MILTON'S VIEW OF HUMAN DESTINY

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to prove that Milton was keenly interested in the process of time and made use of historical materials to demonstrate in his poetry and prose his belief that God's omnipotent will controlled human destiny. While Milton's formalized attempts at history-portrayal were confined to his Brief History of Moscovia and History of Britain, his fascination for history was also expressed in his political and social treatises as well as in the great epic poems that he wrote during the final period of his life.

Milton's view of human destiny closely resembled the traditional Christian concept of history as formulated by St. Augustine in The City of God. The providential, universalistic epochal and teleological aspects of the Christian view of history were all present in Milton's concept of the destiny of man. Milton, however, did not merely reproduce these traditional ideas; he transformed them to fit his conception of God's will dynamically operating in the affairs of man.

This thesis attempts to show that Milton did not reproduce historical material for its own sake. His prime
concern was "to instruct and benefit" the reader. The theme which Milton wished to convey was two-fold. Firstly, he demonstrated that God's will was sovereign; nothing transpired in history apart from the controlling will of God. Secondly, Milton stressed the idea that, while God's will was an indisputable absolute, the free will of man was operative in history. There was, therefore, a direct connection between the process of history and human moral behavior. Man's chief responsibility on earth was to conform voluntarily to God's revealed will. Milton thus profusely illustrated from biblical and secular history that individuals and nations who dis­obeyed the will of God lapsed inevitably into political, domestic, and spiritual bondage. As far as Milton was concerned, there was no liberty apart from submission to the will of God.

In this thesis an attempt has been made to apply the term "Baroque" to Milton's portrayal of human destiny. In spite of his antipathy towards Roman Catholic institutions and practices, Milton demonstrated in his poetry the sense of certainty and affirmation which characterized the Baroque painting and architecture of Italy after the Counter-Reformation. By means of panorama, spectacle, and dynamism--techniques which have been considered by many critics as particularly apparent in Baroque art--
Milton portrayed his concept of the dominating, unifying, and benevolent will of God dynamically controlling and directing human destiny.
Preface

In this thesis, Milton's View of Human Destiny, I have attempted to show that Milton was vitally interested in historical processes and that he employed biblical and secular history to demonstrate that the will of God controlled and directed human destiny. This thesis is not intended to be an essay in historiography, however. While I have indicated that Milton had some pronounced opinions on the subject of history-writing and that he also attempted to be scholarly and accurate in his Brief History of Moscovia and History of Britain, I have not tried to prove that Milton was a serious historian.

Apart from some brief references to the works of a few seventeenth-century historians, this thesis does not relate Milton's views on history to those expressed in the writings of his contemporaries. Had the scope of this thesis permitted it, such a study might have proven illuminating and rewarding, for the seventeenth century in England was rich in historical productions. Raleigh's History of the World, for example, has been described by Fussner as "the archetype of all the moralizing histories of the seventeenth century" because of its emphasis on the
rewards and punishments meted out to individuals and nations by God. Urian Oakes in *The Soverign Efficacy of Divine Providence* expressed an extreme Puritan attitude towards history:

God can stop the Sun in its course... He can give check to the Fire, that it shall not burn... He interrupts the course of _natural order_ when He pleases ....

While writers such as Oakes were placing stress on God's direct intervention in human affairs, others were searching for natural causes in history. The influence of Italian humanist historians such as Machiavelli, who simply ignored theological considerations as irrelevant to history, began to make itself felt in England. Francis Bacon distinguished between sacred and civil history in order to investigate the latter with greater scientific objectivity. John Seldon, in his *History of Tithes* treated a crucial social and ecclesiastical problem without reference to divinely-ordained laws; he was concerned only with historical evidence. As the seventeenth century unfolded, there was an increasing tendency among historians to look for immediate causes rather than ultimate ones relating to providence.

To have connected these interesting developments in seventeenth-century historical thought to Milton's views of
human destiny would have been a fascinating project, but it would have altered the nature of the thesis. I have attempted instead to isolate Milton's basic ideas on the history of mankind, and to show that these ideas were in the mainstream of traditional Christian thought as formulated by St. Augustine in *The City of God*. The significance of Augustine's work cannot be over-emphasized, for its systematic treatment of the doctrine of divine providence did not only dominate the middle ages but also influenced the views of history held by the early Protestant reformers on the Continent and by the Puritans in England. In the second chapter of the thesis I have endeavoured to show that Milton made use of the traditional Christian idea of history to portray God's will dynamically operating in human affairs. The third chapter is closely related to the second in that it deals with Milton's convictions concerning the necessity of conforming to the will of God.

The last chapter, "Milton's Baroque Manner of Portraying Human Destiny" may at first appear to be unrelated to the preceding chapters because the terms employed in it are taken from arts such as painting, sculpture, and architecture. It is, however, increasingly common for comparative studies across the boundaries of the
arts to be proposed. Sypher, whose work has been acknowledged in my final chapter, is a popularizer of this approach to the arts. Milton is so massive and many-sided that complementary views of his ideas may be achieved from widely separated viewpoints; these nevertheless fall into harmony in the comprehensive view. Furthermore, as my approach to Milton is literary as well as ideological it is inevitable that the final chapter should return emphatically to the matter of form. The last two books of *Paradise Lost*, which portray Milton's view of human destiny in a particularly artistic manner, have therefore been emphasized in the concluding chapter of the thesis.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER       Page

I  Introduction: Historical Materials in Milton's Works ........................................... 1

II Milton and the Christian View of Man's Destiny ..................................................... 27

III Man's Destiny Viewed in Terms of Liberty and Bondage ................................. 58

IV Milton’s Baroque Manner of Portraying Human Destiny ...................................... 93

Bibliography ................................................. 118
CHAPTER I

Introduction: Historical Material in Milton's Works

Milton's reputation as a great poet has rarely been seriously challenged since *Paradise Lost*, his greatest poetic achievement, was published in London in 1667. While a few critics have agreed with T.S. Eliot's remark that Milton's influence on eighteenth and nineteenth-century poets was "unwholesome"¹ because inferior poets were unable to imitate successfully his elaborate poetic style, many eminent English scholars have highly praised Milton as a poet and have regarded his influence as wholly salutary. Joseph Addison, after contending that *Paradise Lost* was greater than even *The Iliad* or *The Aeneid* in unity, scope and greatness of action, concluded that there was "an unquestionable magnificence in every

part of *Paradise Lost*. Though Samuel Johnson disliked Milton's minor works, especially the sonnets and *Lycidas*, he conceded that *Paradise Lost* was in design and performance one of the "greatest productions of the human mind." In 1883 Matthew Arnold wrote that Milton was "by his diction and rhythm the one great artist of the highest rank in the great style whom we have."

These comments on Milton's work are representative of the vast amount of criticism which has appeared over the past three hundred years. Inevitably, they lay emphasis upon Milton's poetic craftsmanship and subordinate his accomplishments as a political pamphleteer and historian. While it can hardly be disputed that Milton's finest major achievements are *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, it should nevertheless be remembered that Milton devoted twenty years of his life to the writing of

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2Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, Vol. 4, (Edinburgh, Bell and Bradfute, 1816), No. 267, p. 66.


prose and that many of the basic ideas which informed his prose were to find their way into the great poems that he wrote during the last period of his life. Milton's interest in the story of man and in historical processes is a continuing thread in the tapestry of his works. His Brief History of Moscovia and lengthy History of Britain are only formalized displays of an interest which appeared throughout his political and social treatises, for Milton regarded history as a storehouse of examples and precedents which he could employ to reinforce his arguments. Milton's fascination for history was also demonstrated in Paradise Lost, for the theme of his great epic poem focusses on the fall of man, which was for Milton the crisis which determined the human condition. The last two books of Paradise Lost summarize Milton's view of the history of mankind. Here Milton dynamically portrays the tragic effects of Adam's transgression throughout the course of time and concludes with a glimpse of the distant future:

New Heav'ns, new Earth, Ages of Endless date
Founded in righteousness and peace and love,
To bring forth fruits Joy and Eternal Bliss.
(PL,XII, 548-50) References to Paradise Lost throughout this thesis will be to Merritt Hughes, ed., John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose (New York, Odyssey Press, 1957).
Milton's interest in the history of humanity is clearly indicated in a letter he addressed to a young foreigner, Henry de Brass, who was visiting in London in 1657. After acknowledging that there were problems connected with the writing of history which he could not solve, Milton expresses in emphatic terms what he considered to be of paramount importance. The historian must possess mental endowments equal to those of the great men whose deeds he records. Like answers to like. One cannot adequately evaluate great endowments in others without being greatly endowed himself. An historian should be actively engaged in practical affairs; objective detachment is not sufficient.

He who would write of worthy deeds worthily must write with mental endowments and experience of affairs not less than were in the doer of the same, so as to be able with equal mind to comprehend and measure even the greatest of them ....

Milton's impractical views on the qualifications of an historian were supplemented by somewhat less stringent comments on style. He expressed to de Brass

his admiration for Sallust, the Latin historian who had demonstrated in his works an ability "to throw off a great deal in few words." Milton declared that he was not concerned about ornateness of style but with brevity, clarity, and purity of diction. Milton's concern for style extended to such matters as proportion and decorum. Major events and noble deeds should be treated at great length and in lofty language; less significant events demanded only perfunctory treatment. The historian's task was to "make his expression proportional to the facts" which he recorded.

Milton in his short letter to de Brass also made a cogent statement on the importance of integrity on the part of the historian. No historiographer had a right to follow "his own fancy and conjecture." His "proper duty" was to record the truth—nothing else would suffice. Milton's idealistic assumption that "Queen Truth" could not evade the honest historian blinded him to the fact that complete objectivity in selecting and arranging historical materials was an unattainable ideal.

In his delineation of historiographical technique Milton stated that the historian must not interrupt "the thread of events" by "frequent maxims, or criticisms on the transactions "lest he "invade the office of the Political Writer."" Milton thus contended that the historian and the political controversialist have different roles to perform. Milton's own works, however, indicate that there was a gap between his theories and his performance. His *History of Britain* is replete with digressions and "frequent maxims" which express his puritanical contempt for the ignorant masses who had sold their liberty to unscrupulous and tyrannical kings. Masson went so far as to suggest that there had never been "a history written, professing only to be a compilation, in which there was more obtrusion of the personal sentiments of the author."  

There is a great deal of historical matter throughout Milton's pamphlets. In works such as *Areopagitica*, *The Second Defense of the People of England*, and *The Ready and Easy Way* Milton appeals to


history so frequently that he as a political writer "invades the office" of the historian. His failure to distinguish between history-writing and political controversy is nowhere more apparent than in The Second Defense. This treatise was written in 1654 as a defense of the Puritans, who had been branded as "English parricides" by an anonymous writer who had regarded with horror the execution of Charles I. Milton in his tractate combined his defense of the Puritans (whom he commended for delivering the Commonwealth from tyranny, and religion from degradation) with an eloquent personal defense of his own conduct and physical appearance.

Milton defended himself in a unique manner against the attacks of the Dutch scholar, Salmasius, who had made sport of Milton's blindness. Milton appealed to the Scriptures and to numerous historical works for examples of "distinguished and virtuous persons in history" who had endured physical blindness. Further on in the treatise, he integrated his personal defense into his vindication of the Puritan cause by stating that he had

sacrificed his sight in the interests of liberty.

The conclusion of *The Second Defense* indicates that Milton regarded his treatise as something more than a political pamphlet or personal defense. It was a species of composition with the "epic" purpose of celebrating the great exploit performed by the Puritans in casting off the yoke of monarchical tyranny:

I ... have erected a monument that will not readily be destroyed to the reality of those singular and mighty achievements which were above all praise.  

Unlike *The Second Defense*, Milton's *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* does not purport to be a work in history. Nevertheless, in many ways this political treatise can be regarded as a sequel to the earlier work for in it Milton proposed a system of government which he hoped would keep England from relapsing into "regal bondage." Milton in the first half of the pamphlet carefully outlined the advantages of having a "perpetual senate, especially chosen and entrusted by the people," protected by the "well-affected, either in a standing army or in a settled

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Suddenly, in the middle of his essay, Milton halted the train of his impractical logic for the purpose of demonstrating that history bore testimony to the value of having senators chosen for life. Milton in this connection referred to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Athenian Areopagus, and the Roman Senate. In his final paragraphs Milton developed his arguments by citing further historical precedents that seemed to support his case.

The Protestant Reformation, from which Puritanism had its source, had brought about an intensification of historical research and historical controversy in England. Ecclesiastical and social disputes between Roman Catholics and Protestants—and between conflicting Protestant groups—promoted investigation into all available historical materials, including the Scriptures and tradition. Milton's treatises on ecclesiastical and civil affairs demonstrate that he was acutely aware of the impact of historical "proof" on seventeenth-century readers. Cognizant of the Roman Catholic reliance on medieval tradition and practices, Milton as

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a Puritan went much further than the Anglicans in stressing the superiority of the Scriptures to tradition. In *The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty* Milton vehemently declared his opinion in the matter:

> Tradition they say hath taught them that, for the prevention of growing schism, the bishop was heaved above the presbyter. And must tradition then ever thus to the world's end be the perpetual cankerworm to eat out God's commandments?

Milton did not, however, refrain from making use of tradition when he found it relevant to his purpose. For instance, after arguing that the Scriptures nowhere mention prelacy, he pointed out that Clement of Rome and other early Fathers had not in their works advocated episcopacy even though conditions might have warranted it. Milton as a staunch Protestant regarded the Scriptures alone as ultimately authoritative, but he did not hesitate to appeal to tradition—especially that of the early Patristic period—when it appeared to support his arguments.

Milton's use of historical materials to sustain

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his point of view in civil issues is nowhere more apparent in his shorter prose works than in *Areopagitica*. His appeal to the authority of history as recorded in the Scriptures and Greek and Latin texts is so eloquent that it conceals his weak logic. The formal arguments in the treatise are reinforced throughout the pamphlet by borrowings from works which he regards as repositories of fixed truth.

Milton's awareness of chronological sequence is indicated by his arrangement of historical material in *Areopagitica*. He begins by arguing that the Athenian Greeks did not censor writings unless they were manifestly blasphemous, atheistical, or libellous. The Romans—at least those of the nobler sort—likewise refrained from resorting to censorship, and even the Christian emperors did not prohibit books until general councils had examined them with care and had found them greatly heretical. Milton's hatred of Roman Catholicism emerges as he demonstrates from history that it was not until Renaissance popes such as Martin V and Leo X appeared that censorship began "to rake through the entrails of many an old good author with a violation worse than any could be offered to his tomb."\(^{14}\) Milton

then turns to biblical history, which he regards as the most authoritative of all historical records, and declares in an ironic tone that he will not "insist upon the examples of Moses, David, and Paul, who were skilful in all the learning of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Greeks, which could not probably be without reading their books of all sorts."\(^{15}\) Anticipating a favourable response by the Parliament of England to his written speech, Milton by means of a vital poetic image enthusiastically compares the English people to the Old Testament hero, Samson:

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\text{Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks ...}^{16}
\]

Historical materials in Milton's work were not confined to his political, social, and ecclesiastical pamphlets. His interest in history motivated him to write two works of history in prose, namely \textit{A Brief History of Moscovia} and \textit{The History of Britain}. The former work, according to the testimony of the one who

\(^{15}\) Milton, p. 726.

\(^{16}\) Milton, p. 745.
published it in 1682, had been "writ by the Authour's own hand, before he lost his sight." As Milton was almost totally blind by 1652, it is probable that he produced the Moscovia around 1649-50. The History of Britain, a much larger and more comprehensive work, was published by James Allestry in 1670. There appears to have been a gap between the time that Milton completed the work and the date of its publication, for Masson and other scholars agree that Milton as early as 1648 had written four out of the six books that were to comprise The History of Britain.

It has been argued, somewhat unconvincingly, that Milton's History of Moscovia is not a work of history at all. S.B. Parks, for instance, points out that Milton's own title to his work does not include the word "history" and that the Preface suggests that it is a geographical exercise. The fact remains,


19Park's article was written as a reply to J.A. Bryant, who had postulated that Milton may have been influenced by Sir Francis Bacon's definition of "cosmographical" history. Bacon in The Advancement of Learning had
however, that most of the History of Moscovia deals with history rather than geography. Milton sensed that a geographical survey of an area relatively unknown to most Englishmen would be a useful introduction to the historical material which made up two-thirds of the work. Even the three short chapters which constitute the "geographical" section of the book, however, contain historical material on the early exploration of Russia. The fourth chapter is in the form of a chronicle of the dukes and emperors of Muscovy, and focusses on the expansion of its political influence into such remote areas as Tartary, Samoedia, and Siberia. The final chapter deals with the discovery of Russia by the English and touches upon the reception of various English traders and ambassadors at the hands of successive emperors.

defined "the history of cosmography" as being compounded of natural history, in respect of the regions themselves; history civil, in respect of the habitations, regiments, and manners of the people.

20 Sir Francis Bacon, Advancement of Learning, in Bacon: Works, VI, pp. 197-8, cited in J.A. Bryant, Jr., "Milton and the Art of History," PQ, Vol. 29, 1950, p. 27. Milton's survey of the habits of the Russian people and his description of the landscape seem to demonstrate the kind of history which Bacon defined.
Although the History of Moscovia is not a large or impressive work, it demonstrates Milton's attempts to be scholarly and accurate in his handling of historical material. Milton included at the end of his history a list of eighteen sources upon which he had drawn, and a comment to the effect that his information had been taken from the writings of "Eye-witnesses, or immediate Relaters from such as were." In the margins of the text itself Milton periodically inserted references to the sources he had consulted. His accurate reproduction of detail in the Moscovia has been demonstrated by scholars who have carefully scrutinized the work. There is, for example, in the first chapter a paragraph in which Milton makes use of thirteen numbers concerning latitudes, distances, and other forms of measurement, all of which have been proven correct.

Far from being "a précis" which "could have been done in a week by a compiler who knew what he wanted," as Parks suggests, the History of Moscovia reflects


Milton's personal views and attitudes; it is not merely a compilation but a synthesis of historical materials unified by Milton's personality. For example, he praises Russian women for their obedience to their husbands and records with pleasure that "it is a Rule among them, that if the wife be not beaten once a week, she thinks herself not belov'd, and is the worse." Milton's attitude towards divorce can be detected in his remark that the husband has the "liberty" to divorce his wife "upon utter dislike." The work also exposes Milton's intense national feeling. He ardently extols the English for being the first to discover Russia by the dangerous "northern Ocean" route. Milton exults in the fact that King James of England had acted as a mediator between the Russians and the Poles. He also expresses some of his attitudes on religious issues. His resentment towards "forcers of conscience" can be detected in his praise of the Samoeds, in whose land "no man forc'd to Religion." An indignant comment on the behavior of the Russian priesthood echoes his outburst in "Lycidas":

They observe 4 Lents, have Service in their Churches daily, from two hours before dawn to Evening; yet for Whoredom, Drunkenness and Extortion none worse than the Clergy.  

Milton expressed in the *History of Moscovia* his ideas on the significant role played by individuals on the stage of history. There was no doubt in Milton's mind that a man who possessed integrity and moral courage could completely alter the trend of events. For example, in his account of the lengthy feud between the Russians and the Poles, Milton tells of a humble Russian butcher whose indignation against the corruption of the nobility roused his fellow citizens to follow him in armed uprising. A similar incident is recorded in Book XI of *Paradise Lost*, where Milton portrays Noah as an upright individual whom God used to perpetuate the human race. Adam thus exclaims on Milton's behalf:

> Far less I now lament for one whole World Of wicked Sons destroy'd, than I rejoice For one Man found so perfect and so just, That God voutsafes to raise another World From him .... (PL, XI, 874-878)

Milton's most extensive treatment of historical

materials in prose is to be found in his *History of Britain*. An autobiographical comment in *The Reason of Church Government* suggests that Milton had long been interested in the subject of England's "noble achievements" and had even contemplated the possibility of producing an epic in which the hero would be a king or knight from the pre-conquest era. Milton's ambition to write an epic was not fulfilled until many years afterwards in his creation of *Paradise Lost*, whereas his interest in the early achievements of the British people expressed itself in the prose *History of Britain*. His national pride can be detected in the subtitle, which states that the work is concerned primarily with England; it also appears in the opening pages of the text, where he expresses the wish that the work will redound "to the good of the British Nation."\(^26\)

The arrangement of the subject matter in *The History of Britain* is basically chronological rather than thematic, for it commences with the "first traditional beginnings" of Britain in the dim past and treats in order of time the major periods of British history down to the Norman Conquest. There is a trace of wish-

ful thinking on Milton's part as he opens the first book. He suggests that "with much reason" we may infer "that the Island of Britain had her dwellers, her affairs" (page 3) before the deluge at the time of Noah. He confesses, however, that the history of Britain prior to the coming of the Romans is shrouded in uncertainty. The second book deals with the Roman occupation of Britain from 53 B.C. to 410 A.D., when the Emperor Honorius withdrew the Roman legions from Britain. Milton's admiration for classical culture is evident in his comment that "of the Romans we have cause not to say much worse, then that they beate us into some civilitie." The third, fourth, and fifth books treat the arrival of the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons, and the subsequent flourishing of Anglo-Saxon culture throughout England. In the sixth book Milton relates in a tone of scathing irony the victory of the Danes over the British:

The Danes ... like wild Beasts or rather Sea-Monsters to thir Water-stables, accomplishing by Christmas the Circuit of thir whole years good Deeds ....


The work ends with an account of the crowning of William of Normandy, "an out-landish Conqueror," as King of England in 1066.

Milton's frequent references to the sources he had employed in *The History of Britain* indicate that he was conscious of the fact that some of his authorities were more reliable than others in spite of his efforts to draw from "the antientest and best Authours." Throughout this work, as in the *Moscovia*, Milton cited the specific sources he had employed. He admitted that he had in his first chapter relied heavily on Geoffrey of Monmouth, even though he must have known that Geoffrey had been attacked as an imposter only a few decades after his death.²⁹ Geoffrey's legend of the Trojan origin of the British race had made a profound impact on the literature of romance and chivalry in England.³⁰ Milton was therefore hesitant to repudiate an idea that had "receav'd approbation from so many,"³¹ even though he did not embrace it without reservation.

The endeavour Milton made "to represent the truth


³⁰Barnes, p. 71.

naked" and to separate it "from Fables and impertinences" is nowhere more evident than in his handling of the popular legends about King Arthur. When it is remembered that Milton had at one time planned to write an epic on King Arthur, his repudiation of the legends in the interests of scholarship appears admirable. In the third book of the History of Britain Milton states that Arthur's existence had been doubted with good reason by scholars because references to Arthur had first appeared in the work of the "trivial" writer, Nennius, and in the strange "British" book of Geoffrey of Monmouth 600 years after the supposed time of Arthur.

The History of Britain is characterized by a pronounced bias. Milton's bitter attitude towards the practices and customs of the Roman Catholic church is exposed in his uncharitable and unscholarly remarks on the leading historian of the Anglo-Saxon period, the Venerable Bede. Even though Milton is forced to ack-


\[33\] Hughes, John Milton, p. 669, footnote 166.

\[34\] Milton, History of Britain, pp. 127-8.
nowledge his reliance on Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*, he attacks Bede for his "many legends of Visions and Miracles" and for his accounts of kings who had relinquished their kingdoms to take up monastic orders. While it cannot be denied that Bede accepted the idea adhered to by most of the Christians of his age that doctrines could frequently be tested as being true or false by the presence of miracles, he nevertheless included as much evidence as possible for the miraculous events which he saw fit to relate. Milton deliberately ignores this. With even less justification he terms the last part of the *Ecclesiastical History* a "Calendar rather than a History." Milton's criticism appears trivial when his own history, especially the fifth book, is compared to Bede's work, for the last part of the *Ecclesiastical History* has intimate personal touches that are noticeably absent in the annalistic portions of *The History of Britain*. Furthermore, there are very few passages in *The History of Britain* that possess the stylistic beauty of Bede's account of the conversion of King Edwin or the story of Caedmon.

Milton wrote his *History of Britain* with the specific purpose of instructing and benefiting the reader. Viewing history in terms of liberty and bondage, Milton throughout the entire work "interrupted the smooth course of History" by passing frequent judgements on those who lacked "the wisdom, the virtue, the labour, to use and maintain true libertie." Political suppression was the punishment meted out by "the hand of Heaven" against nations that had become slaves of their own vices and lusts; spiritual bondage was inevitably followed by social and political enslavement. In the "Digression" which he appended to *The History of Britain*, Milton reproached the people of England for failing to establish a "just and well amended common-wealth" when they had the opportunity to do so. Milton rested his case on the parallels he detected between the Commonwealth period and the time of the fifth-century British King, Vortigern, whose "haughty ignorance" and proneness to vice had resulted in the complete subjugation of the Britons by the Anglo-Saxon invaders.

Milton's interest in history is evident in his poetry as well as in his prose. His choice of the epic

genre for his greatest achievement, Paradise Lost, was motivated by a desire to depict history, in poetic form, on the grandest possible scale. Milton would have agreed with Dr. Johnson that

History must supply the epic writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatick energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation.  

It can, of course, be argued that the epic poet's use of historical materials differs appreciably from the methods of the historiographer. Hobbes, for example, stated that the relationship of epic to history was analogous to the connection between fancy and judgement.

In the case of Paradise Lost, however, some modification must be made, for Milton's views of history were derived largely from the traditional Christian interpretation of the Scriptures, which he regarded as authoritative and therefore absolutely true. Milton in the earlier books of Paradise Lost made use of myth, legend, and tradition, as well as biblical narrative and allegory, but in Books


XI and XII, where his views of history are more clearly depicted, he relies almost completely on Scripture. In these last two books Milton portrays the history of mankind from Eden to the final judgement.

Adam's vision of the history of the human race is based on epic precedent. The series of picture-scenes or tableaux which Michael displays to Adam resemble the pictures that Hephaistos wrought on Achilles' shield:

Also he wrought therein a herd of kine with upright horns, and the kine were fashioned of gold and tin, and with lowing they hurried from the byre to pasture beside a murmuring river .... (The Iliad, XVIII, 573-576)

Milton's pastoral scene depicting the antediluvian period of history is strikingly similar:

He look'd and saw a spacious Plain, whereon Were tents of various hue; by some were herds Of Cattle grazing .... (PL, XI, 556-558)

It is also probable that he had in mind Aeneas' vision of the glorious destiny of Rome in the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid, and Britomart's glimpse in the "charmed looking glass" of the course of British history down to

39 Hughes, John Milton, p. 441, footnote 357.

the time of Elizabeth, as related by Spenser in the third book of *The Faerie Queene*.

Milton's portrayal of history, however, differs sharply in scale and scope from these earlier epic delineations of history. His epic is not concerned with the fortunes of any one nation, however great, but with the destiny of "the whole included Race" whose actions are ultimately controlled by the "Eternal purpose" of God. History for Milton is thus a magnificent pageant which displays "supernal Grace contending with the sinfulness of Men." (PL, XI, 359-60)
CHAPTER II

Milton and the Christian View of Man's Destiny

Milton's view of man's destiny closely resembled the Christian concept of history formulated by St. Augustine in *The City of God* in the early part of the fifth century. R.G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* has termed the Christian approach to history as providential, universalistic, and epochal.¹ E.H. Carr has stressed the teleological aspect of Christian views on time.² These four terms can be applied to Milton's poetry and prose. However, Milton never made use of traditional materials without transforming them to new ends; this is particularly noticeable in his handling of historical materials, which are manipulated to conform to his emphasis on the unifying will of God. Milton, like Augustine, saw the process of time as a conflict between the forces of good and evil, but he


narrowed it down to a conflict between good and evil wills, the latter signifying opposition to the omnipotent will of God. The providential view of man's destiny was, therefore, particularly appealing to Milton. His purpose in writing *Paradise Lost* (apart from his desire to be "dear to God and famous to all ages") was to "assert Eternal Providence/And justify the ways of God to men." For Milton the essence of history was what God's "Eternal purpose hath decreed." The universalism of traditional Christian ideas on historical processes was acceptable to Milton insofar as it expressed the all-embracing plans of God for mankind. Milton, however, stressed the importance of individual obedience to God's plans; every individual was directly beneath the "great task-Master's eye." Milton's view of time, like Augustine's, was epochal, but in an entirely different way. Milton did not adopt Augustine's neat, symmetrical patterns in his portrayal of the destiny of mankind in Books XI and XII of *Paradise Lost*. Stressing the fall of man and the redemptive work of Christ, Milton regarded history as a dynamic, yet syncopated, process by which God's will was worked out through individuals and nations. Milton's view of time was also teleological,
for he saw history proceeding towards a goal; the process of time was infused with the energy and dynamism of the will of God.

The Christian view of man's destiny was derived from the Old and New Testaments. Augustine had stated clearly in The City of God, that his concepts of historical development were based on the Scriptures, which all Christians of his age acknowledged as having "divine authority." The historical writings of the "pagans" on the other hand, were considered unreliable, since they had not been given to mankind by means of divine revelation. One early twentieth-century scholar has analyzed the impact of Christian ideas on history:

There is no more momentous revolution in the history of thought than this, in which the achievements of thinkers and workers, of artists, philosophers, poets, and statesmen, were given up for the revelation of prophets and a gospel of worldly renunciation .... The sacred Scriptures of the Jews had replaced the literature of antiquity. A revolution was

taking place in the history of History .... The authority of a revealed religion sanctioned but one scheme of history through the vast and intricate evolution of the antique world.  

Milton's position regarding the relationship of Scripture to secular histories was more complex than that of the early Christian historians. As a late Renaissance scholar and humanist Milton admired the works of the classical historians, poets, and philosophers. In his Of Education Milton made it clear that a thorough knowledge of the "choice histories" of antiquity was required of one who wished to gain a "universal insight into things." As a Puritan, however, Milton stated in his introduction to The Christian Doctrine that he adhered "to the Holy Scriptures alone."  

The sum of Christian truth, which embraced sacred history as well as doctrine, was to be found in the pages of holy writ; the Scriptures were "that Divine Revelation disclosed to all ages by Christ." In his accounts of the creation of the world and the fall of man in Paradise Lost, Milton


appealed to the Holy Spirit (who is poetically addressed as "Heav'nly Muse," "Urania," and "Celestial Patroness") to "govern" his narration of materials which he accepts without question as authentic.

Milton's efforts to suppress his admiration for classical literature and history (which were frequently inseparable) indicate an underlying tension between his humanism and his puritanism. In the poem, "On The Morning of Christ's Nativity," Milton sadly repudiates the gods of Greece and Rome:

The Oracles are dumb ....
... With flow'r-inwov'n tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets
mourn. (ll. 173, 187-8)

In the account of the activities of the fallen angels in hell in the first book of *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes at some length Homer's story of Mulciber's fall "sheer o'er the Crystal Battlements." Suddenly remembering that the story is not from the Bible, Milton breaks the continuity of his beautiful poetry to insert these harsh lines:

... thus they relate,
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before; nor aught avail'd him now.
(PL, I, 746-8)
In *Paradise Regained* Milton argues, somewhat unconvincingly, that Hebrew history and law were so "strew'd with Hymns" that they aroused the admiration of the Greeks. (PR, IV, 334-8)

Milton's repudiation of classical history and literature appears throughout his works only in places where he feels obligated to choose between the revealed truth of Scripture and human learning and wisdom. He was too much of a humanist to treat secular learning lightly. Unlike some of the early Patristic writers such as Tertullian, who had exclaimed "It is impossible, therefore certain," Milton was anxious to give reason its due. He did not revel in the miraculous. His irritation at the "blind, astonish'd" monks who were "more fond of miracles than apprehensive of truth" in their treatment of early British history, indicates his cast of mind. He had absorbed the Renaissance idea of the primacy of reason to a much greater degree than some other seventeenth-century men of letters. Unlike Sir Thomas Browne, for example, Milton did not love to lose himself in a


8Carr, *What is History?*, p. 110.
Nevertheless, as a Puritan Milton believed implicitly that the Scriptures were the only repositories of fixed truth and that God enabled individuals to understand them "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." Because he was certain that God had revealed his will and plan for mankind through the Holy Scriptures alone, Milton felt that secular learning and wisdom were ultimately unnecessary, regardless of their appeal to the human mind:

... he who receives
Light from above, from the fountain of light
No other doctrine needs, though granted true;
But these are false, or little else but dreams.  
(PR, IV, 288-91)

The highest form of reason was, therefore, not to be found in the "schools of the philosophers" but simply in the recognition and acceptance of the will of God which had been revealed to humanity in the Scriptures.

Milton's views on the destiny of mankind were, in their basic outlines, parallel to those of St. Augustine who, relying heavily on the Scriptures, had

given expression to the Christian philosophy of history in *The City of God*. In this Christian classic Augustine had demonstrated that the process of history was to be regarded as a struggle between the forces of good and evil. The "City of God" included all those "predestined to reign eternally with God," whereas the "City of Satan" was comprised of those who had been foreordained "to suffer eternal punishment with the devil."^{10}

History for Augustine was not confined to the course of time; it was integrally linked to eternity, for the community of elect believers was

> a city surpassing glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat.^{11}

In his presentation of man's destiny in *The City of God*, Augustine alluded to a passage from the new Testament familiar to the Christians of his day when he commented that there were only two kinds of human society "according to the language of the Scriptures":

> The one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the Spirit.^{12}


The passage in Paul's epistle to the Galatians to which Augustine made reference indicated that there was a perpetual conflict between the "children of promise" and the "children of the bondwoman." Augustine applied this idea to his concepts of the process of time, which he saw as a constant struggle between the forces of good and evil. Milton throughout his works accentuated these early Christian ideas of conflict by emphasizing the role of conflicting wills in history.

The stress which Milton placed upon the concept of will can easily be detected in the second chapter of The Christian Doctrine, in which he discussed the attributes of God. After a rapid survey of God's immensity, eternity, immutability and other attributes, Milton paused to discuss somewhat more fully the omnipotence and unity of God. He then proceeded to treat at great length the characteristics he associated with God's will. These characteristics were holiness, graciousness, faithfulness, and justice, all of which were emphasized in Milton's views on history. God's holiness

Augustine, The City of God, XIV, 1, 239.

and purity did not permit Him to tolerate rebellion in heaven; Satan and his hosts were therefore thrust out from God's presence into hell. God's graciousness and faithfulness were manifested in his kindly treatment of Adam and Eve, who repented of their "willful crime" of disobedience to his will. All of God's ways were "just... and justifiable to men." (SA, 293-5)

Since God's will was unquestionably good as far as Milton was concerned, all forms of opposition to it were evil. The cardinal sin of Satan and his hosts was their wilful opposition to God, who alone possessed complete authority. The "hot hell" that always burned in Satan could never be extinguished as long as his "unconquerable will" set itself against the Almighty. There was nothing intrinsically evil about the fruit that Adam and Eve ate in the garden of Eden; it was not the apple that corrupted our first parents but their deliberate act of disobeying the commandment of God that brought them to ruin. In the last two books of Paradise Lost, where numerous examples of human sinfulness and error are recorded, it is interesting to note that, apart from a few isolated references to tyranny, luxury and sensuality, there is very little that arouses one's moral indignation.14 The basic sin of mankind, as

14 Roy Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque, p. 79.
seen by Milton in the lengthy survey of human destiny at the end of his epic, was their failure to conform to the will of God.

There was a close relationship between Milton's views on history and his concepts of good and evil, for Milton saw history as a drama which portrayed God's will triumphing over all forms of opposition. Satan's rebellion in heaven, which was the first cataclysmic event of history, or pre-history, was the occasion for God's creation of mankind:

But lest his heart exalt him in the harm
Already done, to have dispeopl'd heav'n,
My damage fondly deem'd, I can repair
That detriment, if such it be to lose
Self-lost, and in a moment will create
Another World, out of one man a Race
Of men innumerable .... (PL, VII, 150-156)

The fall of man in Eden, which at first appeared to be an unqualified triumph for Satan, was counteracted by God's reduction of Satan to "a monstrous serpent" and by the Son's request of the Father that mankind be redeemed. Throughout Books XI and XII Milton showed God actively interfering in human affairs by overcoming evil with good:

... I am sent
To show thee what shall come in future days
To thee and to thy Offspring; good with bad
Expect to hear, supernal Grace contending
With sinfulness of Men .... (PL, XI, 356-360)
Christian views on the process of time were characterized by their emphasis on the operations of divine providence. While Collingwood is not entirely accurate in his remark that the providential idea of history was "totally absent from Greco-Roman historiography"\(^{15}\) it is certainly true that Christians took far more seriously than the Greeks or Romans the concept that all human affairs were ultimately controlled and directed by the hand of heaven. Virgil poetically reiterates throughout *The Aeneid* the idea that the Gods were concerned about the future of Rome, but the reader gets the impression that Virgil does not take too seriously the love-quarrels of Jove and Juno which ostensibly control the actions of the leading human characters in the epic. The Christian historian, however, had a profound reverence for one God, whom he believed ruled omnipotently but benevolently in the affairs of men. Augustine dogmatically affirmed that

human kingdoms are established by divine providence. And if any one attributes their existence to fate, because he calls the will or the power of God itself by the name of fate, let him keep his opinion, but correct his language.\(^{16}\)


\(^{16}\)Augustine, *The City of God*, V, 1, 54.
Milton's emphasis on the will of God throughout his poetry and prose indicated that he, like Augustine and Calvin, could not think of human destiny as having ultimate meaning apart from divine providence. Augustine had stated that human governments were established by divine providence, and Calvin had dogmatically postulated that God's will was "the cause of all things" and that "his providence was the determinative principle for all human plans and works." Both of these influential Christian thinkers had explicitly ruled out classical concepts relating to the role of fortune and faith in human affairs. Augustine attacked those who assumed either that events did "not proceed from some intelligible order "or that they took place independently of the will of God and man, by the necessity of a certain order." Calvin similarly devaluated fortune by stating that "God's providence exercises authority over fortune in directing its end."
Generally speaking, all Christian views of history agree on this point.

Milton aligned himself with Augustine and Calvin in his views on providence. In *The Christian Doctrine* he argued that fate could be "nothing but a divine decree emanating from some almighty power." That this power was for Milton none other than God is evident in the speech of the Father to the Son just prior to his creation of the world:

... Necessity and Chance
Approach not mee, and what I will is Fate.
*(PL, VII, 173-4)*

This idea is repeated, though in a less direct manner, in Christ's repudiation of the vain philosophies of the Greek Stoics in *Paradise Regained*:

... they ... to themselves
All glory arrogate, to God give none,
Rather accuse him under usual names,
Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
Of Mortal Things .... *(PR, IV, 314-18)*

Human destiny was thus integrally linked to theology in Milton's mind. Everything that transpired in history

was ultimately motivated and directed by God. Milton was not an isolated thinker in his views on providential history, for most of the men of learning in seventeenth-century England, Puritan or otherwise, believed in a dominating providence. Nevertheless, throughout the century there had been an increasing tendency to separate history from divinity and to apply historical scholarship to secondary causes rather than to ultimate causes relating to the will of God. This tendency is not apparent in Milton's work, however, for Milton saw all historical events in terms of the unifying principle of God's controlling will.

Even though Milton viewed man's destiny as the manifestation of the providence of God, he was also adamant in his belief in the freedom of the human will. In this respect he was much closer to Augustine than to Calvin. Augustine had asserted that

> our wills themselves are included in that order of causes of human actions; He who foreknew all the causes of things would certainly among those causes not have been ignorant of our wills.  

22 Fussner, *The Historical Revolution*, p. 25.

23 Fussner, p. 25.

Augustine had thus implied that God's foreknowledge logically preceded his acts of predestination. Calvin inverted the process by affirming that

God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction.  

Although the Puritans as a group adhered to Calvin's ideas on predestination, Milton explicitly rejected them in favour of the Augustinian and Arminian doctrine of free will. In *The Christian Doctrine* Milton contended that it was absurd to separate the "will of the Deity from his eternal counsel and foreknowledge;" the whole canon of Scripture showed "that God decreed nothing absolutely, which he left in the power of free agents." Continuing his argument, Milton suggested that it would be "unworthy of God" to allow man nominally to enjoy a liberty of which he was in fact deprived. The most


interesting feature of Milton's defense of human free will is that it in no way detracts from his appreciation of the sovereignty of God:

... the will of God is not less the universal first cause because He has himself decreed that some things should be left to our own free will. 28

Milton was thus one step ahead of the Calvinists, whose prime concern was to protect God's sovereignty, for he acknowledged that God had the right to give man free will if He chose. This idea was also expressed in the third book of *Paradise Lost*, where Milton makes it clear that God's "high Decree Unchangeable" had ordained that angels and men be free to serve God by their own will, not by necessity. Milton was perceptive enough to detect that iniquity could logically be traced back to God if the concept of free will were not upheld.

... they themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
(PL, III, 116-119)

Another important characteristic of the Christian

view of man's destiny was its universalism. Greek and Roman historians had almost invariably focussed their attention on some specific country or city, usually with the intention of perpetuating the fame of the particular race or community concerned. Christian historians, on the other hand, were vitally interested in such subjects as the creation and fall of man, and the redemption of mankind as a whole, for in Christ there was "neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." (Colossians 3:11) The fascination for world history which scholars acquired as a result of the Christian idea that all men were included in God's plans made them attempt to write universal histories. As early as 221 A.D., almost two centuries before Augustine's City of God appeared, a Christian writer named Sextus Julius Africanus produced a five-volume work entitled Chronographia, in which the history of the pagans as well as that of the Jews and early Christians was given intensive consideration. The first great church historian, Eusebius, wrote a similar work, The Chronicle, about 303 A.D. The Christian view of history, with its emphasis upon universality, gained such wide acceptance

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by the eighth century that most European historians began to imitate Bede's practice of dating all events by the single universal chronology based upon the supposed date of the birth of Christ.\textsuperscript{30}

The universalism of Christian views on history was also a striking feature of Milton's conception of human destiny. His view of history embraced the past, present, and future, and all persons, including angels and devils as well as mankind. In the third book of \textit{Paradise Lost}, Milton depicted God "beholding from his prospect high" the totality of time and space. God summed up the activities of men and angels by relating to the Son that man, who would fall "deceiv'd" at the hands of the "adversary," should find grace in order to permit "Mercy and Justice both" to shine brightly "through Heav'n and Earth." (\textit{PL}, III, 133-4)

The immense scope of time suggested by this scene was given further attention in later portions of \textit{Paradise Lost}. Milton's lengthy portrayal of Raphael's visit to Adam and Eve provided him with the opportunity to relate the great events which had transpired before the

\textsuperscript{30} Collingwood, \textit{The Idea of History}, p. 51.
creation of man. Even though Milton appeared to be slightly embarrassed by the problem of relating time to eternity, he insisted that events prior to the creation of the world be considered as an integral part of the process of history:

As yet this World was not, and Chaos wild Reign'd where these Heav'n's now roll, where Earth now rests Upon her Centre pois'd, when on a day (For Time, through in Eternity, applied To motion, measures all things durable By present, past, and future) on such day As Heav'n's great Year brings forth .... (PL, V, 577-83)

This introductory speech by Raphael was followed by a detailed narration of the war in heaven and, in the following book, by a greatly expanded account of the Genesis story of the creation of the world and mankind.

Having portrayed the great events prior to the creation of man, Milton turned his attention towards the entire history of the human race between Eden and the final judgement. The divine messenger appointed by God to outline the future to Adam was the stern, militant angel, Michael, who was quite unlike the affable Gabriel, who had recounted the past to Adam and Eve while part-taking of their fête champêtre. Books eleven and twelve
of *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton intended to depict the complete history of Adam's offspring, appear from one point of view to be little more than a précis of biblical history, with an emphasis upon the story of the Hebrews. In this respect Milton's delineation of history was similar to that of the early Christian world historians. Christians had traditionally stressed the significance of the Hebrew people in the great plan of God, for it was from the line of Abraham that all of the nations of the earth were to be blessed:

Not only to the Sons of Abraham's Loins
Salvation shall be Preacht, but to the Sons
Of Abraham's Faith wherever through the world;
So in his seed all Nations shall be blest.
(P.L, XII, 447-50)

Milton's view of human society, like Augustine's, involved "the whole included Race." Augustine had divided mankind into two camps, which he termed the "City of God" and the "City of Satan." Milton, however, divided the participants of history into three groups, namely the "Elect," "the rest," and "They who neglect and scorn". (P.L, III, 184-185, 199). Each segment rep-

resented a particular attitude towards the will of God. The elect were those whose devotion to God marked them as worthy recipients of God's special favour. "The rest" were people who, through a prolonged process of "prayer, repentance, and obedience due," would eventually "safe arrive" at the gates of heaven. The third group was comprised of people who either neglected or scornfully refused to conform to the will of God; their defiant attitude placed them beyond the reach of mercy.

Of the three segments of human society, only "the elect above the rest" were of the slightest interest to Milton. Furthermore, the elect were rarely treated as a group in Milton's work, but as individuals. His outline of history at the end of *Paradise Lost* was sharply focussed on individuals who remained loyal to God when the rest of the world had lost all fear of God. Enoch, "eminent in wise deport," so enraged the multitudes around him by his words "of Right and Wrong" that he would have been "seiz'd with violent hands" had he not been snatched away by divine intervention. Noah, the "one Man found so perfect and so just" was preserved by God while the rest of the world "swam at large." (PL, XI, 626, 876) The salvation of mankind, prophesied throughout *Paradise Lost*, was to depend upon the one great
Man who would "Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat" that Adam lost.

Closely associated with Christian providential and universalistic ideas of history was the concept that the course of time could be divided into periods or epochs. Christian historians contended that God did not manipulate human affairs in an haphazard fashion, but that He had preordained and prearranged the entire course of human destiny. The task of the historian was to discover and expound God's great plan in history. The idea that history could be divided into periods or stages did not originate with the early Christian historiographers, however. The Greek mythologist, Hesiod, had expressed the concept that human history had undergone five stages, namely the golden, silver, bronze, heroes, and iron ages.32 The Roman poet, Ovid, touched upon this idea of history in *The Metamorphoses*, a work in which he portrayed history as having commenced with a Golden Age that degenerated into the Bronze and Iron Ages after the fall of Saturn. The Patristic historians absorbed the classical idea of a golden age and subsequent

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Augustine saw the fall of Adam in Eden as the beginning of the six ages of man upon the earth. Finding an analogy between the Hebrew account of creation, which was depicted in the Book of Genesis as having taken place in six consecutive days, and the "periods" of history which he detected throughout the Old and New Testaments, Augustine proceeded to organize the entire history of mankind into six epochs. The first "day" was the period from Adam to the deluge, and the second day from the deluge to Abraham. These eras were comprised of ten generations each. The third, fourth, and fifth days covered the time from Abraham to the nativity of Christ. These three periods were seen in relation to King David and the Babylonian exile of the Jews. Augustine considered the Church age to be the sixth day, and affirmed that it would conclude with the second advent of Christ. Projecting his sight far into the future, Augustine saw the seventh day, or Sabbath, as the great period of rest for God and his elect, which would merge into the Lord's Day, the eighth and eternal

Augustine's systematic delineation of the entire course of time fascinated historians and poets throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods. Edmund Spenser, with a slight modification of Augustine's eschatology, likewise anticipated the sabbath rest which was to bring the historical process to its termination:

For all that moveth, doth in Change delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbath hight:
O that great Sabbath God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight.

(FQ, VII, viii, 2)

Milton's treatment of man's destiny was strikingly different from Augustine's. The Church father's neat division of history into epochs comprised of a specific number of generations found no place in Milton's great epic, in spite of the fact that the basic subject matter employed by each writer was similar. Augustine had divided the history of mankind into seven epochs, but for Milton history was a dynamic process marked by cataclysmic events such as the fall of man and the incarnation of Christ.

34 Augustine, The City of God, XXII, 30, 663.

The theme of the fall of man, which was dealt with so intensively in *Paradise Lost*, had attracted great poets before Milton's day. The eminent medieval poet, Dante, had viewed the fall as a lapse from goodness and peace:

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The Supreme Good, who himself alone doth please,
Made man good, and for goodness, and this clime
Gave him for pledge of the eternal peace,
By his default he sojourned here small time ....
(Purgatorio, XXVIII, 91-94)
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Spenser, in "An Hymn of Heavenly Love," focussed his attention on the disastrous effects of man's forgetfulness of God's goodness:

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But man forgetful of his makers grace,
No less then Angels, whom he did ensew,
Fell from the hope of promist heavenly place,
Into the mouth of death, to sinners dew,
And all his off-spring into thraldome threw.
(ll. 120-4)
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Milton, in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, saw the fall as an act of disobedience, with grim consequences:

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Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden ....  (PL, I, 1-4)
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37 Spenser, in Smith and Selincourt, p. 594.
Yet integrally united with his view of the fall was the idea of restoration:

... till one greater Man
   Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat.
   (PL, I, 4-5)

The two greatest events of history for Milton were the fall of man through Adam and the restoration of man through Christ. The first event had been the result of disobedience to the will of God, whereas the second was brought about "by one man's firm obedience fully tried." (PR, I, 4)

The last two books of Paradise Lost, which together comprise a survey of the history of the human race, deal largely with the consequences of the fall. There are, however, throughout these books numerous references to the "woman's Seed" who would one day "bruise the serpent's head." While Milton did not, like Augustine, organize history into well-defined epochs, his outline of human destiny is not without pattern, for everything is related in some way to the fall or to the promised restoration of mankind by Christ. In Book XI Michael

shows Adam a series of tableaux depicting various human activities which had become despicable as a result of man's tendency to rebel against God's perfect will. A pastoral scene is deformed into a murder-scene; natural attraction between the sexes degenerates into lust; valour and heroic virtue deteriorate into man-slaughter. There is a parallel between the eleventh book of *Paradise Lost* and Augustine's first day or epoch, since both deal with the period from Adam to the deluge. This similarity does not extend very far, however, for Milton's account occasionally touches upon matters related to the very distant future.

In the twelfth book of *Paradise Lost*, as in the eleventh, Milton views man's destiny both in terms of the fall and of the promised restoration of man, but his emphasis shifts decidedly towards the latter aspect. Milton sees the period between the deluge and the Incarnation as one in which men are selected (or elected) by God to fulfil his will on earth. *Abraham* is thus called from his idol-worship by the Euphrates River to serve the true God in the land where his descendant the "great deliverer" will be born. Moses and Aaron are "sent from God to claim/His people from enthralment" and to ordain
laws and rites which will show how "that destin'd Seed ... shall achieve/Mankind's deliverance." (PL,XII, 170-1, 233-5) Creating an illusion of completeness in his survey of history, Milton nevertheless accentuates the roles of Joshua and King David before he introduces the long-awaited Messiah, whose "Obedience to the Law of God" annuls the doom of man.

The Christian concept of time, as formulated by Augustine and popularized in the work of numerous medieval historians such as Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede of Northumbria, differed from the classical views it replaced in its postulation that the historical process was moving towards a goal. Such classical historians as Thucydides and Lucretius had manifested very little concern for the past or the future; they had been preoccupied largely with the events of their own age. A possible exception can be made in the case of Virgil who, seeing history in terms of Rome's destiny, "prophesied" through Anchises that Caesar Augustus would "bring back the age of gold."\(^{39}\) (The Aeneid, VI, 794) All Christians, however, would

have agreed with Augustine that "The end of the City of God ... is ... the eternal happiness of the saints"\textsuperscript{40} in the presence of God.

Milton's view of man's destiny, like Augustine's, was also teleological, for he saw history proceeding towards a goal. This goal for Milton was the restoration of the unity that had been disrupted by Satan, and in turn, by man. Satan and his hosts, by placing themselves in opposition towards the will of God for refusing to confess the Son as Lord, had "broken union" with God. Similarly, mankind by their disobedience to God's "sole command" severed their original blissful relationship with God. The end of history was, therefore, both the final overthrow and utter discomfiture of Satan's forces, and the complete reconciliation of man with God.

Milton's double vision of the future is so dynamically portrayed in \textit{Paradise Lost} that it can be considered apocalyptic\textsuperscript{41} as well as teleological. History was headed towards a climactic conclusion which

\textsuperscript{40}Augustine, \textit{The City of God}, XXII, 1, 609.

\textsuperscript{41}Roy Daniells, \textit{Milton, Mannerism and Baroque}, p. 99.
would demonstrate the final triumph of God's unifying will. "The living, and forthwith the cited dead/Of all past Ages" were to be summoned "to the general Doom." (PL, III, 326-8) All the forces of evil personified by "bad men and angels" would be consigned to "eternal silence" behind the gates of hell which were to "be forever shut." The company of the Redeemed would then enter heaven, where they would enjoy "peace assur'd/And reconcilement." Finally, all judgement past, "with Joy and Love triumphing," the Son himself would turn over his "regal Sceptre" to God the Father, who was to be "All in All." (PL, III, 338-41) When God had thus finally encompassed all things by the unifying power of his will, time would be no more.
Chapter III

Man's Destiny Viewed in Terms of Liberty and Bondage

Milton, like a number of historians both before and after him, felt that one of the first tasks of the historian was to commend praiseworthy actions and to censure evil deeds. Tacitus had held that it was the duty of the recorder of historical events to commemorate every worthy action and "to hold the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds."¹ The early British historian, Gildas, whose work *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* was frequently cited by Milton in *The History of Britain*, stated that his subject was "the destruction of good and the growth of evil in the land."² In *The History of the World*, a work particularly admired by the Puritans because of its stress on the role of providence in history,³ Sir Walter Raleigh noted

¹Cited in Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, p. 35.


how kings and kingdoms have flourished;
and for what virtue and piety God made
prosperous, and for what vice and deformity
he made wretched, both the one and the other. 4

The idea that God controlled history by rewarding
the righteous and punishing the wicked was as acceptable
to the Royalists as to Puritans such as Milton, for the
well-known diarist John Evelyn recorded shortly after
the Restoration that the "carcases" of the arch-rebels,
Cromwell, Bradshaw and Ireton were ignominiously ex­
posed by hanging, thanks to the "stupendous and
inscrutable judgments of God." 5

Moral purpose is particularly evident in Milton's
treatment of history. There are very few traces in his
prose or verse of historical material existing for its
own sake. 6 In the opening paragraphs of The History of
Britain, his most formal historical work, Milton ex­
pressed his intention "to relate well and orderly things
worth the noting, so as may best instruct and benefit
them that read." 7 Even the Brief History of Moscova

5 Cited in Coffin and Witherspoon, eds., Seventeenth-
Century Prose and Poetry, p. 525.

6 Roy Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque, p. 98.

7 Milton, History of Britain, p. 3.
is replete with Milton's personal comments on the moral and religious attitudes of the Russians. Historical materials in *Paradise Lost* are similarly treated. In his account of the fall of the angels and the creation of the world Raphael intermittently warns Adam to obey God and to guard against passion. The course of human destiny in Books XI and XII is related by Michael for the express purpose of teaching Adam moral values and safeguards:

... know I am sent  
To show thee what shall come in future days
To thee and to thy Offspring; good with bad Expect to hear ... thereby to learn
True patience, and to temper joy with fear
And pious sorrow, equally inur'd
By moderation either state to bear.  

(*PL*, XI, 356-63)

The moral theme which pervaded Milton's work was, in Addison's words, "that obedience to the will of God makes men happy, and that disobedience makes them miserable." This theme Milton developed in terms of liberty and bondage. Liberty for Milton was to be found only in absolute conformity to God's will; bondage was the inevitable outcome of the slightest deviation.

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8Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, Vol. 4 (Edinburgh, Bell and Bradfute, 1816), No. 369, p. 226. Addison's remark was a perceptive generalization, but it should be remembered that Milton did not regard the relationship between providence and human will as simple. Many
from it. The course of events was, therefore made up of "supernal Grace contending with sinfulness of Men." (PL, XI, 350-60). Milton's emphasis on the omnipotent will of God in his treatment of the Christian view of man's destiny was counterbalanced by an equal stress upon the responses of nations and individuals to the will of God. God's will was an indisputable absolute, but the free will of man was operative in history. There was, therefore, a direct connection between the events of history and human moral behavior. In the succinct words of Saurat, man's destiny was for Milton "but a translation into events of the psychological drama enacted in man's free soul."  

Milton's conception of liberty was based on the Pauline doctrine that Christ had redeemed man from the yoke of the Mosaic law. In his discussion of liberty in The Christian Doctrine he quoted Galatians 5:1,

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

Milton's contemporaries held a view of providence which did not allow for the efficacy of free will. Others, on the other hand, considered penitence and grace more easily available than Milton did.

9Denis Saurat, Milton, Man and Thinker (London, Dent and
Paul's admonition was worked into Milton's comprehensive definition of Christian liberty as

that whereby we are loosed as it were by enfranchisement, through Christ our deliverer, from the bondage of sin, and consequently from the rule of the law and of man; to the intent that being made sons instead of servants, and perfect men instead of children, we may serve God in love through the guidance of the Spirit of truth. 10 (italics mine)

Liberty had no meaning for Milton apart from voluntary service and devotion to God. Like Donne, he could have exclaimed

Take me to You, imprison me, for I
Except You enthrall me, never shall be free. 11

Intimately connected with Milton's concept of liberty was his belief that the exercise of one's free will against the will of God led inevitably to bondage. This idea was also biblical in its origins, for Old

Sons, 1946 first published 1925, p. 162.

11 Cited in Coffin and Witherspoon, p. 34. (Holy Sonnet No. 14)
Testament history profusely illustrated that the children of Israel were overcome by their enemies whenever they "forgat the Lord their God." (Judges 3:7)

Christ had drawn attention to the spiritual enslavement of those who indulged in wickedness in his statement, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (John 8:34) The relationship between internal and external servitude was dealt with by Augustine, who maintained that "the prime cause of slavery is sin, which brings man under the dominion of his fellow--that which does not happen save by the judgment of God." Milton employed these traditional ideas in order to emphasize that disobedience to God's will inexorably produced both spiritual and political enslavement. This concept was amplified in his prose and verse. The first climactic event in Milton's broad scope of history in *Paradise Lost* is a convenient example. Satan, who prided himself on his "unconquerable Will" was brought to shame by Abdiel, the valiant cherub who pointed out to him that he was to himself "enthralled." He had become ("O worst imprison-

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ment!"") the dungeon of himself, and had made in his own mind a hell from which he could not escape. His followers, who, in the words of Belial, preferred "Hard liberty before the yoke of servile Pomp" merely exchanged their joyful service to God for a degrading servitude to the rebel who had brought them into total ruin. At the beginning of Book XII Milton outlined the rise and fall of nations throughout history in terms of liberty and bondage. The archangel, Michael, having aroused Adam's indignation by a prophecy of a particularly reprehensible act of tyranny, paused to explain to Adam the close connection between spiritual and political enslavement:

... sometimes Nations will decline so low From Virtue, which is reason, that no wrong But Justice, and some fatal curse annex Deprives them of thir outward liberty, Thir inward lost. ([PL, XII, 97-101])

Milton elaborated on his views of political freedom and bondage in *The History of Britain*. One of his main purposes in writing the work was to demonstrate that "the gaining or losing of libertie is the greatest change to better or to worse that may befall a nation under civil government."\(^{13}\) Milton placed such great

stress on the calamities which beset the Britons because of their departure from the paths of virtue that the work can almost be regarded as a spiritual, as well as a political, history of the British peoples. For example, he recorded that when the Romans left England in the early part of the fifth century, the Britons' lack of "the wisdom, the virtue, the labour, to use and maintain true libertie" caused them to "shrink more wretchedly under the burden of thir own libertie, than before under a foren yoke."\(^{14}\) His account of the Norman Conquest was couched in similar terms. Because of their dissolute life, the people of England "fitted themselves for servitude ... to an out-landish Conqueror."\(^{15}\) His intentional didacticism is clearly evident in the moral application with which he terminated his history of the early British period:

> These were the causes of Misery to our ancestors, so this age should "fear from like Vices without amendment the Revolution of like Calamities."\(^{15}\)

It is probably an oversimplification of Milton's views


to suggest that he believed that history repeated itself, but it cannot be disputed that Milton took for
granted the concept that moral decay was invariably followed by political decline. His belief that God
punished nations and individuals who spurned his will was, of course, balanced by the idea that righteousness
was frequently rewarded by political and military ascendancy. In spite of his dislike for the Venerable Bede, Milton accepted without reservation the Anglo-Saxon historian's assumption that the few military successes of the British were directly traceable to resurgences of piety in the nation.

The personal concern Milton had for political and civil freedom caused him to align himself with the Puritan anti-royalist cause headed by Oliver Cromwell. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* Milton appealed to history in his contention that it had been lawful "through all ages" for the people of a nation to depose and put to death a tyrant or a wicked king. Milton commenced his argument by postulating that all men, having been created in the image of God, were "born free" and therefore "born to command."\(^16\) As a result of Adam's

\(^{16}\text{Milton, } \textit{Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, in Hughes, p. 754.} \)
transgression, however, mankind began to be at variance with each other. In order to have mutual protection, they agreed to invest authority in one whose wisdom and integrity placed him naturally above the rest. The institution of regal authority was thus based on "entrusted power." About eleven years afterwards, dangerously close to the Restoration, Milton in *The Ready and Easy Way* defended the Commonwealth for its abolition of the "regal bondage" that had proved so "unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous."

Milton supported his anti-monarchical views by referring to historical precedents in the Scriptures and secular histories. He pointed out that God had strongly disapproved of the Israelites when they demanded a king, for their request involved the replacing of their theocratic government by a monarchy. Milton thus used

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Scripture to defend his transference of loyalty from earthly monarchs to God himself. In his appeals to secular history he referred to the early British historian, Gildas, who had recorded that kings were elected and deposed in the early post-Roman period by the people, who were merely exercising their original rights. The institution of monarchy was of pragmatic value only as long as it fulfilled its task of preserving liberty and the common weal.

Milton's anti-royalist bias was reflected in much of his historical work. The History of Britain is replete with Milton's personal comments on the behavior of kings who either behaved tyrannically or were the means of bringing their subjects into spiritual and political bondage because of their folly and vice. Vortigern, the "proud unfortunate Tyrant" whose invitation of the Anglo-Saxons to England proved disastrous for the native Britons, was singled out by Milton for special reprobation. This "covetous, lustful, luxurious" king, "prone to all vice" and "careless of the common danger" finally became a pawn in the hands of the Saxon king, Hengist, who gave the sinful Britons the cruel treatment they deserved.

In the last two books of Paradise Lost Milton

19Milton, History of Britain, p. 113.
almost completely ignored the roles of earthly kings in the history of the world, but the few remarks on monarchs whose names he saw fit to insert clearly exposed his bias. Nimrod was portrayed as a self-appointed tyrant who made use of his servile subjects to build a tower from earth to heaven in order to "get themselves a name." His project failed completely when God confused the language of the builders, who were thereby dispersed, much to the amusement of the heavenly hosts. Another example of a tyrannical monarch was the "lawless" Pharaoh, whose opposition towards the children of God finally brought him to an ignominious death in the Red Sea. King David, however, was favourably described by Milton, for he was appointed by God to be the progenitor of the King of Kings, whose reign would be eternal. Christ, who alone had restored freedom to mankind, was the "true and rightful and only to be expected King."²⁰

The concern which Milton showed for political liberty was complemented by his high regard for domestic and religious freedom. In his Second Defense of the English People, a work in which he outlined the three species of liberty as "religious, domestic, and civil,"

Milton went on to categorize domestic liberty under three headings, namely "the conditions of the conjugal tie, the education of the children, and the free publication of the thoughts." These three branches of domestic liberty had been treated, respectively, in _The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Of Education, and Areopagitica._

Milton's independent attitude towards marriage and divorce emerged in the opening paragraphs of _The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce_, for he immediately launched an attack against the restricting influences of custom, that "mere face" which along with error "would persecute and chase away all truth and solid wisdom out of human life." Having thus disposed of custom, Milton proceeded to show that Christ did not abrogate the Mosaic law which had permitted divorce on certain grounds besides adultery. Milton's purpose in writing the tractate was to protect both men and women from the "unworthy bondage" of "an ill marriage." He even went so far as to suggest that mental incompatibility was

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22 Milton, _The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce_, in Hughes, p. 697.
a more valid reason for divorce than "natural frigidity."

In other works Milton demonstrated an equally ardent concern for conjugal liberty, but his focus had shifted so as to favour the rights of the men. Domestic freedom could be maintained only by the jurisdiction of men over women. Adam, by "being overcome by female charm" and thereby resigning his manhood, transgressed against the will of God and brought mankind into bondage. Milton in his survey of the course of time at the end of Paradise Lost portrayed the tendency of men to be ensnared by the wiles of "beauteous" women "empty of all good wherein consists Woman's domestic honor and chief praise." (PL, XI, 616-17) Men by "effeminate slackness" would

... yield up all thir virtue, all thir fame
Ignobly, to the trains and to the smiles
Of these fair Atheists .... (PL, XI, 623-5)

Milton also expressed his views on the right relationship between men and women in The History of Britain. He recorded, for example, that in the pre-Roman era in Britain a certain Queen Martia enforced excellent laws. The idea of any woman giving laws to men was so objectionable to Milton that he could not refrain from
remarking that the queen's conduct could be justified only because of her "son's minority." Even this did not completely appease Milton, so he divulged a secret to his readers: the laws were not really hers but her counsellors, "for laws are Masculin Births." Queen Boadicea, who is usually praised in modern history texts as a British heroine because of her crafty methods of opposition towards the Roman invaders, was placed in a very poor light in Milton's History of Britain. Exasperated at the idea of a woman being the commander-in-chief of the British military forces, Milton spared no pains in his comments on the defeat of her "mad Crew" and her ignominious death. Milton's contempt for women who deprived their husbands of their rightful privileges was displayed in his recast of Bede's account of the wife of Egfrid, a Northumbrian King. Bede had related in the fourth book of his Ecclesiastical History that the body of Queen Ethelrida "suffered no corruption" after being in the grave for sixteen years, because she had remained a virgin until the day of her death in a monastery. Milton, in his recounting of


the incident, recorded that the queen, "having undertak'n Wedlock ... persisted twelve years in the obstinat refusal of his bed, thinking to live the purer life." Milton thus regarded the situation as a form of "adversity" endured by the unfortunate king. With examples such as these Milton suggested that domestic and social freedom were threatened when women in any way usurped authority over men.

The second branch of liberty, according to Milton's outline in The Second Defense of the English People, was related to education. There was a direct link between Milton's concept of liberty and his views on education, for he believed that the purpose of education was to direct men into the paths of "virtue, the only genuine source of ... individual liberty." Virtue, however, was for Milton directly connected with devotion and obedience to God. The end of learning was to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue.

Milton's ideas on the relationship between knowledge and virtue were incorporated into his views on historiography in *Paradise Lost*. Raphael, addressed as "Divine Historian" by Adam, outlined the origins of things solely for the purpose of warning Adam against departing from virtue by disobeying the command of God. When Adam's intellectual curiosity motivated him to ask questions concerning celestial motions (a topic quite unrelated to the history Raphael had been narrating in order to instruct Adam), the angel proceeded to enlighten him as to the dangers of uncontrolled speculation:

... apt the Mind or Fancy is to rove  
Uncheck't, and of her roving is no end.  
(*PL, VIII, 188-9*)

Similarly, Michael's lengthy preview of men's destiny was given to Adam with the specific intention of admonishing him to add virtue to necessary knowledge. Adam's response to Michael's survey of history indicated that he had learned his lesson well:

Greatly instructed, I shall hence depart,  
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill  
Of Knowledge, what this Vessel can contain;  
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.  
Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,  
And love with fear the only God .... (*PL, XII, 557-62*)
Milton also believed strongly that the right kind of knowledge should end in action.\textsuperscript{28} His puritanical desire to be "dear to God" was linked to his humanistic ambition to be "famous to all ages." Neither aspiration could be realized apart from dedicated service to mankind. An education could not be called generous unless it fitted "a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war."\textsuperscript{29} This idealistic concept of education was closely linked to Milton's ideas of liberty and bondage, for he felt that individuals with the right kind of knowledge could "at some time or other save an army." King Alfred, whose exploits were depicted in \textit{The History of Britain}, seemed to be a depiction of Milton's ideal of a "universal" man, for he "thirsted after all liberal knowledge," was "exemplary in devotion," and directed the "many glorious labours of his life" both to peace and war, so that "justice seem'd in his daies not to flourish only, but to tryumph."\textsuperscript{30}


\textsuperscript{29}Of \textit{Education}, in Hughes, p. 633.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{History of Britain}, pp. 220-223.
Milton's praise of virtuous action was counterbalanced by his harsh censure of "ignoble ease and peaceful sloth." Domestic as well as political and social liberty could be maintained only by astute and diligent men who were entirely devoted to the will of God. Milton expressed through Samson his contempt for those who were unwilling to pay the moral price of Freedom:

But what more oft in Nations grown corrupt,  
And by thir vices brought to servitude,  
Than to love Bondage more than Liberty,  
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty.  

(3A, 268-71)

Milton also illustrated in *The History of Britain* the connection which he saw between idleness and bondage. The tendency of the British to adopt indiscriminately the Roman manner of life aroused Milton's disdain:

Then were the Roman fashions imitated, ... after a while the incitements also and materials of Vice, and voluptuous life, proud Buildings, Baths, and the elegance of Banqueting; which the foolisher sort call'd civiltie, but was indeed a secret Art to prepare them for bondage.  

He similarly attributed the frequent victories of the

31 *History of Britain*, pp. 73-4.
Danes in the ninth century to the moral lethargy of the Saxons, who were "brok'n with luxurie and sloth" and therefore "fitted by thir own vices for no condition but servile."\(^{32}\)

One form of virtue stressed by Milton in his outline of human destiny at the end of *Paradise Lost* was temperance. Michael announced to Adam that one of his main purposes in predicting what would transpire in the future was to demonstrate the value of moderation, for approximately eighty lines of Book XI are devoted to the dangers of intemperance. Adam was forced to behold the Lazar-house of the world, full of disease-racked people suffering from intemperance, which would bring greater numbers to the grave than the combined ravages of fire, flood, and famine.\(^{33}\) With almost cruel insistence Michael pointed out to Adam, who was weeping at the ghastly sight, that the disastrous effects of intemperance had begun to plague mankind the moment that he and Eve had yielded to "ungovern'd appetite" by partaking of the

\(^{32}\)History of Britain, p. 198.

\(^{33}\)George C. Taylor and Merritt Hughes have drawn attention to the striking resemblances between Milton's list of diseases and that of the French poet, Du Bartas, in *La Sepmain ou Creation*, published in complete form in 1608. Milton's list, however, is considerably shorter.
forbidden fruit. Michael then partially consoled Adam by showing him that many diseases could be avoided by "the rule of not too much ... due nourishment, not gluttonous delight." (PL, XI, 531-3). At the end of his portrayal of history Michael once again reminded Adam to include temperance in his list of virtues.

Milton's attacks on the vice of intemperance were occasionally veiled in heavy-handed humour. In Comus he showed that weary travellers, who through "fond intemperate thirst" partook of the "drought of Phoebus," were changed into brutish animals such as wolves, frogs, or goats. With scathing irony Milton then added:

And they, so perfect is their misery,  
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
But boast themselves more comely than before ....  
(Comus, 73-5)

Similar invectives against intemperance found their way into Milton's histories. In The History of Britain, for instance, he digressed to comment on the "matchless drinker," Bonosus, a Roman emperor who "hang'd himself, and gave occasion of a ready jest made on him for his much drinking: 'Heer hangs a tankard, not a man.'"34

34History of Britain, p. 88.
Having permitted the reader to join him in beholding the hilarious sight, Milton returned to his chronological outline of British history.

Milton's belief that slothfulness and intemperance were invariably punished with outward as well as inward bondage was supplemented by a corresponding conviction that virtue was unassailable. In Comus there are several Miltonic maxims relating to the impregnability of virtue. The elder brother condescendingly informs his timorous brother that their sister, by possessing chastity, "is clad in complete steel." When the second again begins to waver, he is reassured that "virtue may be assail'd but never hurt." The Lady herself, upon being confronted by Comus, challenges her antagonist with these words:

Fool, do not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind.
(Comus, 663-4)

Virtue, which for Milton was personal devotion to God, was the highest form of heroism. It was also the only safeguard of liberty:

Unless that liberty which is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away, which
alone is the fruit of piety, of justice, of temperance, and unadulterated virtue, ... there will not long be wanting one who will snatch from you by treachery what you have acquired by arms. 35

These ideas were illustrated in *Paradise Lost*. Raphael, in his recounting of the war in heaven, singled out the seraph, Abdiel, to illustrate to Adam the meaning of true valour. This "fervent Angel," who remained loyal to God in the midst of "innumerable false," was able to withstand the armed hosts of Satan without raising his sword. He was commended directly by God after he had returned from the enemy camp:

Servant of God, well done, well thou hast fought
The better fight, who single hast maintain'd
Against revolted multitudes the Cause
Of Truth, in word mightier than they in Arms;
And for the testimony of Truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence .... (PL, VI, 29-35)

"Far worse to bear than violence" is a phrase which gives us a clue to Milton's great reluctance to admit that history was full of examples of the knowing few who were martyred for their faith by the erring thousands

35 The Second Defense, in Hughes, p. 835.
because God for some inexplicable reason had not seen fit to come to their rescue. For Milton, it was only just "that he who in debate of Truth hath won should win in Arms." In Abdiel's case this principle was put into effect, for Abdiel with a "noble stroke" made Satan recoil ten huge paces backwards. When, however, hundreds were massacred in Piemont in his own day, Milton was forced to recognize the grim realities connected with martyrdom. The news so enraged Milton's righteous indignation that he, in some of the most powerful poetry he ever penned, cried out to God to avenge the bloody deed:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold,
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our Fathers worship't Stocks and Stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy Sheep .... (Sonnet XVIII, "On the Late Massacre in Piemont," 1-6)

Having expressed himself in this manner, Milton went on to conquer his anger by voluntarily submitting to providence and by standing upon patience instead of vengeance:

... Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant: that from these may grow
A hundredfold .... (ll. 10-13)
Milton's belief in the unassailability of virtue persisted, however, and appeared in *Paradise Lost*. Near the beginning of Book IX he postulated that Christian fortitude was far superior to the "fabl'd Knights" and "battles feigned" of epic warfare. He also stated his intention to praise "heroic martyrdom." The last two books of *Paradise Lost*, however, show that while Milton consistently stressed Christian fortitude, he evaded the issue of "heroic martyrdom" as much as possible. Most of the earlier tableaux of Book XI which Michael set before Adam depicted individuals whose devotion to God protected them from the onslaughts of their enemies. Abel was murdered, but Enoch, Noah, and others were preserved by means of the direct intervention of God in the world. Michael's portrayal of the Church period of history also demonstrated Milton's tendency to evade the fact of martyrdom. While some would be done to death for their faith in Christ, believers would be "oft supported so as shall arrange Thir proudest persecutors" and would go on to win great numbers for Christ until

... at length
Thir Ministry peform'd, and race well run,
Thir doctrine and thir story written left,
They die ....  (*PL*, XII, 405-7)
The third "material question" relating to domestic liberty, as outlined by Milton in The Second Defense, dealt with "the free publication" of ideas. Milton here made reference to his Areopagitica, a treatise in which he defended the right of an individual to be free from censoring magistrates. While Milton was vitally interested in the liberty of unlicensed printing, his primary concern was to prove that God had entrusted man "with the gift of reason to be his own chooser."^36

Milton accepted the Elizabethan ethical system based on Platonic and Christian ideas of reason and passion.37 This widely-held ethical scheme regarded man's soul as a triple hierarchy in which reason (comprised of the will and understanding) was the highest faculty, while the senses were the lowest. The intermediary faculty was made up of common sense, fancy, and memory. Milton summarized these concepts in Adam's words to Eve, who had just related her distressing dream:

36Areopagitica, in Hughes, p. 727.

But know that in the Soul
Are many lesser Faculties that serve
Reason as chief; among these Fancy next
Her office holds; of all external things,
Which the five watchful Senses represent,
She forms Imaginations, Aery shapes,
Which Reason joining or disjoining, frames .... *(PL, V, 100-6)*

Milton went along with the commonplace idea that disorder and confused behavior would inevitably emerge if reason were dethroned by passion (the uncontrolled operation of the lower faculties). This is clearly illustrated in Milton's account of the effects of the fall. "High passions," anger, hate, and other sordid emotions disrupted the serenity which Adam and Eve had once enjoyed,

*For understanding rul'd not, and the Will
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
To sensual Appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovran Reason claimed
Superior sway .... *(PL, IX, 1127-31)*

Milton, however, was not content to incorporate into his works these traditional ideas of reason and passion without some shifts in emphasis. Throughout his works he made it evident that for him reason—the only safeguard of liberty—was essentially conformity to the will of God, whereas passion was rebellion against it. Milton illustrated this idea in his poetic portrayal
of history. The great insurrection in heaven was brought about by those who refused "Right reason for thir Law." Their failure to submit to God's will automatically plunged them into the bondage of their own passions and insatiable lusts. Similarly, man, who had been endowed "with Sanctity of Reason" (which Milton in Areopagitica calls the image of God) in order "to adore and worship God Supreme" (PL, VII, 514-15), lost his freedom when he disobeyed the command of God. Michael thus showed Adam that throughout the course of time mankind would continually lapse into external as well as internal servitude because "true liberty," which always dwelt with "right Reason," was lost at the time of his "original lapse." For Milton, "right Reason" was unqualified submission to God's will. It was but a manifestation of "vain reasoning" even to question the purposes of God, whose ways were "just ... and justifiable to men." (SA, 293-4):

Milton also stressed the close relationship he detected between reason and choice. In Areopagitica he contended that "reason is but choosing." Milton, who prized above all things "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience," could not "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue."38 Domestic and
and civil liberty could not be preserved apart from the prerogative of individuals to exercise their wills by means of the "gift of reason" with which God had endowed them. Woodhouse sums up Milton's position clearly: "It was impossible for Milton to conceive of beings in the full possession of free will unless this presented the possibility of trial at any moment."^39

Reason and choice were linked together in Milton's treatment of the fall of man. In Areopagitica he expressed extreme irritation at the suggestion that God could rightfully be blamed for allowing Adam to transgress; it was utter nonsense as far as Milton was concerned. Had not God given man freedom of choice along with the gift of reason? Who ever set a premium on enforced obedience? Milton touched on the same questions in the third book of Paradise Lost. God, surveying the past, present, and future, announced to the Son that man would be entirely to blame for his fall, because he, like the angels, had been amply supplied with the powers of reason and choice:

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^38 Aeropagitica, in Hughes, pp. 728-746.

Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
Of true allegiance ... what praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd ....
(PL, III, 104-9)

For Milton reason and choice were inseparable, for man's rational faculties could only be exercised in their appointed task of informing the will.

The third species of liberty which Milton listed in his Second Defense was religious freedom. In the broad sense of the term religious liberty embraced political and domestic freedom, for Milton regarded all aspects of human life as having profound spiritual ramifications. "Who can enjoy," he asked, "anything in this world with contentment who hath not liberty to serve God and to save his own soul according to the best light which God hath planted in him?"\(^40\) In its narrower sense, religious liberty meant for Puritan thinkers such as Milton freedom from the jurisdiction of popes or bishops. In The Reason of Church Government Milton expressed his approval of the presbyterian form of "ministerial order" widely adopted by Puritan groups in

\(^40\)Milton, The Ready and Easy Way, in Hughes, p. 895.
the seventeenth century. This simple form of ecclesiastical government, which provided offices only for presbyters and deacons, did away with such episcopal functionaries as bishops, archbishops, and popes. Milton, along with most Puritans, repudiated mystical interpretations of the communion service and elaborate church ceremonies. He also stressed the right of the individual to interpret the Scriptures for himself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In his Treatise of Civil Power Milton emphatically summed up the basic Puritan position on matters of authority:

It cannot be denied, being the main foundation of our protestant religion, that we ... have no other divine rule or authority from without us ... but the holy Scripture, and no other within us but the illumination of the Holy Spirit. ..."}

In one sense, all of God's children were kings and priests before God. "The title of clergy," Milton contended, "St. Peter gave to all God's people, till Pope Higinus and the succeeding prelates took it from them."

42 Treatise of Civil Power, in Hughes, pp. 840-1.
43 The Reason of Church Government, in Hughes, p. 678.
Milton's anti-prelatical bias and his corresponding appreciation of the freedom belonging to the righteous influenced his history-writing. The History of Britain is full of vehement outbursts against the viciousness and corruptness of the clergy, "whose Example should have guided others." Milton's lofty conception of the duties and responsibilities of those who had been called by God to minister accounted for his violent invectives against the "great Clercs" who were

Unlearned, Unapprehensive, yet impudent; suttle Prowlers, Pastors in Name, but indeed Wolves .... not call'd, but seising on the Ministry as a Trade, not as a Spiritual Charge ... usurping the Chair of Peter, but through the blindness of thir own worldly lusts, they stumble upon the Seat of Judas .... 44

Michael, in his prophecy of the Church Age, drew attention to the period of history in which "grievous Wolves," posing as teachers, would turn "all the sacred mysteries of Heav'n To thir own vile advantages." (PL, XII, 508-10)

Milton's puritanical aversion to rites and ceremonies, which he regarded as encumbrances to the freedom of true worship, was also expressed in his preview

44History of Britain, pp. 134-5.
of history. Michael foretold that the greater part of mankind would replace truth and faith with "outward Rites and specious forms." The purest form of religion for Milton was the adoration of God without such media as liturgies and priests. He depicted in Book IV of Paradise Lost his version of archetypal worship. Adam and Eve, before retiring to their flower-strewn bower, "under op'n Sky ador'd The God that made both Sky, Air, Earth and Heav'n ... other Rites Observing none." (PL, IV, 721-2; 736-7) The highest form of worship was the direct communion of the individual soul with God.

Since the liberty of conscience was "above all other things ... dearest and most precious" to Milton, he regarded any attempt to curb it with indignation. He therefore took the opportunity in his outline of history to attack the medieval Roman Catholic church for persecuting those who worshipped God in spirit and in truth. Milton was particularly disturbed at the presumptuous behavior of ecclesiastical officials for enforcing "spiritual laws by carnal power." He saw this as a form of opposition to God, who had given to every

45 The Ready and Easy Way, in Hughes, p. 895.
individual the freedom to appropriate salvation for himself:

What will they then
But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
His consort Liberty; what, but unbuild
His living Temples, built by Faith to stand,
Thir own Faith not anothers? (PL, XII, 524-8)

In spite of his conviction that Christian liberty released the individual "from the rule of the law and of man," he did not countenance antinomianism in any form. Like the Apostle Paul, who attacked those who repudiated the moral law along with the ceremonial law, Milton strongly expressed his disapproval of the idea that a Christian could continue in sin if he wished, because of the abundant supply of grace available to him. Milton clearly distinguished between spiritual freedom and license in his sonnet, "On the Same":

License they mean when they cry liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good.
(Sonnet XII, 11-12)

Spiritual liberty removed the individual from the law of men only in order that he might serve God. It was the

47 Romans 6:1,2, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."
responsibility as well as the privilege of each Christian to fulfil God's will in his own life. For Milton, freedom belonged only to good men; the rest did not love freedom but license. Liberty was, in the words of Woodhouse, "the special prerogative of the regenerate" as far as Milton and the Puritans in general were concerned. Milton incorporated these ideas into his view of human destiny. Individuals and nations that failed to maintain the spiritual freedom allotted to them by God inevitably lapsed into every kind of bondage. In The History of Britain Milton summarized his numerous accounts of the rise and fall of peoples by means of a profound moral application:

> For stories teach us that libertie sought out of season in a corrupt and degenerate age ... brought further slaverie. For libertie hath a sharp and double edge fitt onelie to be handl'd by just and vertuous men, to bad and dissolute it becomes a mischief unwieldie in thir own hands.  

Only by being "delivered from the bondage of corruption" could men enjoy "the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:21)

48 Cited in Roy Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque, p. 149.

49 History of Britain, p. 324.
CHAPTER IV

Milton's Baroque Manner of Portraying Human Destiny

In recent years there has been an increasing tendency among scholars to classify many seventeenth-century European works of art as Baroque. The word "Baroque" seems to have originated as a jeweller's or academician's term for something of strange or irregular shape. It was later used to describe various kinds of art which were felt to be extravagant and bizarre. Throughout most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the term "Baroque" was employed to designate a certain style of painting and architecture in a disparaging way, but in the 1880's in Germany the word lost its unfavourable connotations and became an objective term to describe the dominant style of seventeenth-century Italian art. A few decades later, the term "Baroque" began to be applied to literature.

1 Roy Daniells, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque, p. 57.


The chief popularizer of the term in the early part of the twentieth century was the German scholar, Wölfflin, who in his Principles of Art History outlined what he considered to be the chief characteristics of the Baroque style in painting and architecture. Even though critics today find it useful to regard as "Mannerist" many works of art which Wölfflin termed as Baroque, his "five pairs of concepts" relating to the basic differences between Renaissance and Baroque style are still illuminating. Baroque works he described as "painterly" because they tended "to look limitless" instead of "confined" like Renaissance works. Secondly, the Baroque demonstrated a development from plane to recession, and had characteristics such as depth and spatial illusion. Thirdly, Baroque art depicted "open" rather than "closed" form, and appeared less rigid to Wölfflin than Renaissance art. In his fourth point, "multiplicity to unity," Wölfflin contended that a Baroque work of art did not possess the harmony of free parts common to Renaissance art, but was com-

prised of "a union of parts in a single theme ... by the subordination, to one unconditioned dominant, of all other elements." Finally, Baroque art, while lacking the absolute clarity of subject which characterized Renaissance productions, permitted freer expression of light and colour for diversified effects.

Historically the Baroque style—especially Roman Baroque—was closely connected with the authoritarian formulations of the Council of Trent (which had convened intermittently between 1545 and 1563 in the Tyrol), and with the rising interest of a number of popes and cardinals in religious art. The original intention of the Council had been to draw Protestant Europe back into the Roman Catholic fold, but failing in this, the Council ended up reaffirming Roman Catholic doctrines, including the dogma that church tradition ranked with the Bible as an authority in matters of faith and morals. The Church began to demand that artists obtain the advice of theologians in their painting and sculpture. In certain cases, artists were even restricted

5 Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture, p. 175.
6 Merritt Hughes, P. 723, footnote 60.
to using prescribed colours, especially in their depiction of the Holy Virgin. Ecclesiastical controls in the realm of art were, however, frequently modified in practice. Church dignitaries, many of whom were humanistically inclined, began to see the need to make the forms and ceremonies of the Church more attractive to the common man. Artists were therefore encouraged to depict the power and glory of the Roman Catholic Church by means of spectacle. Magnificent edifices such as Bernini's Piazza San Pietro and the facade of the Church of Sant' Agnese in Agone transformed Rome. In the field of sculpture dynamic creations exemplified by Bernini's statues of St. Teresa and Longinus appeared. One eminent Italian critic has described Bernini's portrayal in marble of one of St. Teresa's mystical states of rapture as "an epitome of the devotional spirit of the Roman Catholic countries in the seventeenth century." The influence of Roman Baroque art gradually spread into northern Europe. Baroque colour, grandeur, and energy began to permeate the art of Protestant lands such as the Low Countries and England. Rubens and Rembrandt triumphed, respectively,

in Baroque landscape painting and portraiture. The splendour and dynamism of the Baroque also found expression in Milton's rich poetry and prose.

Initially, it might appear strange to a casual reader of Milton's works that the poetry of an ardent Puritan such as Milton can be related in any way to the Baroque impulses stemming from the Counter-Reformation, seeing that Milton's antipathy towards Roman Catholic institutions and practices was reflected through his writings. The answer can be found in Milton's ardent devotion to God. Milton had seen the splendours of papal Rome and had undoubtedly been impressed, but as a Puritan he regarded ecclesiastical pomp with distrust; glory belonged to God alone. Milton as a poet demonstrated the same degree of loyalty to God that Counter-Reformation artists manifested towards the Church of Rome. Regarding himself as a kind of poet-priest before God, Milton sought

to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue ... and to set the affections in right time, to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness.®

The effects of decision, fulfillment, and certainty which characterize Baroque art were expressed in Milton's portrayal of man's destiny in *Paradise Lost*. Employing materials which could be termed commonplaces because they were so familiar to seventeenth-century readers, Milton reshaped the subject of the fall of man and its consequences to conform to his magnificent conception of God's controlling will in the affairs of men. His originality lay in his dynamic manner of presenting a familiar theme. The dynamism of Milton's epic has been aptly described by Wedgewood:

The wonderful forward march of *Paradise Lost*, the concealed interplay of natural stress, metre, and meaning ... give to the poem a variety like that of the waters of some huge swift river.  

Milton employed Baroque techniques in his panoramic portrayal of human destiny. By his use of Baroque vistas, linear and cyclical patterns, and cumulative devices, Milton in *Paradise Lost* conveyed his belief that history existed only for the purpose of displaying the

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operations of God's all-encompassing will. A magnificent Baroque vista depicting God's control over the totality of time and space appears near the beginning of the third book. (Time and space are here viewed together, as in other places in Milton's poetry, for space makes room for action).\textsuperscript{11} Milton shows God bending "down his eye" from his high throne in the pure Empyrean to view at one glance heaven, earth, and hell; at the same instant He "from his prospect high" beholds the past, present and future, and declares that everything that transpires shall conform to his "high Decree." (PL, 111, 58, 77-8): There are close similarities between the sense of infinity conveyed by Milton's vista and the spacious interior of St. Peter's in Rome, for they both possess the "spatial illusion" of the Baroque. In the words of Sypher, one feels "engulfed in infinitely extended spaciousness" inside St. Peter's, whereas in fact he is "shut in by massive and dense Roman walls, arches, and vaults."\textsuperscript{12} Milton's vista is similar, for while the reader is given a glimpse

\textsuperscript{11} Roy Daniells, \textit{Milton, Mannerism and Baroque}, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{12} Wylie Sypher, \textit{Four Stages of Renaissance Style}, p. 214.
into infinite stretches of time and space, he is made to understand that infinity itself is framed by the will of God.

Wölfflin's term "open form" can be used to describe Milton's vista into history in Book XI of *Paradise Lost*. Adam is taken by Michael to the top of the highest hill in Paradise, "from whose top the Hemisphere of Earth" (PL, XI,378-9) could be seen in one coup d'oeil.\(^\text{13}\) Time and space are again integrally united, for Adam's vision encompasses earthly kingdoms which are separated from each other chronologically as well as geographically. Milton indicates in the comparison which he makes between the hill of Paradise and the hill upon which "the Tempter" sets Christ that Adam is able to view all the kingdoms of the earth. A close look at the list of names recorded by Milton reveals that he was interested primarily in classical and biblical lands. After outlining the history of the empires of the earth down to the time of Rome's ascendancy, Milton begins to lose interest in the rest of the nations of the world. Following Michael's sketchy references to the New World, Adam is given "Euphrasy and Rue" so that he can behold

"nobler sights." These sights are events relating mainly to the history of the Hebrews, who play a predominant role in God's program for mankind. Milton's hazy treatment of areas of the world which do not particularly amplify his theme has parallels to such Baroque paintings as "Adam and Eve" by Rubens (assisted by Jan Breughel). In this work, the attention of the beholder tends to be drawn away immediately from the ambiguous "open" borders of the painting towards the figures of Adam and Eve, who are in the act of partaking of the forbidden fruit.

Milton's treatment of the process of time is comprised of cyclical and linear patterns. As one reads through The History of Britain he begins to detect a kind of cyclical pattern in the constant rise and fall of peoples. Milton depicts this process, as we have seen in the previous chapter, in terms of liberty and bondage. These cyclical patterns might seem at first to be taking us away from the linear, "smooth course of history" which Milton at the outset of The History of Britain promised "not ... to delay or interrupt."14 Further

14 Milton, The History of Britain, p. 3.
reading in the work, however, makes it clear that the cycles are like links in a chain, or better still, like swirls in an extended spiral, for the moral advancement and decline of nations can be seen as fitting into a chronological, hence linear, pattern based upon God's permissive will.

The last two books of *Paradise Lost* follow a similar double pattern. Book XI is comprised largely of a series of tableaux each of which initially appears to be self-contained. The first tableau, which depicts Cain's murder of his brother, Abel, seems to have little connection with the following tableaux, which deal, respectively, with the wiles of evil women and the development of warfare. As further tableaux appear it begins to be apparent that Milton is demonstrating not only the recurrence of moral lapses in different forms, but is also showing that God employs the evil wills of men to further his own ultimate purposes. He uses even the wrath of men to bring praise to his name.\(^{15}\) Book XII also shows the constant spiritual progress and decline of peoples. This recurring cycle revolves around a straight line, which is for Milton the dynamic

\(^{15}\)Psalm 76:10
axis of the ever unfolding will of God. In Baroque terms, Milton's view of history is like the interior of a Baroque dome, in which "the architecture on the lower surface of the dome suddenly breaks open into a blaze of light and space." The process of time is made up of the "enclosures" of man's resistance which God breaks through to assert his sovereign will.

In his panoramic portrayal of human destiny Milton made use of cumulative effects to enhance the glory of God. These techniques were employed in the last two books of Paradise Lost and in Paradise Regained. Like the artists of the Counter-Reformation period in Italy, Milton was aware of the power of spectacle. At the beginning of Book XI he lists with Baroque profusion the names of many great kings and their empires. The cumulative effect is overwhelming, for the reader is not permitted to pause until he has come to the end of the list. Employing connectives such as "and," "or," and "thence to," Milton does not conclude with a period until he has inserted almost fifty proper nouns. A segment of the passage will serve as an example:

16 Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style, p.213.
... from the destin'd Walls
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can,
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's Throne,
To Paquin of Sinaean Kings, and thence
To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul
Down to the golden Chersonese .... (PL, XI, 387-92)

In similar fashion Milton in Paradise Regained has Satan display before Christ the great nations and cities of history, with the names of many of their warriors, kings, and emperors. Milton's underlying motive in portraying these panoramas is to magnify God, who "bringeth princes to nothing" and "maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." (Isaiah 40:23) Michael thus tells Adam that Christ's "Regal Throne for ever shall endure."
(PL, XII, 323-4) In Paradise Regained Christ elicits from the Tempter himself an acknowledgment that the kingdoms of this world are but transitory.

One of the most striking features of the High Baroque, according to a modern definition, is "movement ... calculated to overwhelm the spectator by a direct emotional appeal."¹⁷ In Paradise Lost Baroque movement and vigour are depicted in terms of powerful wills in conflict. History for Milton is not only a demonstration of

God's glory but also of his omnipotence, which is continually manifesting itself in decisive acts. Com­mencing *in medias res* Milton plunges into his great epic by painting in powerful poetry a scene which has aptly been compared to Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* because of its energy and dynamism:

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Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the' Ethereal Sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition .... (PL, I, 44-47)
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Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the' Ethereal Sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition .... (PL, I, 44-47)

Baroque vigour is also expressed in the actions of the fallen hosts in hell. After emerging from the "tempestuous fire" into which they have been thrown, Satan's hosts decide on a course of action which represents their concerted effort to defy the power of God. With a sense of great urgency they proceed to erect "a Fabrick huge ... Built like a temple where Pilasters round/ Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid/ With Golden Architrave." (PL, I, 710-15) Pandemonium, which Sypher terms "a Baroque palace in hell" is the symbolic

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18 Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, pp. 205, 209. Sypher contends that while Michelangelo is Mannerist in most of his works, "The Last Judgement" expresses the power of the Baroque.

19 Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, p. 211. Sypher points out the ironic connection between Milton's description of Pandemonium and his contempt for the splendours of prelacy.
representation of their opposition towards God's plans for mankind. One purpose of "the great consult" of Satan and his hosts in Pandemonium is "to interrupt" the "joy" of God by seducing man to join their "Party," and thereby "out of good still to find means of evil." (PL, I, 165) There is a direct connection between this plan of action and the course of human destiny as Milton views it, for history is the arena in which the forces of evil continue to strive for control over mankind. Good will triumphs over evil, however. Near the end of Michael's portrayal of history Adam exclaims rapturously,

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good .... (PL, XII, 469-71)

Adam has learned that efforts exerted against the will of God were to prove utterly futile.

The Baroque "sense of powerful movement overcoming the resistance of weighty materials"\(^\text{20}\) can be felt throughout the last two books of Paradise Lost. Adam's vision of the future opens with a great display of power, represented by many a "Seat of Mightiest Empire." In this passage, which has close similarities to the power temptation that comprises so much of

Paradise Regained, Adam is given to understand that earthly might is but of short duration and is circumscribed by the will of God. Resistance to God's will, as illustrated by the tableaux which follow, is invariably vanquished by divine power. Book XI terminates with a glimpse of the total destruction of Noah's rebellious contemporaries by means of a cataclysmic deluge. Similarly, in Book XII great antagonists to God, such as Nimrod and Pharaoh, are reduced to insignificance or oblivion. The last vestiges of insurrection against the omnipotent will of God will disappear forever when the Father dissolves "Satan with his perverted world" in a "conflagrant mass." (PL, XII, 546-8)

Another major characteristic of the Baroque according to Wölfflin's Principles of Art History is unity. Wölfflin carefully distinguishes between Renaissance unity, which he sees as a harmony of free parts, and Baroque unity, in which he detects a subordination of all elements to one central theme. Even a cursory perusal of Milton's great epic makes it indisputably evident that everything in Paradise Lost can be directly related to the unifying will of God. The whole universe is beneath the scrutinizing eye of the Creator. Even Chaos, which is somewhat obliquely situated in relation to
the vertical axis which descends from the throne of God, is subject to God's control, for He uses the raw material of Chaos to create the world. Furthermore, all of the personages in the universe are ultimately confined by the limitations which God sets upon their activities. While the angels are arranged in a neat hierarchy comprised of "Cherub and Seraph, Potentates and Thrones/And Virtues, winged Spirits," (PL, VII, 198-9) they are not responsible to their immediate superiors but are answerable to God alone. Abdiel, for example, is commended directly by God for his loyalty, and Raphael and Michael are appointed by God himself to portray, respectively, the past and the future to Adam and Eve. Even the Son "attends the will of his great Father;" (PL, III, 270-1) Milton's leaning towards Arianism is the logical outcome of his overwhelming appreciation of the unity of God the Father. The heavy-handed comic relief which Milton makes use of in his Limbo of Fools and in his depiction of devils exploring the periphery of hell is an indirect method of illustrating the meaningless and absurdity of activities conducted without direct reference to God's will; the enterprising devils merely get lost in "wandering mazes."

Milton's preview of man's destiny in the two final
books of *Paradise Lost* demonstrates the same degree of unity that characterizes the rest of the epic. Far from being "an untransmuted lump of futurity"\(^2\) as C.S. Lewis would have us believe, Milton's outline of human history is integrally related to the theme of the epic as a whole, which is the fall of man. The war in heaven and the creation of the world and mankind, subjects that take up most of the early books of the epic, set the stage for man's fall. The recounting of these great events by Raphael is designed to warn Adam and Eve, by means of example, of the danger of disobeying God's will. The history of mankind in the last two books shows the long-range effects of man's disobedience recorded in Book IX.

The last two books together form a unified history in spite of the fact that they are constructed differently from each other. Book XI is laid out in a series of tableaux, whereas Book XII is in narrative form, Michael having observed that Adam's mortal sight had begun to fail. Addison criticized Milton for his shift in technique from vision to narration by remarking that it was "as if an history-painter should put in colours one-half

of his subject, and write down the remaining part of it."\(^{22}\) Addison's inept criticism in this instance stemmed from his failure to detect the subtle, though pervasive, unity which Milton employed in his view of man's destiny. His was a fused, organic, Baroque unity that related every part to the whole. In the inimitable words of Dryden in his summation of the seventeenth century, Milton's history in *Paradise Lost* can be described as being "all of a piece throughout."\(^{23}\)

Recapitulation was one of the methods by which Milton achieved the unity he desired. For instance, Michael throughout his portrayal of human destiny pauses to remind Adam that mankind's predilection towards evil stems from his initial act of disobedience in Eden. When Adam expresses his chagrin at the scenes of violence which are displayed before him, he is informed that freedom from molestation was lost to mankind when he disobeyed the will of God by yielding to passion in Eden:

\[
\text{Therefore since hee permits}
\text{Within himself unworthy Powers to reign}
\text{Over free Reason, God in Judgment just}
\text{Subjects him from without to violent Lords.}
\]

*(PL, XII, 90-3)*

\(^{22}\) *Spectator*, No. 369, Vol. V, p. 221.

\(^{23}\) Cited in Coffin and Witherspoon, *Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry*, p. 268. (*From The Secular Masque*)
The problem of pain and suffering is similarly traced back to the fall. When Adam enquires of Michael why man, who still retained "Divine similitude in part" should not be exempted from deformities arising out of illness, he is curtly reminded that his "ungovern'd appetite" in Paradise unleashed these miseries upon the human race. With flashbacks such as these Michael demonstrates to Adam that the dark side of human history is to be accounted for by his defiance of God's will at the time of the fall.

Milton also employed techniques of foreshadowing and prophetic anticipation\(^2\) in order to achieve unity. He was not concerned only with portraying the grim consequences of the fall on human history, but was also preoccupied with the plan of salvation provided by God to nullify the detrimental effects of the fall. In his rapid recounting of the major events in the life of Abraham, Michael makes the first of many references to Abraham's Seed, by whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. At this moment he indicates to Adam that more information concerning the Redeemer will be forthcoming:

... by that Seed
Is meant thy great deliverer, who shall bruise
The Serpent's head; whereof to thee anon
Plainlier shall be reveal'd. (PL, XII, 148-51)

Foreshadowing is combined with recapitulation in Michael's depiction of the Savior's death on the cross:

... this God-like act
Annuls thy doom, the death thou should'st have
di'd .... (PL, XII, 428-9)

Prefiguration is a variety of prophetic anticipation present in Milton's portrayal of man's destiny. Milton's treatment of such outstanding Old Testament figures as Moses and Joshua indicated that he had a dual purpose in mind. Firstly, he singled out these men for special mention because of their exemplary devotion to the will of God. Secondly, these individuals were depicted as prefigurations of Christ. Milton regarded Moses, in his capacity as a mediator between Jehovah and the Israelites, as a type of the true mediator between God and man:

... to God is no access
Without Mediator, whose high Office now
Moses in figure bears, to introduce
One greater, of whose day he shall foretell,
And all the Prophets in thir Age the time
Of great Messiah shall sing. (PL, XII, 239-44)

In his capacity as law-giver, however, Moses was not
permitted to lead Israel into Canaan. That task was appointed for Joshua, a military figure who was a type of the conquering Christ:

... Joshua whom the Gentiles Jesus call,
His Name and Office bearing, who shall quell
The adversary Serpent, and bring back
Through the world's wilderness long wander'd man
Safe to eternal Paradise of rest. (PL, XII, 310-44)

By means of his techniques of recapitulation and foreshadowing Milton forces the reader to move rapidly back and forth on the unified axis of history.25

Milton's poetic portrayal of history in Paradise Lost, though unified, is not static but dynamic.
Throughout the last two books there is a powerful movement

25 It is illuminating to contrast Milton's treatment of history in Paradise Lost with Spenser's chronicle of British history in the second book of The Faerie Queene. In his chronological outline of the history of Britain from the time of Brutus to Gloriana Spenser illustrates precisely the harmony of free parts which Wölflin termed Renaissance unity. Most of the seventy-seven stanzas are comprised of independent historical episodes which are unified only by means of conscious effort on Spenser's part. He employs numerous linking expressions such as "so," "but," "then" and "after all these" to keep his chronology together. Stanza 34 is typical:

His sonne Rivallo his dead roome did supply,
In whose sad time bloud did from heaven raine:
Next great Gurgurstus, then faire Caecily
In constant peace their Kingdomes did containe,
After whom Lago, and Kinmarke did raine,
And Gorbogud, till farre in yeares he grew:
Then his ambitious sonnes unto them twaine
Arraught the rule, and from their father drew,
Stout Ferrex and sterne Porrex him in prison threw. (FQ, II, X, 34)
towards reintegration and resolution. Like the Baroque art of Italy which expressed the confidence and optimism of the reintegrated Roman Catholic Church after the convening of the Council of Trent, Milton's depiction of human destiny is an expression of his faith in the overwhelming goodness, wisdom, and power of God. It is an expansion of the second part of the two-fold theme announced at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton declared that he would not deal only with "woe" and "loss of Eden" but also with the "greater Man" who was to restore mankind and "regain the blissful Seat" that man had forfeited at the time of the fall. Michael therefore proclaims to Adam that the long-awaited Savior would reunite mankind with God. The disruptive forces

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In spite of Spenser's obvious efforts to unify his history by carefully recording the names of almost every monarch who occupied the British Throne in the period concerned, his history is no more unified than that of Milton, who does not even attempt to refer to many of the major figures of history. There are gaps in Milton's outline of history—no specific figures from the medieval period are mentioned, for instance—but the reader is hardly conscious of these, for Milton's history is organically and thematically unified. History for Milton is a unity because nothing transpires that is not ultimately controlled by the will of God.
of Satan were to be crushed, and the redeemed would be "waft[ed] to eternal life." (PL, XII, 435)

Milton's remark in his *Brief History of Moscovia* that "good events oftimes arise from evil occasions" can be applied to his view of man's destiny in *Paradise Lost*. He was so confident that God would finally resolve the disturbances caused by the fall that he regarded the fall itself as a fortunate occurrence; it had provided the opportunity for God to manifest his power and glory throughout history. Even though the world would "go on, to good malignant, to bad men benign" the day was coming when there would be "respiration to the just and vengeance to the wicked." (PL, XII, 537-40)

Milton thus assumed that the glorious end of history—namely the ultimate triumph of God's will and the eternal bliss of the redeemed—would somehow cancel out the pain and sorrow endured by saints throughout history. Since Milton's concern extended only to those that would be saved, the fate of the wicked and reprobate was hardly touched upon. Milton, like most of the Christians of his age, accepted the doctrine of eternal


punishment for the lost, but he carefully avoided making any specific references to human individuals suffering in hell for it would have marred his glorious picture of the grand finale of history. For Milton it was sufficient that "Heav'nly love should outdo Hellish hate." (PL, III, 298) Adam thus speaks for Milton when he exclaims

\[...\] full of doubt now I stand,  
Whether I should repent me now of sin  
By mee done and occasion'd, or rejoice  
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,  
To God more glory, more good will to Men  
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound ....  
(PL, XII, 473-8)

As Milton's poetic view of history in *Paradise Lost* drew to a close it became increasingly diffuse. Specific issues such as the whereabouts of the abode of the redeemed in eternity were hardly touched on. It mattered little to Milton whether the saints would be "in Heav'n or Earth, for then the Earth/Shall all be Paradise, far happier place/Than this of Eden."

(PL, XII, 463-5) Milton's prime concern was not to present history in a logical, systematic manner, but to select from biblical history and prophecy materials which could be used to demonstrate the omnipotence and glory of God, for whose sake history itself existed.28

"unquenchable yearning for infinity"\textsuperscript{29} which characterized Baroque art was expressed in Milton's portrayal of the end of the historical process. Milton's view of man's destiny expanded into a vision of illimitable glory. Beyond the confines of human history lay "eternity, whose end no eye could reach," when there would be "New Heav'ns, new Earth, Ages of endless date/Founded in righteousness and peace and love." (\textit{PL}, XII, 449-51)

\textsuperscript{29} Arnold Hauser, \textit{The Social History of Art}, p. 182.
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