.

Arguments from recent scholarship, however, are vulnerable to the charge that Milton's contemporaries—and perhaps Milton himself—read the Bible as a unified text presenting a coherent and reliable chronology of sacred history. Such readers would naturally be unaware of modern theories that assert the influence of Near Middle East cultures on the text of the Bible, regarding Deuteronomy's provision of kingship as an expression of Yahweh's will. Two points can be raised in response to this charge. First, such a reading puts Yahweh at cross-purposes with himself—apparently establishing kingship under Moses, quietly eliminating it at some unspecified later point, then reestablishing it as a punishment during the latter days of Samuel—a situation that in and of itself seems to undermine any assertion of unity or coherence in the text. Second, and more important, the argument that Milton and his contemporaries read the Bible as a unified or coherent text is, at best, problematic. As Regina Schwartz writes, "[Milton] makes distinctions between the authority of an external and internal scripture. Furthermore he takes authority away from the external scripture altogether to confer it on the internal scripture." Schwartz makes this observation in the midst of a complex argument that has Milton using the Bible to authorize his own positions while at the same time using his positions to authorize the Bible. In essence, Milton is involved in a continual exchange of authority with the text

he at once rejects and refines. As Schwartz argues, "Because Milton authorizes the Bible, the Bible in turn authorizes Milton."²⁷

Christopher Hill has done valuable work in demonstrating that a view of the Bible as a unified and coherent text was far from universally held among Milton's contemporaries. Gerrard Winstanley, for example, "accepted that the text of the Bible was uncertain" and "rejected much Biblical history in favor of allegorical interpretations." Winstanley also traced kingship and monarchical power to Cain's killing of Abel and characterized "Kingly government" as "the government of highwaymen."²⁸ Moreover, in Milton's day, antimonarchical sentiment held that kingship was a corrupt innovation introduced by those who had rejected the standards of the true God. Hill gives as an example of this attitude a "near-Digger pamphlet"²⁹ of 1649, which argues that "the rise of dukes was from wicked Esau,"³⁰ the brother who rejected his birthright and became the founder of the Edomite people.

III. HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY KINGSHIP IN MILTON'S PROSE
 For Milton, who writes in *De Doctrina Christiana* that "God is always described or outlined not as he really is but in such a way as will make him conceivable to us" (YP 6:133), the changing portrait of God throughout the Scriptures would not represent a change in God as he is, but rather a change—and a change decidedly for the worse—in the character of God's people, who clamor for a human king "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). In *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton specifically argues that the Israelites' demand for a king reflects a generalized "oriental" tendency toward slavery: "the people of Asia, and with them the Jews also, especially since the time they chose a King against the advice and counsel of God, are noted by wise Authors much inclinable to slavery" (YP 3:202-3). After lumping in Israel with the other "people of Asia," Milton goes on to characterize the giving of a king to Israel as a punishment out of God's wrath: "God was heretofore angry with the Jews who rejected him and his forme of Government to choose a king" (YP 3:236). Milton makes his contempt for the Israelites' choice clear in *Eikonoklastes* when he refers to "those foolish *Israelites*, who depos'd God and *Samuel* to set up a King" (YP 3:580). It is unsurprising that this same Milton finds grounds to refer to Englishmen who demand a king as "a race of Idiots" (YP 3:542).

Milton seems to have followed a course of development that starts in the early 1640s with acceptance of kingship as the form of government most likely to be friendly to reformation of the English church, that progresses into the antipathy toward Charles I seen in the antimonarchical tracts of the late 1640s and early 1650s, and that finally develops by 1660 into a full-blown

rejection of kingship in *The Ready and Easy Way*. The assumption that Milton was at least nominally royalist in his antiprelatical tracts has long been common in Milton criticism. A World War II-era royalist like G. Wilson Knight is hardly making a dramatic statement when he writes that "Milton's anti-episcopal pamphlets are the work of a fervent royalist." James Holly Hanford describes Milton in his antiprelatical pamphlet period as "with the majority of his countrymen, conservative, assuming the monarchical form of government as that to which the nation is permanently committed." However neatly this line may seem to connect the dots of Milton's published attitudes toward kings and kingship, I believe that this is more a tracing of what he was willing to say publicly than an accurate sketch of changing thoughts Milton may have had. This is also Christopher Hill's contention, as he argues that even before his entry into the church-government controversies of the early 1640s, "Milton [was] at least considering anti-monarchical sentiments which he did not find it expedient to express openly until 1649." Rather than developing an antimonarchical frame of mind through his career of writing prose and poetry, Milton gives clues early on about his negative attitudes toward kings, kingship, and external authority.³¹

Early in his career as a pamphleteer, Milton reveals his predispositions on the subject of the methods of governing. In *The Reason of Church Government* (1641), he writes that "persuasion" is preferable "to keepe men in obedience than feare" (YP 1:746). Nearly thirty years later, the older Milton will put similar sentiments into the mouth of the Son of God, who holds it both humane and heavenly to "Make persuasion do the work of fear" (PR 1.223). I believe that this consistency lies at the heart of Milton's attitude toward externally imposed authority of all kinds—church government, secular government, and, ultimately, the human relation to the divine itself. Government must persuade, and it must do so by working with the intellects and consciences of the governed; if government does not function in this manner, then it becomes tyranny, however benevolent it may appear. Government of the "inner man" (PR 2.477) is the only true government; external government—kingship both on earth and in heaven—exists only as a result of the deleterious effects of the Fall. Kingship is a daily reminder of the failure of the "inner man."

Milton's belief that this "inner man" is somehow redeemable is made clear in his 1644 treatise *Of Education*, where he outlines the ultimate purpose for human education: "The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true vertue" (YP 2:366-67). When Milton suggests that it is possible to "repair the ruins of our first parents" through a vigorous program

of pedagogical self-improvement, he writes in the language of internal relation to the divine. In so doing, Milton is firmly within a Reformation tradition of imagining salvation as a process of deification, or, less radically, of discovering God within rather than without. Such radical continental Protestants as Caspar Schwenckfeld, the Silesian nobleman, Teutonic knight, and aristocratic evangelist for reform, regarded God within as the true God: "I cannot be one in faith with either the Pope or Luther, because they condemn me and my faith, that is, they hate *my Christ in me*." Schwenckfeld went on to suggest that the purpose of the Incarnation was to make it "possible for man to become what God is," that is, divine. David Joris, a Dutch Protestant of the mid-sixteenth century, argued that the purpose of religion was "to achieve unity with God, a unity which comes only by the inner re-enacting of the incarnation and Passion of Christ." Quintin of Hainaut, a sixteenth-century Flemish spiritualist, held that "every Christian becomes, in a pantheistic or mystical sense, a Christ."³²

Though English divines in Milton's day stop short of asserting that humans will become divine, they do contend that the divine is to be found by searching within. The Quaker minister Alexander Parker argues that "Christ Jesus is the Truth, and he is the Light, and ... the Light is within ... all they who deny to be guided by the light within denies God, Christ, and the Spirit ... for God is light, Christ is light, and the Spirit is light"³³ The equation is clear: the light is to be discovered within, and God is light, therefore God is to be discovered within. Another famous Quaker, George Fox, writes his 1654 pamphlet, "To all that would know the way to the kingdome," as "A Direction to turne your minds within, where the voice of the true God is to be heard, whom you ignorantly worship as afarre off." Fox goes on to maintain that, "as the eternal light which Christ has enlightened you withal is loved, minded, and taken heed unto, this earthly part is wrought out."³⁴ When the earthly part is "wrought out," what is left is the divine light, the inner light provided by God to all those who truly seek. Lydia Fairman specifically identifies the inner light with an inner Christ when she writes of "Christ the light in every one of you."³⁵

David Loewenstein has argued that "the early Quakers . . . represented the largest and most dynamic movement of social, political and religious protest" in the mid-seventeenth century and persuasively demonstrates that *Paradise Regained* and "its striking revision of external forms of politics and kingship; its emphasis on the mighty power of a spiritual kingdom within; and its depiction of Jesus as a pious and inward saint" adopts many of the same ideas taken up by the Quakers. "The emphasis in early Quaker writings on the interiorization of power and kingship" is one shared by *Paradise Regained*, as "this poem does not simply repudiate worldly kingship; it also

makes kingship and power inward... redefining them in terms of a spiritual kingdom of the mind."³⁶

To argue that education can "repair" the "ruins" produced by the Fall of Adam and Eve is as radical a theological statement as I can find in Milton. This verges on the territory of Pelagius, the fourth- and fifth-century monk who argued that mankind was capable of, and therefore responsible for, its own spiritual regeneration. Milton here reduces everything to one simple principle: love, imitate, and be like God. This cuts to shreds notions of Milton's inconsistency on the issues of kingship and man's proper relation to God, and renders untenable the arguments that would have Milton defending in heaven what he assailed on earth. If Man's greatest achievement, as Milton says in *Of Education* (YP 2:366) and as the "Son" says in *Paradise Regained* (2.475), is to know God "aright," to imitate and be like God, and if, as Milton argues in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, human monarchy is the end result of a process of falling away from God, then God cannot possibly be a monarch. God is not a king; God cannot be a king because, for humankind to "love him, to imitate him, to be like him," human kingship would have to be approved by God.

Milton's "inner man" will not become like God through unquestioning obedience to any arbitrary authority intent on making equally arbitrary declarations. Authority exercised in this manner can have only negative consequences. A case in point is the proclamation made by the Father in *Paradise Lost* 5.600-15. Here, the Father (presumably without consultation) anoints the Son as a king before whom all must kneel instantly and without question or murmur. Those who fail this test of immediate and *cheerful* obedience are threatened with the direst consequences: they shall be "Cast out from God and blessed vision ... / Into utter darkness, deep ingulft, his place / Ordain'd without redemption, without end" (613-15). Threats are the currency of the bully; threats are no way to govern the "inner man." Outward complicity is all that such threats will purchase, as evidenced by the consequence of the Father's threats, hypocrisy: "All seem'd well pleas'd, all seem'd, but were not all" (617).

That such governing techniques are doomed to abject failure is a truth all too obvious to the Son after the war in heaven. True government cannot be conducted through fear; rather, it must be undertaken through persuasion. This model of relationship between ruler and ruled, between God and Man, requires subjects capable of being persuaded, subjects educated enough to recognize the good when it is placed before them. Ironically, our ability to recognize the good requires, in the epistemology Milton outlines in *Areopagitica*, a familiarity with evil: "As therefore the state of man now is; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without knowl-

edge of evil?" (YP 2:514). Milton suggests that the knowledge of evil that is necessary for the ability to recognize and choose the good is the primary benefit of "books promiscuously read" (YP 2:517). Far from the "lowly wise" attitude recommended to Adam (*PL* 8.173), Milton's suggestion reflects an attitude of aggressive knowledge and truth seeking, a model of intellectual and spiritual inquiry similar to that of the Bereans whom Paul referred to as noble because their obedience required persuasion: they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

From the antiprelatical tracts to the divorce tracts and through the antimonarchical tracts, Milton continually struggles against human "custom"—an "everyone knows *that*" attitude Milton equates with ignorance—in favor of biblical texts and interpretations that support his arguments. As early as *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton argues for theological and political consistency on at least one level—using the Bible as the source of models for civil and religious authority: "[T]his practice we may learn, from a better & more ancient authority, then any heathen writer hath to give us . . . that book, within whose sacred context all wisdome is infolded" (YP 1:746-747). Milton goes on to insist that just as Moses instructed "the Jewes . . . in a generall reason of that government to which their subjection was requir'd," so "the Gospell" should instruct Christians "in the reason of that government which the Church claimes to have over them" (YP 1:747). In *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton avers that it is "custome" that is "the creator of Prelaty," and that prelaty is "lesse ancient than the government of Presbyters" (YP 1:778). The hierarchy of authority inherent in this statement is a key to understanding Milton's hermeneutical stance toward both theological and political controversies; the ancient models are those that Milton "recovers," excavating them from beneath the dust and rubbish of later "custom." Milton begins his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* in precisely the same manner: "If men within themselves would be govern'd by reason, and not generally give up their understanding to a double tyrannie, of Custom from without and blind affections within, they would discern better what it is to favour and uphold the Tyrant of a Nation" (YP 3:190). Milton continues making his case by returning to original principles, compared to which kingship is "lesse ancient": "I shall here set downe from first beginning, the original of Kings; how and wherfore exalted to that dignitie above thir Brethren; and from thence shall prove, that turning to Tyranny they may bee as lawfully depos'd and punish'd, as they were at first elected" (YP 3:198). Originally, Milton reminds us, "all men naturally were borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself" (YP 3:198). Kings, then, in Milton's analysis, are the end result of a long chain of events set in motion by the Fall. After "Adams transgression, falling among themselves to doe wrong and violence," men

"agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement" (YP 3:199).

The history and teleology of kingship are sufficient to cast serious doubt on the idea that Milton approved of imagining God as a king. The logical, if absurd, extension of such imagining would posit a heavenly king as one angel elected by the rest to protect the angels from their own descent into "wrong and violence." This is similar to the way Satan imagines the Father in *Paradise Lost*, thinking of the Father as, in Empson's phrase, "a usurping angel."³⁷ However, Milton elsewhere makes his opposition to heavenly kingship clear enough that we need not rest with logical inference and reasonable doubt.

In the fifth chapter of *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton is already arguing against an identification of divinity with kingship. In refuting Bishop Andrewess contention that Christ was foreshadowed in Hebrew scripture by both kings and priests, Milton accuses Andrewes of using this (satirically labeled) "[m]arvelous piece of divinity" to "ingage [the king's] power for them [the bishops of the Church of England] as in his own quarrell, that when they fall they may fall in a generall ruine" (YP 1:769-70). Milton's pointed question to Andrewes is an early indication of his rejection of "Heav'n's king": "But where, O Bishop, doth the purpose of the law set forth Christ to us as a King?" (YP 1:770). Milton's answer to his own question makes his rejection clear:

That which never was intended in the Law, can never be abolish't as part thereof. When the Law was made, there was no King: if before the law, or under the law God by a speciall type in any king would foesignifie the future kingdome of Christ, which is not yet visibly come, what was that to the law? The whole ceremoniall law, and types can be in no law else, comprehends *nothing but the propitiatory office of Christs Priesthood.* (YP 1:770-71)

Milton's reference to "the future kingdome of Christ" only makes his discomfort with the idea of divinity conceived in terms of kingship more obvious. "That which never was intended in the Law," the same law that forbids graven images of the deity, was also never intended to become a part of the human imagining of the divine. Some years later, Milton will argue in *Eikonoklastes* that "*Christs Kingdom* [should] be tak'n for the true Discipline of the Church" (YP 3:536). In referring to Christ as "our common King" (YP 7:429), and "our true and rightfull and only to be expected King" (YP 7:445) in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton is writing of spiritual kingship, not a "Heavenly" kingship that looks like an impossibly glorious version of the court of Charles I. In other words, "the future kingdome of Christ" is a spiritual arrangement of faith and worship, not a secular arrangement of politics and

power (no matter whether such a "secular" arrangement is located on earth or in heaven).

As the Son will later say in *Paradise Regained*, to be truly "kingly" is to exercise spiritual dominion, to govern (in the sense of discipline) the "inner man, the nobler part" (2.477). Each Christian who takes his or her obligations as a Christian in a serious and spiritual sense is thus already "kingly" in this manner and needs no other king on earth or in heaven. Just as Milton relies on a familiar post-Reformation formulation of the "priesthood of all believers" in his antiprelatical tracts (arguing against bishops as an unnecessary and actively deleterious hierarchical layer separating the Christian from God), so he comes to rely on an analogous construction of the "kingship of all believers" (arguing against kings and kingship in the same way) in his later antimonarchical tracts. Much as bishops stood between true Christians (who are "priestly") and a right relationship with God, so also do kings stand between true Christians (who are "kingly") and God. Worse still, the idea of God as a king, an external ruler who demands outward compliance delivered with promptness and ceremony, prevents the Christian from, in the Son's words, "knowing . . . God aright" (*PR* 2.475). In the argument with Bishop Andrewes, Milton has taken his first steps, not only in arguing against the custom of picturing God and/or Christ as a king, but also in redefining what it means to be truly "kingly."

Milton does not stop here, however, but goes on in *Eikonoklastes* to a similar denigration of "custom" in relation to kingship. He refers contemptuously to those "who through custom, simplicitie, or want of better teaching, have not more seriously considered Kings, than in the gaudy name of Majesty" (YP 3:338). To seriously consider kings, Milton suggests, would be to realize that majesty, in its external and "gaudy" trappings, is not truly kingly. Later, Milton sneers at "the easy literature of custom and opinion," declaring that "few perhaps, but... such of value and substantial worth" (YP 3:339-40) will align themselves with Milton's own rejection of such custom. The foreshadowing of the "fit audience ... though few" of *Paradise Lost* is unmistakable here.

In *A Defence of the People of England*, Milton briefly recalls the account he gave in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* of the growth of kingship, but he makes an important addition: the formation of churches. "Men first came together to form a state in order to live in safety and freedom without violence or wrong; they founded a church to live in holiness and piety" (YP 4:320-21). The origin of both kings and churches, then, is the Fall. King and church issue not from blessings but from curses, maledictions cast upon fallen mankind. This insight flowers from the seeds planted in *The Reason of Church Government*, where Milton finds the proper forms of both civil and

church governments in the Bible. It is a tantalizing prospect to consider that Milton—who was, according to Thomas Newton, "a dissenter from the Church of England [and] not a professed member of any particular sect of Christians"—may have rejected both king and church, seeing them, finally, as obstacles preventing mankind from knowing God "aright."³⁸

Milton goes on in *A Defence of the People of England* specifically and unequivocally to identify the form of civil government recommended in the Bible as a commonwealth, in direct contradistinction to modern interpretations of his writings that would suggest a Miltonic longing for "ideal" or heavenly monarchy: "A republican form of government, moreover, as being better adapted to our human circumstances than monarchy, seemed to God more advantageous for his chosen people; he set up a republic for them and granted their request for a monarchy only after long reluctance" (YP 4:344). Furthermore, Milton argues that God gave the Israelites a king only out of anger: "God was wroth at their desire for a king, not in accordance with divine law but in imitation of the gentiles, and he was wroth furthermore that they desired a king at all" (YP 4:347). In *Ready and Easy Way*, Milton flatly states that God "imputed it a sin to [the Israelites] that they sought [a king]" and further maintains that "*Christ*. . . forbids his disciples to admitt of any such heathenish government" (YP 7:424).

Ample textual evidence demonstrates that Milton considers the "custom" of kingship to be a foreign imposition on God's people; Icings are endured as a punishment that, but for the Fall, would never have been necessary. Thus, Milton's portrait of a monarchical Father, a character that has troubled readers and critics alike for centuries, troubles precisely because he is supposed to trouble. The Father's heavenly crown is not an exhibit of heavenly perfection; it is instead a necessary contrast to a perfect form of rule (both heavenly and earthly) that is offered by the Son, who offers the best indication of the system that had the most "obvious beauty" for Milton.

IV. HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY KINGSHIP IN MILTON'S POETRY

Milton's "portrait" of heavenly kingship in *Paradise Lost* is a triptych; the central portion of the piece—with its somber egg tempera image of the Father as a king sitting upon the throne of heaven—cannot be understood properly without reference to the images on its right and left. The panel at the left hand of the Father depicts Satan, while the panel to the right hand of the Father pictures the Son. Each of the peripheral figures represents a balance and contrast to the middle figure; the characters portrayed on the left and right sides of Milton's triptych both offer a challenge to a Father ruling as an "absolute monarch."³⁹

The similarity between Satan and the Son as challengers of the Father is a point that cannot be overstressed. Each character rejects the idea of the Father as an unquestioned and unquestionable ruler. For Satan and the Son, the Father will not pass unchallenged as an absolute monarch, certainly not in the terms described by Aristotle (from whom Milton learned much in preparation for his arguments against tyranny): a tyrant is "an individual which is responsible to no one, and governs all alike, whether equals or betters, with a view to its own advantage, not to that of its subjects, and therefore against their will."⁴⁰ Critics who engage in what Empson described as "the modern duty of catching Satan out wherever possible" delight in emphasizing Satan's descent into tyranny while trying to avoid—at all costs—coming to grips with the uncomfortable extent to which the Father in *Paradise Lost* fits the definition of a tyrant.⁴¹

The Father is first referred to as a "supreme King" in *Paradise Lost* at 1.735, after the demonic associations of kingship have been thoroughly rehearsed over the last three hundred lines, and in the midst of a description of the demonic architect whom men, "erring" (1.747), call Mulciber. During the debate in hell, the fallen angels continually refer to the Father as a king: he is twice "the King of Heaven" (2.229, 2.316), and he "first and last will Reign / Sole king" (2.325—25). Satan and his followers take it for granted that the Father is a king, and a tyrannical king at that. They are, in this estimation, correct. A tyrant, according to Milton, is "he who regarding neither Law nor the common good, reigns onely for himself and his faction" (*Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, YP 3:212). For whom else does the Father rule except for "himself and his faction"? The Father may very well regard "law," but it is difficult to see how he regards "the common good," especially when it is the Son who must vigorously remind him of that good in Book Three of *Paradise Lost*. To argue that the Father gets to define the common good is particularly slippery; this is rather like the argument of Euthyphro in the Platonic dialogue of the same name—piety is piety, not of itself, but because it is dear to the gods, and impiety is impiety, not of itself, but because it is abhorrent to the gods. Variations of this same justification are made in the name of each of history's great tyrannies—the leader knows best, and what the leader defines as the good is the good.

Satan's challenge to the Father is mirrored by the Son's challenge. Left and right are reversed, as in a reflection whose similitude is an illusion, a trick of technique and the manipulation of light and shade. Where Satan is shaded, the Son is light; where Satan's challenge to the Father eventually brings out what is worst in him (his desire to emulate the absolute monarchy he once rejected), the Son's challenge brings out what is best in him.⁴² Behind the Son's words in *Paradise Lost* 3.144-66 are the words of Abraham and Moses.

The Son's "that far be from thee" is an almost direct quotation of Abrahams "that be far from thee" during his challenge to Yahweh over the planned destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah at Genesis 18:25.⁴³

It should come as no surprise that the often irascible Yahweh looms behind the figure of a poetic character that Milton is careful to identify as Jehovah: "Great are thy works, *Jehovah*, infinite / Thy power" (PL 7.602-3). What may surprise is die use to which Milton puts the biblical character in the celestial dialogue of Book Three. Casting the Son in the position of Abraham emphasizes the confrontational nature of the Son's approach to the Father in this scene. Abraham's verbal struggle with Yahweh is no mere polite disagreement. Abraham takes a potentially fantastic risk by challenging the righteousness of his God. Abraham not only asks that Yahweh "display mercy to the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, he asks *repeatedly*, bargaining with Yahweh in an attempt to determine just how far mercy and righteousness may be effective in lessening his wrath. Will fifty "righteous" be enough to avoid wholesale slaughter? How about ten? There are only four, and four turn out to be not quite enough. Yahweh is not testing Abraham; Abraham is testing Yahweh. When Abraham confronts Yahweh in Genesis 18:25 ("Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"), he is asking a serious question. Will Yahweh actually kill the innocent with the guilty, making no distinction between righteous and unrighteous? "That be far from thee to do after this manner," declares Abraham. The Son takes a similar position with the Father:

should Man finally be lost

 that be from thee far,
 That far be from thee, Father, who art Judge
 Of all things made, and judgest only right. (PL 3.150,153-55)

The Father is not testing die Son; the Son is testing the Father.

Another parallel with which Milton works is that between Moses and Yahweh in Exodus, chapter 32. Yahweh tells Moses to leave him alone so that he may destroy the very people whom he has only recently led out of slavery in Egypt: "let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (32:10). Moses, quite understandably, given the effort he has put in over the people Yahweh now threatens to destroy, will have none of this. He tells the deity to stop and think: What will the Egyptians say? "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?" (32:12). Such a call to God to consider what the enemy will think and say about the destruction—by God—of God's people is precisely what Milton ascribes to the Son in his dialogue with the Father in Book

Three of *Paradise Lost*. Just as Moses pleads with God to "repent of the evil against thy people" (Exod. 32:12), so also the Son implores the Father not to take an action that will allow Satan to question and blaspheme "without defense."⁴⁴ In the context of such challenges, the Son's confrontation of the Father is a demonstration of the passibility, the Yahweh-like emotional volatility and moral ambiguity, of the Father. Michael Lieb has argued that Milton "not only intensifies the idea of passibility, but bestows upon it a new significance" in his portrait of the Father. Lieb concludes, "the figure of God in *Paradise Lost* is portrayed as a fully passible being."⁴⁵ Such a being, passible and morally ambiguous, is what the Son confronts in Book Three of *Paradise Lost*.

The Son begins his public career in a manner much less confrontational toward the Father than the stance he adopts in the debate of Book Three. When the Father announces his begetting in Book Five, the Son seems little more than an extension of the Father; the Father's ever present concern with his "Omnipotence," "Arms," "Deity," and "Empire" (721-24) are echoed by the Son, who describes the controversy in heaven as "Matter to mee of Glory" (737). As the war in heaven is being fought and won, when "War wearied hath perform'd what War can do" (6.695), the Son still speaks of his own glory, but is beginning also to speak in terms of relinquishing the very power he has recently assumed: "Sceptre and Power, thy giving, I assume, / And gladlier shall resign" (6.730-31). After the war and the expulsion of the vanquished, the Son no longer seems so impressed with "Sceptre and Power" as he may have been previously. Mercy is now the Son's focus, not power, not scepter, not even the justice about which the Father rails (at 3.210) in what Empson once described as "the stage villain's hiss of 'Die he or Justice must.'"⁴⁶

The Son's concern with "Glory" and "Sceptre and Power" has completely faded by the time he embarks on the fulfillment of the fatal bargain he made with the Father in Book Three of *Paradise Lost*. In *Paradise Regained*, the Son's expressed contempt for the idea of kingship is devastating in its power. Government, to avoid being tyranny, must be internal, a self-government of each individual guided only by truth, and by "knowing . . . God aright" (2.475). The Son's clear accusation against not only mankind, but against mankind's earthly *and* heavenly rulers is that existing forms of rule have not enabled most to properly know God. Kingship, churches, external rule, threats, and the demand for outward compliance—all of these things have not only *not* enabled mankind to know God "aright," but have actively led mankind astray.

However, this is the kind of external regime that the Son has come to bring to an end, replacing it with a rule of "the inner man" (PR 2.477). The

Son has nothing to do with either oriental despotism or feudalism; nor is the Son's rule a "self-renouncing monarchy."⁴⁷ The Son promises, and delivers, something entirely different: monarchy-renouncing monarchy. Milton creates a Son for whom to be truly kingly is to "lay down" a kingdom, an action the Son considers "Far more magnanimous than to assume" (2.483). The Son's entire message, if he can be said to have a message in Milton, is that to know God "aright" is to know God as the Son himself knows God, to know that the rule of heaven is not external, but internal. The regime of the Son is not "o'er the body only," but of the "nobler part," a rule where there is no first, but only equality. To know God "aright" is to know that God is not a king. Like the Son, Satan begins with concern for glory, but his progression is one designed, albeit unsuccessfully, to recover what he feels to be his own lost glory and to accrue more glory through battle and an ascension to a hellish throne. Satan's "ambition" is to "reign" (*PL* 1.262), a concern similar to that the Father expresses in Book Five:

Nearly it concerns us to be sure
Of our Omnipotence, and with what Arms
We mean to hold what anciently we claim
Of Deity or Empire.

(721-24)

Both the Father and Satan seem primarily concerned with the consolidation, maintenance, or acquisition of power. Satan was, in this sense, right to claim that the Father held "the Tyranny of Heav'n" (1.124). However, Satan's mistake is not his challenge of the Father, but his method. Where Satan chooses military force in an attempt to cause the Father to doubt "his empire" from "terror of this arm" (1.113-14)—a strategy that proves an abject failure—the Son chooses to "make persuasion do the work of fear" (*PR* 1.223),³ a preference Milton expresses as early as 1642, when in *The Reason of Church Government* he writes that "persuasion is certainly a more winning, and more manlike way to keepe men in obedience than feare" (*YP* 1:746).

Through the contrasting challenges offered by Satan and the Son, Milton's rejection of the very idea of earthly and heavenly kingship comes sharply into focus. Milton's use of Satan and his rebellion against an absolute monarch in heaven also helps to answer the perennial question of why Satan seems to overwhelm the readers senses with the scope of his Achillean heroism. Satan is supposed to seem heroic—and not in Fish's sense of misleading the unwary reader line by line. Satan's heroism is real, and therefore his slow degeneration from Book One to Book Ten is not, as C. S. Lewis would have it, farcical, but legitimately tragic. Satan rises against an absolute monarch. So far, so good, Miltonically speaking. The complex of reasons for which he rises comprises both the failure and the wrongheadedness of his

rebellion. Satan's sense of "injur'd merit" (1.98), according to his own admission to his closest compatriot, Beelzebub, is what raised him to contend with the Father. As Satan sees it, the issue is simple: Who has the right to reign in heaven? Satan proclaims that in preparation for battle he had "brought along / Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd / That durst dislike his reign, and mee preferring" (1.100-102). Thinking along similar lines, the Father who is concerned with "Deity" and "Empire" (despite the Son's strangely protective and unconvincing gloss of that concern as "derision" [5.736]), seems to indicate that Satan may be more like the Father than many Milton critics would care to admit.

What drives the Son to contend with the Father in Book Three is not a concern with his own merit—injured or rewarded—but mercy for the as yet unfallen human race. Readings of this scene, like Fish's, that insist on the merely rhetorical character of the Fathers conversation with the Son in the celestial dialogue deliberately puncture and deflate the swelling drama of what are perhaps the most important passages in all of *Paradise Lost*. If the Father is "determinedly non-affective" and is not talking "to anyone in particular,"⁴⁸ then Milton's great poetic triptych has its right hand panel lopped off and is rendered less an artistic marvel of an earlier age than a damaged, but historically significant, curiosity. If denied the emotional weight of speaking back to power in his own voice, the Son is denied the great dignity of Abraham (a frail and mortal man contending with the Almighty over the fate of any righteous men who may live in Sodom and Gomorrah). The Son is also denied the heroism through which, by pleading for mercy to be shown to humanity and offering to die to satisfy the implacable "Justice" of the Father, he displays the greatest bravery imaginable. In a reading that denies him an active and crucial agency in Book Three, the Son is rendered a figure merely ridiculous and sycophantic, the worst—because the most powerful—of the "Minstrelsy of Heav'n" (6.168). Such a Son makes a villain of the Father who creates him. Such a Son hands the moral high ground to Satan.

In contrast to the tripartite structure of Milton's picture of heavenly kingship, earthly kingship in Milton's epics is portrayed rather more simply, nearly always associated either with tyranny or with estrangement from God, or in some combination thereof. Solomon, the "uxorious king" of *Paradise Lost* 1.444, is an example of kings alienated from the true God. A particularly instructive example is Jeroboam, the "rebel king" of 1.472-89, whose Miltonic portrait in *Paradise Lost* is one of apostasy, wickedness, and rebellion against God. However, as Davies has pointed out, Milton, in his polemical argument with Salmasius (in *A Defence of the People of England*), finds himself forced to defend Jeroboam. Milton argues rather weakly: Jeroboam had overthrown his brother Rehoboam (the heir to the throne by birthright),

and turned out to be exceedingly pagan and wicked; nevertheless, though Jeroboam and his successors were offenders against the true worship of God, they were not rebels (YP 4:405-6). Davies takes from this seeming inconsistency on Milton's part a most apposite maxim: "This apparent contradiction between prose and poetry may serve as a warning to the reader to modify his expectations of the manner in which the former will elucidate the latter."⁴⁹

Milton's prose and poetry are certainly written in different contexts and for different purposes, and the immediate polemical squeeze into which Salmasius had been able to catch Milton over the rather embarrassing failure of the successors to the Solomonic throne to live up to seventeenth-century English antimonarchical principles was tense and, doubtless, exquisitely uncomfortable. Milton had used Jeroboam as an example, "of justified rebellion against a wicked king, equating Jeroboam (who deposed Rehoboam) and the English revolutionaries (who deposed Charles I) as "Brethren, not Rebels" in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (YP 3:209); Salmasius had Milton dead to rights because Jeroboam turned out to be an idolatrous and tyrannical ruler.

Years after his controversy with Salmasius, however, Milton vigorously attacks in poetry what he previously defended in prose because he is no longer faced with a rhetorical situation that demands that he defend an exposed and nearly indefensible flank. I suggest that the characterization of Jeroboam in *Paradise Lost* should be given the most weight because it is more consistent with Milton's view of kingship as a curse, a malediction, a punishment wrought by Sin and the Fall. If readers are to modify any expectations regarding the relationship between the attitudes toward kingship expressed in Milton's poetry and prose, let them look to the teleology of kingship expressed in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, the characterization of kingship in *The Ready and Easy Way* as "heathenish" and forbidden by Christ to those who would follow him, and the impulse of the Son, both in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, to lay down the scepter, step away from the throne, focus on the inner man, and to finish his poetic sojourn "Home to his Mother's house private return'd" (PR 4.639).

Readerly expectations should be further instructed by the fact that elsewhere in *Paradise Lost* kings are described as having demonic origins or associations: the "Memphian kings" of 1.694 and the Babylonian kings of 1.721 are entangled in a web of demonic rebellion and rejection of God. Satan's throne in hell is associated with Eastern kings of "Ormus and of Ind" (2.2), while Moloch, the "Sceptr'd king" (2.43), is described in a manner no different from the "Sceptr'd Angels" (1.734) who in heaven rule "Each in his Hierarchy, the Orders bright" (1.737). Thus, Milton tars the hierarchy of heaven with the blackened palette of hell. By first presenting us with kings and kingship in hell (Satan, Moloch, and Death are all described in the language of

kingship), and then in the "dark / Illimitable Ocean" (2.891-92) in which Chaos reigns with "the Sceptre of old Night" (2.1002), Milton lays the groundwork for his portrayal of a heaven gone horribly wrong. Milton has not shown us first the kingships of Satan, Death, and Chaos in order to "create a King of Heaven so glorious and a court so splendid that it put his idolatrous imitators to shame";⁵⁰ rather, he creates a king of heaven so unworthy of the idea of God to put his fellow post-Restoration Englishmen to shame.

Only in Book Twelve of *Paradise Lost* is there any glimmer of hope. King David of Israel is mentioned with approbation, but he is the all-too-rare exception to the rule of earthly kingship. David, a deeply flawed ruler who used his power to steal another man's wife while simultaneously having the cuckolded victim killed in battle, has much more in common with his earthly and demonic predecessors than he does with the figure who follows him, the Son, "of Kings/The last" (329-30). His reign—the reign of the "inner man" — shall have "no end" (330). Kingship, heavenly and earthly, looks forward to this solitary figure, the Son who in *Paradise Lost* accepts regal power only to lay it down in *Paradise Regained*, who disdains deeds of glory and the pomp and circumstance of the earthly kingships Satan shows him, but who also rejects any form of rule—earthly and heavenly—that does not cause the ruled to know God aright: to know his virtue, patience, and love. Thus, for Milton, the purpose of government, just as the purpose of education, is to repair the ruins of the Fall and to restore the original relationship of humanity and divinity.

If we pull back for a moment from the monumental canvases of Milton's epics and look briefly at an early poem like *Sonnet 19*, it might seem that such opinions on kingship as Milton expresses therein are relatively conventional, but they only seem so until they are placed in relation to the opinions Milton places in the mouth of the Son in *Paradise Regained*. Milton's brief epic is a textbook of antimonarchical attitudes. From Book One's portrait of Satan's continuing obsession with monarchies—earthly and heavenly—to Book Two and Three's depiction of the Son's thoroughgoing rejection of earthly monarchy (including, significantly, Davidic monarchy), and to the Son's radical redefinition of what it means to be truly "kingly" in heavenly and spiritual terms, *Paradise Regained* seems to represent a significant ideological shift from the terms of *Sonnet 19*. Both works, however, focus on what it means to be "kingly," not what it means to be an actual monarch. "Kingly" is a term that need not necessarily be limited to its most literal sense—being, or partaking of, the nature of an actual monarch; it can also refer to traits of character such as nobility, dignity, passion governed by wisdom, justice tempered by mercy, confidence without arrogance, intellectual weight, empathy, and patience.

Sonnet 19 makes reference to a God who has just such traits, a quietist deity who does not need the labors and talents of humans in his service. This

God, whose "State / Is Kingly," imposes only a "mild yoke" (11); and while "Thousands at his bidding speed" (11), those who serve him best are those who bear the mild yoke, including those who "stand and wait" (14) if that is their lot. This is not the military monarch of *Paradise Lost*, a glowering and derisive Father who makes it his business either to create dissent, or to drive it into the open (in Book Five). *Sonnet 19's* "Kingly" God is a king in the sense of having a "kingly" character. The tolerance and mild yoke of a God who demands nothing more than patience from his blinded and wounded servant Milton are "kingly" in much the same way that the Son's concern with the "inner man, the nobler part" is "kingly" in *Paradise Regained* (2-477). To be "kingly" is not to be either an earthly or a heavenly monarch. To be truly "kingly" is a spiritual, not a political achievement; neither Satan nor the Father, the two characters in Milton's epics most visibly concerned with achieving or maintaining power, gives any evidence of real spirituality of such a "kingly" nature.

I contend that Milton hoped his "fit" audience would recognize that it was the Son, and not the Father, whom he was offering as a lamp to guide their footsteps in the dark world of the restored Stuart monarchy. Challenges to the Father offered by both Satan and the Son show each defying the received opinion of heaven: Satan's challenge is to a position that Abdiel represents in Book Five as a siblings variation on the classic "I brought you into this world, and I'll take you out" threat of an angry father: "Then who created thee lamenting learn, / When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know" (5.894-95).

Abdiel's behavior in this scene is often portrayed as that of a faithful angel who is bearing solitary witness, under severe duress, to the requirements of true obedience; for example, Stella Revard contends that it is Abdiel, despite his arguments from force, who is being bullied in his argument with Satan.⁵¹ I find it difficult to concur with Revard's assessment of Abdiel's position in this scene, given the fact that he is in no way subjected to reprisal. I am closer to the position of Empson, who sees Satan as displaying a certain nobility in allowing Abdiel to leave unmolested: "we do not find Milton's God being content to differ from someone who contradicts him."⁵² Rather than being assaulted, or even seriously threatened, Abdiel is told to leave, told, in fact, to take a message to "the Anointed King" (5.870). The warning that evil might intercept his flight if he does not leave quickly is merely a goad to get him to go and go now. In fact, in this debate, although Satan also argues from force—declaring that "our own right hand / Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try / Who is our equal" (5.864-66)—it is Abdiel, rather than Satan, who introduces the theme of uncreation, or death.

Abdiel seems to believe—and significantly, no one contradicts his belief

—that the proper heavenly response to serious dissent is lethal force. Satan is given no immediate verbal response to this dark truism of heaven's monarchical regime, responding instead to this threat as he has responded to the Fathers, by demanding proof through the force of deeds. Satan, it would seem, has learned his lessons rather too well; the way to resolve a serious dispute is through violence. Thus, it is entirely predictable that Satan's challenge to the Father is one of military force.

The Son challenges both received opinion and the Father rather differently; in a sense, he challenges the Father's received opinion of himself. Are you, the Son asks, really concerned only with strict, retributive justice? What, then, separates you from your adversary, who is concerned with strict retributive revenge? In another sense, however, the Son is also challenging the Father with the simplistically destructive and bullying terms of Abdiel in mind. Are you really going to uncreate your human creation? "[W]ilt thou thyself / Abolish thy Creation" asks the Son (3.162-63). Are you really the sort of parent who would kill his own children? Are you, in fact, exactly the sort of tyrant that the rebels accuse you of being? If the answer is yes, then "So should thy goodness and thy greatness both / Be question'd and blasphem'd without defense" (3.165-66). Michael Lieb has argued that the Son is not only *challenging* the Father, but also *warning* the Father: "One senses in the challenge that the Son himself would be the foremost among the reprobate in excoriating the Father, should the Father fail to heed the Son's warning."⁵³ In other words, there will be no defense to be made of a "goodness" and a "greatness" that the Father himself will have proven to be lies. If there is no defense that can be mounted against charges that initially seem to be blasphemous, then there is, strictly speaking, no blasphemy. Truth is not blasphemous, and truth is the basis of the Son's challenge.

Finally, what lies at the heart of the challenges of Satan and the Son is the question of what it means to be truly "kingly"; for Satan, to be "kingly" is to be a monarch, the sense in which most Milton critics today seem to read the term, while for the Son, to be "kingly" is specifically *not* to be a power-wielding monarch, but to be of noble and virtuous character, "to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue" (*Of Education*, YP 2:367). Thus do the kingliness of the Son and Milton's definition of the purpose of education meet: for the Son, to be "kingly" is to have "repair[ed] the ruins of our first parents" (YP 2:366-67). To be "kingly" is to know God and to be like God, a God imagined not as a wielder of power and a giver of orders, but as a soul "of true vertue" (YP 2:367).

Being like God is the promise the serpent makes to Eve in Genesis, and it is the promise Satan makes to Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Raphael's continual

suggestions that Adam and Eve may ascend to heaven "under long obedience tri'd" (7.159), and that their "bodies may at last turn all to spirit" (5.497), are variations of the theme of being like God. Ultimately, the question of what it takes to be like God depends upon the answer to a far more fundamental question: *what is God like?* If God cannot be directly apprehended, if the divine is, as Augustine maintained, "unspeakable,"⁵⁴ or if, as Milton argued, "God, as he really is, is far beyond man's imagination, let alone his understanding" (YP 6:133), then an even more fundamental question must be asked: *How is God to be imagined?*

Competing definitions offered by Satan and the Son of what it means to be "kingly" are also competing answers to the question of how God is to be imagined. The competition between these definitions and these imaginings, pursued in contrasting challenges to the Father, is the core of Milton's attempt to reject kingship and to reimagine God. Milton wishes to seriously consider kings and kingship and reimagine God in terms other than "the gaudy name of Majesty" (YP 3:338). In so doing, Milton is rejecting the Father and his concern with "Empire" as a proper image of God, and is instead elevating the Son, whose focus is "true vertue."

Satan imagines the Father as a king, while the Son imagines the Father as "kingly." There is all the difference in the world between the two conceptions, and in this last great effort of his life, Milton is England's poetic John the Baptist, a voice crying out in the wilderness of "the easy literature of custom and opinion" to teach his "fit audience . . . though few" to recognize that difference.

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Milton's prose are from *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven, 1953–82), hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as YP, followed by volume and page number. All quotations of Milton's poetry are from *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey, 1957), hereafter cited in the text.

2. Joan Bennett. *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 33.

3. Stevie Davies, *Images of Kingship in "Paradise Lost": Milton's Politics and Christian Liberty* (Columbia, Mo., 1983), 3.

4. Robert Thomas Fallon, *Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery* (University Park, Pa., 1995), 32-33.

5. Reuben Sanchez, "From Polemic to Prophecy," in *Milton Studies* 30, ed. Albert C. Labriola (Pittsburgh, 1993), 27.

6. Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (Evanston, 111., 1964), has also argued for a consistency in the purpose of Milton's prose writings and has noted that inconsistency may appear as a result of Milton's immediate rhetorical situation: "The unity, particularly of the prose, may be obscured by the apparently different objectives he pursued at different times, but in reality these objectives were only so many means to one end" (76).

7. Fallon, *Divided Empire*, 36.

8. G. Wilson Knight, *Chariot of Wrath* (London, 1942), 44.

9. William Empson, *Milton's God* (London, 1961), 111.

10. Fallon, *Divided Empire*, 42.

11. There are many potential objections to be made to the raising of the controversial theological treatise in an argument about the nature of the Father/Son relationship in *Paradise Lost*. However, despite the eloquent arguments of William B. Hunter and Gordon Campbell et al., I am not yet persuaded that we should abandon the idea of Milton as the author of *De Doctrina Christiana*. See Hunter's argument in *Visitation Unimplor'd: Milton and the Authorship of "De Doctrina Christiana"* (Pittsburgh, 1998), and "Responses," *Milton Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1999): 31-37; see also the arguments of Gordon Campbell et al. in "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 31 (October 1997): 67-121.

12. This extreme is not one to which all groups identified as "Gnostic" go, but it is recognizable, for instance, in Marcion. According to Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 2d ed. (Boston, 1991), Marcion's demiurge was primarily conceived in terms of "pettiness" (141) and was merely just as opposed to good. The Valentinian 'artificer' (demiurge) of the left-hand things" (190) is also recognizable as a devilish kind of anti-God whose main attribute is "ignorance . . . and [the] presumption in which he believes himself to be alone and declares himself to be the unique and highest God" (191).

13. In his *History*, Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, trans. George Rawlinson (Chicago, 1955), narrates the argument of Darius for monarchy as the ideal form of government; the Medo-Persian potentate asks, "what government can possibly be better than that of the very best man in the whole state?" (108). Oligarchy and democracy lead inevitably to strife and faction, while Darius insists that monarchs are free to rule with the best interests of their subjects in mind. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Chicago, 1955), likewise argues that kingship is the ideal form of rule, calling "the rule of a king the happiest" form of government (419). Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vols. 1 and 2, trans. Daniel J. Sullivan (Chicago, 1955), argues that "the best government is government by one" (1:530). He also asserts that "a kingdom is the best form of government of the people, so long as it is not corrupt" (2:309).

14. Christopher Kendrick, *Milton: A Study in Ideology and Form* (New York, 1986), has argued that Milton was a protonationalist: "His whole epic vocation was intertwined with what we might call a form of proto-nationalism. . . . Milton's . . . is a religiously coded patriotism for which die ideal English church . . . is simply one with the nation, and for which the nation represents only a peculiarly chosen member of the collective saintly body" (84).

15. Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), refers to Milton's equation of England and Israel as a commonplace idea of his time and place: "Israel was not just a model for England, as Rome or Greece might be, but England was a recapitulation of Israel" (17).

16. Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, N.J., 1979), has characterized the often-drawn parallels between England with Israel as "genuine recapitulations" in which God "deals with his new Israel as he did with the old" (131).

17. Fallon, *Divided Empire*, 36.

18. Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke," *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1969), 50-122

19. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton argues that the text of the Bible as it has been transmitted across the millennia to a seventeenth-century reader is corrupt. The text of the Greek scriptures, in particular, "has often been liable to corruption" (YP 6:587) and should be submitted to the judgment of the individual believer, guided by the Spirit.

20. Scriptural citations are from the Authorized Version of 1611.

21. Fallon, *Divided Empire*, 42.

22. Nimrod is also, for Milton, "the first that hunted after Faction" (*Eikonoklastes*, YP 3.466), and faction is an indispensable ingredient in Milton's recipe for tyranny.

23. Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Chico, Calif., 1981), 71. Other works useful for an understanding of the development of the idea of Yahweh as a king include Zafrira Ben-Barak, *The Manner of the King and the Manner of the Kingdom: Basic Factors in the Establishment of the Israelite Monarchy in the Light of' Canaanite Kingship* (Jerusalem, 1972); Marc Zvi Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (Sheffield, 1989); and Audrey K Gordon, *Religious Dimensions of Kingship in Canaan and Israel* (M.S., History and Literature of Religions, Northwestern University, 1967).

24. Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*, 71.

25. *Ibid.*, 73.

26. For a discussion of the *Enuma Elish*, Genesis, and Milton, see Regina Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: On Milton's Theology and Poetics* (Chicago, 1993). Also see J. Martin Evans, *"Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford, 1968).

27. Regina Schwartz, "Citation, Authority, and *De Doctrina Christiana*," in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, ed. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (Cambridge, 1990), 233, 230.

28. Winstanley quoted in Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London, 1994), 223, 208, 209.

29. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century*, 209.

30. Winstanley quoted in *ibid.*, 209.

31. Knight, *Chariot of Wrath*, 27; James Holly Hanford, *A Milton Handbook*, 4th ed. (New York, 1954), 79; Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, 91.

32. George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1962), 258, 335, 483, 599-

33. Alexander Parker, *A testimony of the Light within...* (London, 1657).

34. George Fox, "To all that would know the way to the kingdome" (London, 1654), title page, 2.

35. Lydia Fairman, "A few lines given forth and a true testimony of the way which is Christ..." (London, 1659).

36. David Loewenstein, "The Kingdom Within: Radical Religious Culture and the Politics of *Paradise Regained*," in *Literature and History* 3 (autumn 1994): 64, 63, 74.

37. Empson, *Milton's God*, 103.

38. Thomas Newton, ed., *Paradise Lost* (Birmingham, 1759), lxiii.

39. Bennett, *Reviving Liberty*, g.

40. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Chicago, 1955), 495.

41. Empson, *Milton's God*, 74.

42. On the Son's challenge to the Father in book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, see Michael Lieb, "Reading God: Milton and the Anthropopathic Tradition," in *Milton Studies* 25, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1989), 213-43, and "Milton's 'Dramatick Constitution': The Celestial Dialogue in *Paradise Lost*, Book III," in *Milton Studies* 23, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1987), 215-40.

43. Gordon Campbell, "Popular Traditions of God in the Renaissance," in *Reconsidering*

the Renaissance: Papers from the Twenty-First Annual Conference, ed. Mario A. DiCesare (Binghamton, N.Y., 1992), has pointed out this parallel (501-20).

44. For another expression of this argument, see my " 'That far be from thee': Divine Evil and Justification in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 36 (May 2002): 87-105.

45. Lieb, "Milton and the Anthropopathic Tradition," 225, 229.

46. Empson, *Milton's God*, 120.

47. Davies, *Images of Kingship in "Paradise Lost"*, 175.

48. Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 62.

49. Davies, *Images of Kingship in "Paradise Lost"*, 30-31.

50. Fallon, *Divided Empire*, 42.

51. Stella Revard, *The War in Heaven* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980), 218.

52. Empson, *Milton's God*, 24.

53. Lieb, "Milton's 'Dramatick Constitution,'" 229.

54. Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw (Chicago, 1955), 626.