

John Milton: A Cause without a Rebel

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ABSTRACT

John Milton has been frequently associated with rebellion, both by modern scholars and by his contemporaries. Objectively speaking, he may very well be a rebel; however, looking to his own works complicates the issue. In fact, Milton makes very clear in his writing, especially in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, that he abhors rebellion mainly because it is unlawful. Furthermore, he describes the uprising against King Charles I by disassociating it from any kind of rebellion, instead determining that the uprising was done lawfully. Milton writes about rebellion in the same way in many of his works leading up to and including *Paradise Lost*, where Satan resembles the rebel that Milton so vehemently despises. Given Milton's dislike of rebellion, his association of it with Satan complicates another commonplace scholarly argument; that Satan is sympathetic in *Paradise Lost*. This work will explicate Milton's definition of rebellion, especially through *Tenure*, and will then use that definition to demonstrate that Satan cannot be read as sympathetic.

For my Grandfather, who got me interested in questioning the world.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Civil Wars and Milton's Works and Experiences Leading to <i>The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates</i>	5
Milton's Definition of Rebellion in <i>The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates</i>	19
Rebellion in <i>Paradise Lost</i>	31
Conclusion.....	54
Works Cited.....	56

Introduction

John Milton has long been associated with rebellion. Indeed, in the years after the Restoration Milton “lived in fear for his life” and, “was imprisoned for some weeks in 1660” because of his radical writings. One work in particular, *Eikonoklastes*, in which he attempts to dispel any notion that the late Charles was a martyr or that the regicide was unjust, was publically burned (Lewalski 398). Milton also published several other works earlier in his career including *The Doctrine and Discipline and Divorce*, and *Areopagitica*, which dealt with laws surrounding divorce and censorship respectively. These works were often vilified by his contemporaries because they challenged generally accepted practices. Milton sent *The Doctrine on Discipline and Divorce* to the Westminster Assembly which began in 1643, and “Herbert Palmer, who chaired the Assembly,” described it as, “a wicked book...deserving to be burnt, whose author hath been so impudent as to set his name to it and dedicate it to yourselves” (Kerrigan 854). *Areopagitica*, on the other hand, “had little or no impact” in its time; however, Milton did publish the book without a license (925-926). That Milton published his work without license further associates him with rebellion, especially since he did so “Despite a Parliamentary order of June 1643 prohibiting unlicensed publications” (923). Because of these and several other writings, Milton’s association with rebellion seems obvious. For Milton’s contemporaries, divorce was only allowed in very specific circumstances, but Milton advocated for a much more liberal application of the practice. Furthermore, *Areopagitica* argued against censorship at a time when practically everything was reviewed and frequently censored, further encouraging Milton’s identification as a rebel.

Indeed, scholars often attribute Milton's mindset and motivations to that of a subversive and rebellious character. One such scholar, Catherine Canino, writes that "Milton mined his personal experience of rebellion and revolt in order to breathe life into his portrayal of Satan" (15). The off-handed way in which Canino refers to Milton's experience of rebellion is common among scholars. In her article, Canino attempts to reconcile Milton's support of the overthrow of Charles with his open derision of the Irish Rebellion and claims that "the conventionality of... [his] rhetoric does not lessen the sharp contrast between Milton's advocacy of and allegiance to the English revolutionaries and his censure and condemnation of the Irish rebels" (15). Clearly, Canino attributes a rebellious motivation to Milton's support of regicide since she writes of his "personal experience of rebellion."

David Loewenstein also considers Milton as a rebellious individual. Loewenstein argues that Milton, "was a writer who gained considerable experience in analyzing and interpreting forms of rebellion, which he saw as both a political and discursive monster threatening the state" (180). Loewenstein is correct in his assessment of Milton's views on rebellion; however, Loewenstein also refers to Milton as a revolutionary, yet draws no distinction between the terms "rebellion" and "revolution." Loewenstein claims, "The revolutionary Milton could represent the horror of Antichristian rebellion and its proliferating power by using images of the monstrous and unnatural in his prose and poetry" (176). In fact, Loewenstein seems to equate the terms. Loewenstein claims that some of Milton's writing, "essentially confirmed his sense of the more ambiguous forms and language of sedition endangering the state and the Revolution of 1648-49" (180). Most importantly, Loewenstein writes that "By the late 1640s, Milton found himself

vehemently justifying political rebellion, while simultaneously scrutinizing and combating numerous other kinds taking shape both inside and outside the state” (179).

This statement, again, strongly associates Milton with rebellion.

Michael Wilding also associates Milton with rebellion, and claims that in *Paradise Lost* Milton makes a “direct connection” between his blindness and his radical propaganda (241). Later he argues that “In stressing his blindness, he is reasserting his radical beliefs... he is claiming that God rewarded him for the radical political commitment, that God approves of his revolutionary activity” (241). Like the others, Wilding unequivocally associates Milton with rebellion or revolution, demonstrating the common practice among scholars to do so without considering the implications of Milton’s writings on his own sense and understanding of rebellion.

Both the words “rebellion” and “revolution” are mentioned since one might wish to make a distinction between the two in an attempt to clarify that Milton was supporting one or the other; however, the Oxford English Dictionary defines both in similar ways. In the first entry, “Rebellion” is defined as, “An organized armed resistance to an established ruler or government; an uprising, a revolt” (“rebellion” OED). Also in its first entry, “Revolution” is defined as an, “Overthrow of an established government or social order by those previously subject to it; forcible substitution of a new form of government. In early use also: rebellion” (“revolution” OED). The definitions are similar in the first place, and the OED even equates the terms during Milton’s time. But, a distinction is not necessary for another reason. Given the definitions, it seems that the term “rebellion” implies more violence than the term “revolution;” so, scholars might wish to identify Milton as a revolutionary since he was not violent in any known history. However,

scholars do not seem interested in doing so. Instead, they often use the words interchangeably, and without drawing a major or important distinction. So, whether the terms mean something different will not be called into question, only the use of either term with regards to Milton will be challenged since Milton would not have identified himself as one or the other under either definition. While it may appear as a minor point, it seems misguided to refer to Milton as “the revolutionary” or one who “found himself vehemently justifying political rebellion” because, though the overthrow of Charles can certainly be considered a rebellion, Milton himself would never have conflated his support of the regicide with support of a rebellion. Again, though it is not necessarily wrong to say that Milton supported what is, from an objective standpoint, a rebellion, Milton did not consider himself a radical or revolutionary.

In this work I will argue that, contrary to popular scholarly opinion, we should not view Milton as a rebel. To do so, I will look to Milton’s own definition of rebellion in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* to prove his personal abhorrence for the act of rebellion. I will then demonstrate how this definition challenges another popular scholarly opinion: Milton’s portrayal of Satan as a sympathetic character in *Paradise Lost*, and will conclude that Satan cannot be a sympathetic character.

The Civil Wars and Milton's Works and Experiences Leading to *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*

To understand why Milton is so often associated with rebellion, it is useful to understand the turbulent political events, including the civil wars, of the mid-seventeenth century. King Charles I ascended the throne in 1625, and from that point on tensions increased, eventually leading to war. At the center of this struggle, at least until he made peace in 1629, was the Thirty Years War for which Charles needed continued financial support. Charles eventually called a particularly important meeting of Parliament in 1628, his fourth, to further gather that support, especially necessary because of a series of military failures in 1627 and 1628. At first, Charles seemed optimistic about his relationship with Parliament. Charles, "had reason to believe that the Parliament of 1628 would succeed" (Kishlansky 110). Despite blunders, "Most Englishman approved of the attacks on both France and Spain," and "there was a growing realization that English liberties were in danger and that only Parliament could protect them (110). Indeed, Charles met with success during the first session of Parliament, the Commons gave a grant of five subsidies, and he said, "Now I see with this I shall have the affection of my people. I love parliaments. I shall rejoice to meet with my people often" (110). However, those grants were not to be fully issued until a bill of grievances had been issued to the king, and to which he had agreed upon. The list of grievances, eventually known as the Petition of Right, "was drawn up to confirm four liberties: freedom from arbitrary arrest, from non-parliamentary taxation, from the free billeting of troops, and from being governed by martial law" (112). The king eventually assented to the Petition of Right, but viewed it as blackmail, stating that he was "disgraced and ruined of... our necessities"

(Holmes 1). Feeling betrayed at the conditions Parliament set on their support, especially because he claimed that Parliament had, “encouraged the crown to throw England into the war raging in Europe to uphold the Protestant cause,” Charles then determined to rule without parliament until “his people had ‘come to a better understanding of us and themselves’” (1-2).

Charles’ determination not to call Parliament led to perhaps the most obvious example of his civil indiscretions, known as the "Eleven Years' Tyranny." Charles called parliament in 1628 and did not do so again until 1640, hence the appellation given. The main problem for Charles during this time, sometimes less polemically referred to as the “personal rule,” was an inability to raise revenue (Holmes 2). Essentially, “Without parliamentary taxation, Charles had to find new sources of revenue” (2). One of Charles’ schemes included “The fining of those eligible gentleman who had not sought knighthood at the coronation, and those who had breached the long-disused laws governing the royal forests” (2). While these taxes may have been inflammatory, there is clear evidence that the reinstatement of ship money, essentially Charles’ right to tax coastal towns, was not well received. Though at first successful, “In 1640 the machinery for its collection had failed...the collectors were faced with a wall of resistance by a host of individual tax payers” (11). Indeed, the collectors, “faced routine abuse, threats of lawsuits, and occasional violent resistance” (12). In the end, “The king’s policies offended the legal and constitutional sensibilities, political consciousness, of his subjects, not least of those who were both taxpayers and the local executors of those policies” (13). It should be noted, however, that Charles was within his right, and within the law, to levy the taxes he did. That fact does not, of course, change the reaction of tax payers to those taxes.

Perhaps, “the problem lay not so much with Charles alone but with the fit between the monarchy and the people at the time when he happened to come to the throne” (Carlin 143). Regardless, Charles’ policies were, to say the least, not well liked.

Indeed, that Charles’ civil imprudence was at issue with the people is evidenced by the Long Parliament called in 1640, several years later. Holmes argues, “At the polls in many constituencies the electorate had displayed their concern for current issues and their disaffection from the king’s policies. Any hint of vague association with the court, whether true or not, could be fatal to a candidate’s prospects, as could a man’s involvement in the enforcement of any of Charles’s policies” (5). Furthermore, the Long Parliament, “outlawed the innovative fiscal programmes that Charles had developed in that period, and abolished some of the agencies through which he had enforced his will” (3). Charles’ objective in calling the Long Parliament was to alleviate some of the financial burden that the Scottish war had put on him, especially given the terms of the peace treaty which included a hefty amount of money to be paid each day to maintain the Scottish army. However, “Any hope that loyal subjects would vote money for the Scottish war as a matter of urgency was swept aside by parliament’s insistence that priority must be given to discussion and redress of the grievances of the English” (3,7). In essence, Charles’ “Policies in the 1630s demonstrated both tactical mistakes and a more fundamental failure to observe or even understand the structures of society, of government, and of ideology that circumscribed royal authority in England” (8).

Though the causes of the English Civil Wars are still debated, most scholars agree that somewhere near the center of the issue, aside from the civil concerns mentioned above, was a religious conflict. Charles invited invective against himself with his

ecclesiastical policies, particularly his support of the Laudian church. Carlin argues, “Opposition to Charles’ religious policies may even have mobilized some to fight him who had no major objections to other aspects of his rule” (46). In concert with Archbishop William Laud, Charles instituted several changes to which many, especially Puritans, raised objection. Carlin states:

Above all the efforts of the king and the archbishop were directed towards imposing uniformity on the church by controlling and disciplining the ministry... Laud’s efforts to increase church revenues, the favour shown by Charles to the immunities of cathedrals and colleges, and the appointment of bishops to high offices in the state, all contributed to an anticlerical reaction, which came to be increasingly identified with Puritanism in the 1630s (64).

Indeed, “the social and political elevation of the clergy was an additional factor polarizing opinion in the 1630s” (65). For example, bowing at the altar for communion, though not always enforced, was a major problem when some who did not bow were refused communion by Laudian clergy. Carlin states, “Few things are more serious for a Christian than being refused the sacrament, and Laudianism too divided communities” (65). Puritans were further outraged when a particular opponent to Laud, William Prynne, had his ears cut off for anti-Laudian pamphlets he published. Charles, and Laud, instead of convincing his subjects to assent to his religious policies, succeeded only in providing Puritans with “martyrs [Prynne was not the only case] to identify with” (66).

Puritan opposition to the Laudian church was common. Puritanism in the 17th century “was more a lifestyle than it was a theology; indeed it was a catch-all category that encompassed a wide range of doctrinal positions, many of them incompatible with

each other” (Kishlansky 32). Despite numerous varieties of Puritanism, Puritans were united by “concerns about social dislocation and moral collapse... as a lay movement, the strongest Puritan impulses were towards a reformation of manners” (31). As Lewalski claims, “Puritans denounced both court and country sports on religious grounds: they saw masques, maypoles, and morrises as palpable occasions of sin” (57). Puritanism was also colored by its interpretation of Calvinist¹ scripture whose most important tenant was predestination, the idea that there were a few predestined to be the elect of God and the many that were “predestined to be damned for all eternity” (Kishlansky 31). Perhaps more important than their Calvinist beliefs, Kashlinsky argues, “As explicit critics of corrupt worship and public immorality, they were implicit critics of church and state” (32). As Laud’s changes to the church increased in volume and severity, Puritan criticism and disillusion saw similar increases.

Laud’s changes to the church also affected Milton’s decision to enter the ministry or devote his time to poetry (Lewalski 53). Milton identified as a Puritan, and some of his writing at the time reflected his discontent with the changes to the church. He even published some of his works anonymously, including *Lycidas*. Lewalski claims that, “For *Lycidas* such anonymity might have seemed prudent, given the poems’ vehement attack on the Laudian church” (54). Despite living in the “rural retreat of Hammersmith” at the time, Milton could not escape “these issues, nor from continuing dismaying reports of Protestant losses in the continental wars” (56). Indeed, “As an aspiring poet, whatever

¹ Milton, a Puritan, was not necessarily swayed by Puritanism’s more Calvinist ideals. Lewalski argues, “His emphasis on the power of nations and individuals to help realize providential history departs from the usual Calvinist insistence on God’s control of individual lives, history, and the millennial moment” (122).

else he might do, Milton had to determine how to situate himself in the culture wars that intensified during the 1630s (56).

Milton's critique of the Laudian church in *Lycidas* occurs during the digression in which "The pilot of the Galilean Lake," most likely St. Peter, delivers a speech. Using pastoral metaphor, he disparages the current state of the church. St. Peter speaks:

How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoll'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said,
But that two-handed engine at the door,

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

(Milton 113-131)

This section of *Lycidas* essentially turns worshipping Christians into a flock of sheep, a familiar Biblical metaphor, looking toward their shepherd for guidance. What the sheep receive, however, comes from “Blind mouths.” That the shepherds are blind, blind because in Milton’s view the Laudian clergy is misleading their congregations through their policies, is likely referencing their roles as bishops, which etymologically means, “one that watches, one that looks after; a guardian, protector” (Harper). If the ones who are watching are blind, nothing good can ensue, and indeed, nothing does. When the “hungry sheep look up they are not fed” (Milton 125). Instead, the sheep, “swoll’n with wind, and the rank mist they draw, / Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread” (126-127). With such a statement against the clergy, it seems little surprise that Milton wished to hide his identity. Yet, Milton is not without hope. The section ends with the lines, “But that two-handed engine at the door, / Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more” (130-131). Much consternation has come from attempting to interpret what is meant by the “two-handed engine,” but two of the more common interpretations include the sword of Michael and the two-edged sword of *Revelations* 1.16 (Turner 562). Both interpretations suggest a punishment, and even without a solid definition of the “two-handed engine,” it seems clear that Milton is positive God will solve the problem of corruption, i.e. Laudian reformation, once and for all.

Though his role in the cultural struggle of the 1630s was nowhere near as blatant as when he published *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* in 1649, Milton’s writings demonstrate his willingness to participate and comment on the king and his actions in a

negative, if veiled, way. Indeed, “In the court masques of the 1630s the royal pair [Charles I and Henrietta Maria] displayed themselves under various mythological and pastoral guises... many of them contain some representation of contemporary problems and some covert critique of personal rule, but their primary effect is to mystify and reinforce it” (Lewalski 56). Milton would likely have agreed with Puritan outrage at Charles’ promotion of such masques. They were seen in Puritan eyes as iniquitous and intentionally obfuscating people’s sense of “true religion and... the political crisis” (57). Hence, Milton’s *Arcades* develops, “a stance toward art and recreation that repudiates... the court aesthetics” (59). In it Milton promotes, “the better aesthetics... of a soundly Protestant aristocracy,” “seeks both to confirm and educate these aristocrats in these virtues,” and “proposes to reclaim pastoral from the court, intimating the superiority of these Harefield festivities and the virtues of this noble Protestant lady and her household over the queen and her suspect pastoral entertainments (59-60). “These aristocrats” being the Countess of Derby and her family for whom he was commissioned to produce *Arcades*. Clearly, Milton’s works, even early in his career, carry some political charge.

Later, in 1634, but before *Lycidas* was published, Milton expands upon the ideas in *Arcades* in another masque, *Comus*. Milton produced *Comus* for the Earl of Bridgewater who was, “a Calvinist, a conscientious judge, and a governor who resisted Laud’s efforts to impose rigid religious conformity on his religion,” and in it Milton uses the antagonist, Comus, to represent “Cavalier licentiousness, Laudian ritual, the depravities of court masques and feasts, as well as the unruly holiday pastimes” (Lewalski 63). For example, Comus senses the lady’s presence in the woods and states,

I feel the different pace

Of some chaste footing near about this ground...

Now to my charms, and to my wily trains...

Thus I hurl

My dazzling spells into the spongy air,

Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion

And give it false presentments

(145-156)

While these lines reflect Comus' licentiousness, they also represent an attack on Caroline masques. As Lewalski argues, "In Caroline court masques the evils of social disorder and disruption are commonly associated with the lower classes, not, as here, with the waste and extravagance of the court and the wealthy elites," and the lines above are an example of that (80). Comus, here representing extravagance and waste, becomes the antithesis to Caroline masques because Comus celebrates and invites revelry, as the Caroline Masques did, but is in *Comus* the antagonist and opponent of virtue. Furthermore, Comus' dazzling illusions are another example of Milton's attack on Caroline masques and revelry since they "cheat the eye with blear illusions / And give it false presentments" (155-156).

Milton further associates Comus with Caroline masques when Comus invites his followers to dance in the night:

Night hath better sweets to prove,

Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.

Come let us our rites begin,

'Tis only daylight that makes sin,

Which these dun shades will ne'er report.

(123-127)

Marcus argues, “Like the court masque, his [Comus’] realm is of the night... His beckoning of his followers to nocturnal delights strongly recollects the invitations to dancing and revelry in the Stuart court masque” (Corns 240). Hence, Milton associates Comus with court masques since both claim the night as their domain and disparages them by making Comus the enemy of the story. His aspersions are more made more complete by the fact that the sun is championed throughout *Comus*. For example, when the Lady argues with Comus about relinquishing her chastity, she says that power of chastity is “sun-clad” (782). Furthermore, after helping to save the Lady, the Attendant Spirit, representative of truth and virtue, says,

To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye.

(976-78)

In other words, the Attendant Spirit is going to a place where the revelry and sin of night, and Caroline masques, can never take place.

In 1637 Henry Lawes published the text of *Comus*, but Milton wished to remain anonymous. Lewalski claims that “his reason for remaining anonymous... may be the stance of a gentleman fastidious about avoiding public display, but it more obviously points to a young artist anxious about his first foray into the public arena, and perhaps uneasy about readers’ responses to a work that defies expectations, generic and cultural” (67). So, in both *Arcades* and *Comus* Milton expresses anti-Laudian and anti-Charles dispositions, but his wish to remain anonymous, though probably prudent at the time,

gives way later in his career when he publishes his polemical prose works. The main difference, besides anonymity, is that Milton's prose works define in much clearer terms what he sees as just.

Lycidas, *Arcades*, and *Comus* are primary examples of Milton's growing anti-establishment streak, but are not the only sources that scholars draw upon to establish a pattern of rebelliousness in Milton. For example, some of his travels, and contacts made during those travels, further support the argument for his rebellious nature and suggest possible influences on his later works. For example, during a tour of Europe in 1638 Milton met with Hugo Grotius in France. Lewalski claims, "Grotius had already defended in various writings; natural law theory, the basis of government in social contract, broad religious toleration for Protestants, an Arminian concept of free will, and aristocratic republicanism. Already something of an anti-monarchist, Milton would find a good deal to discuss with Grotius" (89). Lewalski's description of Grotius smacks of many of the arguments Milton later makes in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, especially the basis of government in social contract. Milton not only met with characters such as Grotius, but also received death threats based on comments made during his travels.

During a stay in Naples where Milton was considering a return journey to Rome, merchants there warned him about plots against him if he should return. Milton said of the matter, "As I was on the point of returning to Rome, I was warned by merchants that they had learned through letters of plots laid against me by the English Jesuits, should I return to Rome, because of the freedom with which I had spoken about religion" (Lewalski 98). Not only did the Jesuits take issue with Milton, the Italians did as well. The Dutch poet Nicolaas Heinsius wrote of Milton that "That Englishman was hated by

the Italians, among whom he lived a long time, on account of his over-strict morals, because he both disputed freely about religion, and on any occasion whatever prated very bitterly against the Roman Pontiff” (99). In his own words, Milton claimed, “For almost two months, in the very stronghold of the Pope, if anyone attacked the orthodox religion, I openly, as before, defended it” (99). Such freedom with his speech evidently invited criticism, and provides fuel for the scholarly depiction of Milton as a rebel.

Both civil and ecclesiastical matters were strong factors in the breakout of civil war, but Milton seemed to have found a way to unite the two through his support of Parliament, especially in *An Apology*. Lewalski claims, “he lavishes praise on parliament-termed ‘the high and *sovran* Court of Parliament’ - to encourage it to enact the Root and Branch legislation... at length, with a fine rhetorical flourish, he intimates that parliament dare not fail to achieve church reform, as God himself has become their agent” (138). Despite Milton’s writings on civil matters, it seems clear the primary issue for Milton was religion. That said, an interest in ecclesiastical over civil matters does not excuse him from an association with rebellion, especially since Parliament was opposing the king.

Milton was likely pleased with the results of the fighting, beginning in 1642, by 1647. Lewalski states,

On July 4 Colonel Joyce abducted the king from Holmby and placed him under the control of the army, after which the officers began treating with him on the basis of their own platform, calling for biennial parliaments, increased power to the Commons, reform of the electorates, parliamentary control of the army for ten years, and freedom of Protestant religious practice.

(211)

However, whatever pleasure he may have felt was short lived. The king escaped in November of the same year, and upon an agreement with the Scots, the establishment of Presbyterianism in England for a term of three years if they invaded England and restored him to the throne, plotted his return. The second civil war started shortly thereafter (213).

Perhaps most inflammatory to Milton's sensibilities was the prevarication of the Presbyterian Parliament who while initially fighting against the king, now supported him. During this time Milton translated Psalms 80-8, and in it he, "cries out to God to save a new Israel and a new prophet beleaguered by enemies on all sides and threatened by the treachery of friends- with allusion to the Scots (and some English) Presbyterians who now support the king" (213). Parliament's actions from this point do nothing but displease Milton. For example, Parliament passed the "Ordinance for the Suppression of Blasphemies and Heresies." Lewalski claims, "That law provided the death penalty for atheism, anti-Trinitarianism, and other major errors (unless recanted), and imprisonment for lesser ones such as promoting Arminianism and Anabaptism, denouncing Presbyterian church government, and denying the necessity of Sabbath observance. Milton himself held or would soon hold many of these views" (214). This law, however, would not stop Milton from promoting some of these views, especially a denouncement of Presbyterian church government. Further adding fuel to Milton's anti-Presbyterian fire was Parliament's response to the king being captured yet again. Lewalski claims, "parliament denounced that action and insisted on renewing negotiations with him [Charles I]" (216).

Charles was charged and convicted, on January 27, 1649, as a, "Tyrant, Traitor, Murderer, and public Enemy to the good people of this nation" (223). Charles was later

beheaded, but not before, “The Presbyterian pulpits and presses exploded with denunciations” (223). Lewalski claims that Milton was, “moved by the furor and lies of the Presbyterians during the king’s trial,” and that that was what prompted his work, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (223).

Milton's Definition of Rebellion in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*

Milton makes his position on rebellion quite clear in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. To begin with, one should look at the full title of the work: *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: proving that it is lawful, and hath been held so through the ages, for any, who have the Power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death; if the ordinary MAGISTRATE have neglected, or deny'd to do it. And that they, who of late so much blame Deposing, are the Men that did it themselves* (1021). Milton makes no mention of rebellion in the title, but he does mention that a Tyrant can be deposed after “proving that it is lawful.” Milton wishes to avoid associating the motivations of those who acted against Charles with rebellion because the term, as Milton defines it, has negative connotations. As a rhetorical move Milton is careful both to clearly define rebellion as unlawful and not to associate his justifications of the regicide with anything negative, unlawful, or unjust (what would otherwise be known to him as rebellion).

If there is any confusion as to what Milton might consider an actual rebellion as opposed to a lawful act, his treatment of the Presbyterians will clarify his claims. Milton writes about the Presbyterians that supported deposing the king, but who, upon success, attempted to back away from their convictions. Milton claims:

But what need these examples to Presbyterians, I mean to those who now of late would seem so much to abhor deposing, when as they to all Christendom have given the latest and the liveliest example of doing it themselves. I question not the lawfulness of raising war against a Tyrant in defense of religion, or civil liberty; for no Protestant Church from the first Waldenses of Lyons and Languedoc to this

day but have done it round and maintained it lawful. But this I doubt not to affirm, that the Presbyterians, who now so much condemn deposing, were the men themselves that deposed the king, and cannot with all their shifting and relapsing wash off the guiltiness from their own hands. For they themselves, by these their late doings have made it guiltiness, and turned their own warrantable actions into *rebellion*.

(1042; emphasis mine)

This passage makes Milton's position on rebellion clearer than perhaps anywhere else in the treatise. Essentially, the Presbyterians, who at once acted lawfully by deposing a tyrant, began to consider themselves guilty of some wrong-doing and in that reversal of conviction turned their actions, within their own minds, to rebellion. Hence, Milton is very careful never to associate the actions of those who deposed the king, at least before they began prevaricating, with rebellion. Instead, their actions are lawful and therefore not rebellion.

Continuing to defend the uprising against Charles, Milton argues "Therefore when the people or any part of them shall rise against the king and his authority, executing the law in any thing established, civil or ecclesiastical, I do not say it is rebellion, if the thing commanded though established be unlawful, and that they sought first all due means of redress" (1042). Here, Milton is essentially claiming that Parliament attempted several times to get Charles to assent to their demands, especially since they deemed his taxes and religious policies unlawful. Since Charles would not fulfill the requests of Parliament, the people of England had little choice but to rise up

against him. This uprising is not, however, an act of rebellion because it is done in lawful opposition to the unlawful commands of the king.

It seems evident that for Milton anything done lawfully cannot, in any case or context, constitute a rebellion. As long as it is lawfully established, whether in “civil or ecclesiastical” contexts, any action against a king, though presumably his definition extends to any actions whatsoever, are not unlawful and therefore not rebellion. Indeed, this makes it much easier to associate Charles with rebellion than those who acted against him, though admittedly Milton does not do so. Instead, deposing a king is “an absolute renouncing both of supremacy and allegiance, which in one word is an actual and total deposing of the king and the setting up of another supreme authority over them” (1042). In other words, it is no longer recognizing the king as a king and withdrawing all promise to obey his commands. The promise to obey is withdrawn both because those commands, policies, actions etc. have been proven to be unlawful, and because there is “nothing that so actually makes a subject of England as those two oaths of allegiance and supremacy,” meaning that citizens become subjects only by swearing to become so yet retain the right to retract their status as subjects if the need should arise (1042). Of course, Milton also writes that the deposing of a king entails “the setting up of another supreme authority over them.” However, as previously mentioned, Milton recognizes the term rebellion may be construed at the very least as a negative action, and at the worst a completely unjust action. Therefore, Milton needs to disallow any negative interpretations of those who acted against the king in order to justify regicide.

However, the question remains: what exactly is the law in Milton’s eyes? The law that Milton points to is God’s. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* Milton attributes

the actions of those who opposed Charles to the will of God and not a rebellion. Milton claims, “For if all human power to execute not accidentally but intendedly the wrath of God upon evildoers without exception be of God, then that power whether ordinary or, if that fail, extraordinary so executing that intent of God is lawful and not to be resisted” (1028). Indeed, he argues that those who acted were “lawful” in their activities; therefore, their actions cannot be construed as rebellion both because their actions were “lawful” and because they were the will of God which in this case are concomitant.

Furthermore, Milton argues that Charles’ actions also directly conflict with the laws of God and nature. Milton claims that “No man who knows aught can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all creatures born to command and not to obey” (1028). Milton then goes on to explain that the only reason for the existence of a monarch is that people agreed to put someone in charge to bring order to their society (1028-1029). In other words, that man is subservient to a monarch is only upon agreement between those involved, and not necessarily the natural state of affairs. Charles’ own opposing view is evident in a statement he made to his councilors: “The question was of obeying the king, not of counselling” (Carlin 139). Indeed, “Charles thought purely in terms of descending authority, never ascending authority” (139). Charles’ attitudes no doubt influenced Milton’s writing.

Milton also looks to scripture to support his claim that men choose freely to elect monarchs. Milton quotes Deuteronomy 17.14: “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt say I will set a king over me, like as all the nations about me.” Milton claims that “These words confirm us that the right of choosing,

yea of changing their own government, is by grant of God himself in the people” (1032). Indeed, “For if it needs must be a sin in them to depose, it may as likely be a sin to have elected. And contrary, if the people’s act in election be pleaded by a king as the act of God and the most just title to enthrone him, why may not the people’s act of rejection be as well pleaded by the people as the act of God and the most just reason to depose him?” (1034). In other words, if the king can defer to God as the reason for his enthronement, so can the people under his rule defer to God as the reason to depose him; it was, by the power given to them by God, their hand that elected him in the first place. Therefore, the King can act unjustly especially since he is accountable to the people that elected him, and it is only fair, “To teach lawless kings, and all who so much adore them, that not mortal man, or his imperious will, but justice is the only true sovereign and supreme majesty upon the earth” (1047-1048). Hence, deposing a king is not unlawful but instead it is an action that is sanctioned by the “only true sovereign and supreme majesty upon the earth.”

Milton further elaborates on the social contract between citizens and the monarch, and he claims that the contract is established through, “bond or covenant to obey them in execution of those laws which they the people had themselves made or assented to. And this oftentimes with express warning, that if the king or magistrate proved unfaithful to his trust, the people would be disengaged” (1029). Not only is it lawful to overthrow a king who does not adhere to the laws already in place, but one could even associate Charles’ actions with rebellion since he refused or failed “to obey a legal summons or command” i.e. the tenants of law that the king and his subjects assented to. Hence, Milton champions

the people, though one must temper his praise of people with his staunch republicanism. That is, Milton likely means the aristocracy and not commoners when he claims:

No Christian prince... would arrogate so unreasonably above human condition, or derogate so basely from a whole nation of men his brethren, as if for him only subsisting, and to serve his glory; valuing them in comparison of his own brute will and pleasure, no more than so many beasts or vermin under his feet, not to be reasoned with, but to be trod on; among whom there might be found so many thousand men for wisdom, virtue, nobleness of mind, and all other respects but fortune of his dignity, far above him.

(1031)

Despite Milton's more than likely republican slant on the aforementioned lines, one still finds Milton with an obvious belief that the people of England display virtue and wisdom.

In Sonnet 12, written before *Tenure*, Milton responds to vitriolic Presbyterian writing about *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* with invective against those Presbyterians but also with an implication about how one can judge the goodness of people i.e. through their love, or lack thereof, of liberty (Kerrigan 148). Milton writes:

That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry liberty²;

² Notice here the notion that those who "still revolt when truth would set them free. / Licence they mean when they cry liberty" is precisely the kind of prevaricating that Milton accuses the Presbyterians of in *Tenure*, and is, in these lines, in reference to the Presbyterians.

For who loves that, must first be wise and good.

But from that mark how far they rove we see,

For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood.

(9-14)

Lewalski correctly points out that Milton “implies here, as he often did later, that since only the good can love liberty, the goodness of the people or leaders (for political purposes) can be measured by whether they love liberty and further its cause” (204).

Clearly, Milton supports his own earlier claim in Sonnet 12 through his support of the regicide in *Tenure*.

Milton also argues with the notion of divine right by associating it with unlawfulness. Milton claims that “it follows that to say kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all law and government. For if they may refuse to give account, then all covenants made with them at coronation, all oaths are in vain and mere mockeries, all laws which they swear to keep made to no purpose” (1030). So, not only are the people acting within their rights, but the actions of kings who claim divine right are unlawful and therefore provide more justification to the actions of those who would depose him. Indeed, Charles is, in this context, much more easily associated with Milton’s definition of rebellion since he acted unlawfully and those that deposed him acted lawfully.

Milton was likely not simply arguing against the concept of divine right, but also against others who supported it. In a letter to Parliament in 1643, an anonymous author claims, “Yea, we acknowledge in our Booke of Common-Prayer, that King Charles is Gods Minister, and that he hath Gods Authority, and so fighting against him, we fight

against God himself” (Anonymous 1). As previously demonstrated Milton certainly challenges the notion that Charles is God incarnate on Earth. Of course, Milton also challenges the notion that the regicide was an act of rebellion, and it is likely that his choice to dissociate the regicide from the term rebellion is in response to the kind of writing this author produces. Later in that same letter the author claims that if men were better persuaded by the words of the Bible, “there would not be so little hearkening to the commands of Authority, no so little obeying what they heare; nor would men runne so fiercely into the fearefull sin of Rebellion; which is indeed no other then their foolish imaginations have devised, and their vaine thoughts have set up as an Idoll to themselves” (Anonymous 3). Though Milton makes clear that he agrees rebellion is a “sin” of sorts, his response to this kind of writing is not to justify a “rebellion” against Charles, but to describe it as something completely different.

Milton is, however, not alone in the sentiments he expresses in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and may have drawn inspiration from other writers well before the regicide took place. One of Milton’s more emphatic points is the social contract that places the King in power because the people assent to being ruled. Yet another anonymous author in 1643, several years before *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was published, claims just that. In an pamphlet titled, “The Subjects Libertie Set Forth In The Royall And Politique Power Of England,” the author claims, “The first intent that makes a King is the peoples consent... and it is as the effluce of blood from the heart to the head, and lives before it” (Anonymous 1). The author then lays out the mission the article: “To prove that it is no treason, or rebellion to obey the ordinances of Parliament, against the personal commands of the king, bee they never so royall or regall”

(Anonymous 1). Though it is impossible to establish whether Milton read this particular piece, his own writing echoes this author almost exactly when he writes, “Therefore when the people or any part of them shall rise against the king and his authority, executing the law in any thing established, civil or ecclesiastical, I do not say it is rebellion, if the thing commanded though established be unlawful” (1042).

Milton makes clear that a king may be deposed whether he be tyrant or not when he states,

since the king or magistrate holds his authority of the people, both originally and naturally for their good in the first place, and not his own, then may the people, as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retain or depose him, though no tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of freeborn men to be governed as seems to them best.

(1032)

Milton also certainly seeks to establish Charles as a tyrant thus further justifying the regicide. Milton does not bring to light examples that would elucidate Charles’ indiscretions in both civil and ecclesiastical contexts, perhaps assuming those indiscretions would be fresh in the minds of his readers or in an attempt prove that his ideas apply universally, not just in contemporary context. Examples of Charles’ indiscretions exist nonetheless.

Not only were Charles’ religious policies in question, Milton also questioned Charles’ use of religion. Specifically, Milton suggests the abhorrent method by which a tyrant makes use of scripture both to condemn others and to justify themselves. Milton warns not to let:

Any man be deluded by either the ignorance or the notorious hypocrisy and self-repugnance of our dancing divines, who have the conscience and the boldness to come with scripture in their mouths, glossed and fitted for their turns with a double contradictory sense transforming the sacred verity of God to an idol with two faces, looking at once two several ways, and with the same quotations to charge others, which in the same case they made serve to justify themselves.

(1027)

Charles was certainly guilty of this misuse of scripture since he, “tried deliberately to use the pulpit as a medium of propaganda for royal authority, ordering preachers to defend the Spanish marriage or the forced loan” (Carlin 67). The “Spanish marriage” refers to Charles’ wife Henrietta Maria of France whose Catholicism was a major issue for Protestants in England; Henrietta was at one point asked by the pope to spread Catholicism in England, built a Catholic church completed in 1635, could not actually be crowned because Catholic marriages were illegal, and was even accused as an instigator of the Irish Rebellion. Purkiss argues that it was, “the sheer flagrant unapologetic visibility of Henrietta’s Catholicism and its proximity- in every sense- to the centre of monarchic power that really alarmed those who hated and feared popery... she seemed a shameless emissary of the Whore of Babylon” (30-31, 35). The forced loan, perhaps the more interesting example, refers more specifically in this context to the “The Five Knights Case.” Essentially, Charles ordered specific people to “lend” money, and while most paid a few did not. Charles imprisoned five such gentlemen who subsequently applied for a writ of Habeas Corpus. The knights lost their case, and the five gentlemen were sent back to prison. While the public supported the king’s ability to imprison

without reason, generally in cases of sedition, they were less than pleased with the imprisonment of respectable parties refusing to pay inordinate levies. In response, Charles asked preachers to give sermons in support of the forced loan. Two preachers, Roger Maynwaring and Robert Sibthorpe, wrote and preached such sermons.

Sommerville states that “Both stressed the subject's duty of obedience to the King's commands. A subject's religious duty to obey the prince was far superior to particular English laws about taxation, and so the Forced Loan must be paid” (Sommerville). “The Five Knights Case,” and Charles’ subsequent actions, clearly demonstrates Charles’ willingness to use scripture and religion for his own personal gain. Not to forget Milton’s charge of transforming God into “an idol with two faces,” Charles’ also used religion against Archbishop George Abbot, he was suspended from office, who refused to sign off on Maynwaring’s sermon (Sommerville).

Milton clearly detests Charles’ perversion of scripture, and claims that “to fight against the king’s person and no less a party of his Lords and Commons or to put force upon both the House, was good, was lawful, was no resisting of superior powers; they only were powers not to be resisted who countenanced the good and punished the evil” (1027). The implication here is that Charles did not countenance the good and punish the evil, especially given that these lines directly follow those concerning the perversion of scripture. With this passage Milton outlines his distaste for rebellion by demonstrating that resisting Charles was not unlawful and therefore, according to the previously provided definition of “rebellion,” not a rebellion. Essentially, Milton is arguing that deposing a King who perverts scripture cannot constitute a rebellion because it is lawful, for what is a rebellion if not the “resisting of superior powers.” Those superior powers,

those of God and Christ, are ones which Milton, in this case as in any, clearly does not wish to resist. Though, it would be more accurate to say that Milton does not wish to avoid resisting God and Christ, but rather to surrender to them.

Rebellion in *Paradise Lost*

Understanding Milton's definition of rebellion in *Tenure* can help us better understand his portrayal of rebellion and Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Using that definition Satan's own rebellion can be understood in a new light. Given Milton's clear stance against rebellion and the similarities between Satan's rebellion and the way rebellion is described in *Tenure*, I will demonstrate that Milton's definition of rebellion confirms Satan's unsympathetic nature. However, some understanding of the time between when the two works were published, about 18 years, will help elucidate their connection. This elucidation is important in order to establish a consistency in Milton's thinking, and to justify comparing two works with so much time in between. To begin with, Milton spent much of his time after publishing *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* writing other tracts tearing down the king or further defending the regicide. One example is *Eikonoklastes*, published in 1649 as a response to *Eikon Basilike*, a work painting Charles as a martyr and supposedly written in his own words³. Another is *Defence of the People of England*, published in 1651 and written in response to Salmasius' *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I, or Royal Defence on Behalf of Charles I*.

In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton demonstrates the ways in which Charles was no martyr at all, and paints him as tyrannical. For example, Milton argues that Charles' "claims of inviolability as the 'Lords Anointed' are contradicted by justifications of tyrannicide from the Bible, history, and Natural Law" similarly to the way he refutes the divine right of kings in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (Lewalski 267). Furthermore,

³ There is some evidence that *Eikon Basilike* was not written by Charles at all. Wedgewood claims, "Later on a divine named John Gauden would assert that he had composed it, and his elevation to a bishopric by Charles II suggests that the claim was not groundless (240).

Milton also requires his readers to choose between two versions of the state. Charles' model produces tyranny and servility: the king wields supreme power, controlling the army, governing the church, calling and dismissing parliament, and retaining a negative voice over legislation. In Milton's republican model parliament, as the people's representative, is supreme in all these areas, and it was the king's persistent refusal to recognize this fact that caused the civil war and the regicide (267).

Again, in *Eikonoklastes*, as in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton defines a tyrant, though in *Eikonoklastes* he explicitly makes Charles into one while in *Tenure* he merely implies Charles, and blames Charles' tyrannical nature for his inevitable end. For example, at the beginning of *Eikonoklastes* Milton claims that "Kings... are but weak at arguments; as they who ever have accustomed from the cradle to use their will only as their right hand, their reason always as their left" (1059). This begins Milton's attack on Charles by claiming that Charles only ever ruled according to his will, or his dominant hand, and rarely, if ever, by reason, his subservient hand. This claim, at once, portrays Charles' tyrannical nature. Milton also directly claims that Charles was a tyrant when he argues, "All men inveighed against him; all men except court-vassals opposed him and his tyrannical proceedings; the cry was universal; and this full Parliament was at first unanimous in their dislike and protestation against his evil government" (1063).

Though *Eikonoklastes* is ostensibly an attack on Charles' final written words, it often seems to be more of an attack on the English people themselves. For example, Milton spitefully claims, "That they who from the first beginning or but now of late, by what unhappiness I know not, are so much affatuated not with his person only but with

his palpable faults, and dote upon his deformities, may have none to blame but their own folly if they live and die in such a stricken blindness” (1061). Here, Milton denounces those who have always, or after the regicide, loved Charles despite his faults and “deformities.” Furthermore, Milton suggests that not all men are truly capable of reading *Eikon Basilike* in a critical way. Milton claims that *Eikon Basilike* attempts to “corrupt and disorder the minds of weaker men by new suggestions and narrations, either falsely or fallaciously representing the state of things to the dishonor of this present government and the retarding of the general peace” (1060). Of course, Milton claims that the writing in *Eikon Basilike* is fallacious, but he also suspects that writing was particularly effective on “weaker minds.” In yet another pejorative passage Milton writes that the country is full of people “with a besotted and degenerate baseness of spirit... imbastardized from the ancient nobleness of their ancestors,” and “ready to fall flat and give adoration to the image and memory of this man [Charles]” (1063). Milton does, however, leave space for those “few who yet retain in them... love of freedom” (1063). Milton writes, “Truth,” will be sent “to find out her own readers; few perhaps, but those few of such value and substantial worth” (1060). Ainsworth claims, “Milton’s work serves, in part, to encourage those revolutionaries whose beliefs and whose faith have been shaken by Charles’s execution. *Eikon Basilike* indeed attempts to transform the “success” of the revolution (and, presumably, of the regicide) into “sin,” and the threat that it would do so drives much of Milton’s polemical efforts (161). Hence, though Milton is obviously less than happy with the general populace’s newfound love of Charles, he feels compelled, both by his commission⁴ to write *Eikonoklastes* and probably some sense of integrity, to

⁴ On his commission, see pg. 37

defend those who love freedom much as he did in *Tenure*. Also much like *Tenure*, Milton can't resist the urge to deride the prevaricating Presbyterians.

Milton's distrust and disapproval of Presbyterian prevarication, i.e. their commitment to deposing the king and their subsequent regret, is made abundantly clear when Milton claims, "They who seemed of late to stand up hottest for the Covenant, can now sit mute and much pleased to hear all these opprobrious things uttered against their faith, their freedom, and themselves in their own doings made traitors to boot" (1065). These lines echo *Tenure* where Milton argues, "But this I doubt not to affirm, that the Presbyterians, who now so much condemn deposing, were the men themselves that deposed the king, and cannot with all their shifting and relapsing wash off the guiltiness from their own hands" (1042). In *Eikonoklastes* Milton also accuses the Presbyterians of only caring for Charles when it suited their own ends. He writes, "It is evident that the chief of his adherents never loved him, never honored either him or his cause, but as they took him to set a face upon their own malignant designs; not bemoan his loss at all, but the loss of their own aspiring hopes" (1064). Again, Milton is clearly making similar arguments to those made in *Tenure* after its publication.

In *Defence of the People of England* Milton again argues by making similar points to those he did in *Tenure*. For example, when responding to Salmasius' charge that the government was unrepresentative, i.e. the army had power of the legislature, and parliament had purged bishops, lords, and commoners, Milton responds that "all citizens of every degree" are represented in the House of Commons (Lewalski 275). However, one must keep in mind that by "citizen" Milton did not necessarily mean everyone living in England but more likely those who held property. That said, Milton hearkens back to

his argument in *Tenure* because he appeals to, “the classical ideal of government by the best and worthiest who are, by his further definition, the men who love, support, and defend religious liberty and republican freedoms” (276). The point here is that both of these works are dealing with the same issues, albeit in somewhat different contexts, as *Tenure* and demonstrate a consistency in thought on Milton’s part. Hence, though some would likely argue that attempting to use one work as a lens for the other is naïve, Milton’s consistency cannot be denied.

In March of 1649 Milton was appointed to serve the Commonwealth as Secretary for Foreign Languages. It was in this capacity that he was charged with writing both *Eikonoklastes* and *Defence of the People of England*. Having been a supporter of the deposition of Charles, he was “eager to help it [the new government] establish credibility by writing its letters to foreign states in elegant Latin, and by answering the most formidable polemic attacks against it [*Eikon Basilike* and *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I*]” (Lewalski 237). Now that the government he despised had been destroyed, he was excited to play an important role in establishing a new and better one, and to live up to his writings. However, the government eventually returned to a state much more similar to a monarchy.

Eventually, in 1657, Parliament offered Oliver Cromwell, largely responsible for defeating the Royalists in the second civil war, the crown. He graciously refused, but was nonetheless named Protector, and England returned to a much more monarchical-like status quo. Lewalski claims that “Milton left no record of his opinion about the change of government but some constants in his thought afford a basis for judgement. He believed, with Aristotle and Machiavelli, that forms of government must respond to historical

circumstances and correspond to the nature of the people” (341). Lewalski also, however, estimates Milton’s disapproval of some of the changes coinciding Cromwell’s ascension as Protector. By 1659, Lewalski claims that Milton “shows sympathy for, if not yet overt identification with, a loose coalition of republicans, army officers, sectaries, millenarians, and rank and file soldiers who were orchestrating calls throughout February and March for a return to the ideals of the ‘Good Old Cause’” (362). That “Good Old Cause” being a, “return to the original purity of the Commonwealth [without Protector or Monarch], en route to the promised land” (362). Indeed, through his writings in 1658-1660 Milton, “strives in them [other tracts responding to contemporary issues] to define and promote what he sees as the great goals of the Good Old Cause and the primary ends of government, religious and civil liberty, with religious liberty the ultimate value” (382). Hence, again, constancy in Milton’s thinking⁵.

Cromwell was succeeded by his son, but Richard’s reign did not last long. Soon, he was removed from power and King Charles II ascended the throne beginning the period known as The Restoration. Lewalski claims, “In the years after the restoration, Milton’s worst political fears were realized. Several of his closest associates were

⁵ Lewalski continues to elaborate on Milton’s writings at this time, and does mention some changes in Milton’s thinking. Lewalski claims that in his tract *The Readie and Easy Way* Milton slightly changes his understanding of the Good Old Way. Lewalski argues, “The other main goal of the Good Old Cause, civil liberty, is not now defined in the expansive terms of popular sovereignty, as in *Tenure*, but as the securing of rights, linked to merit” (393). However, Lewalski also points out, while analyzing *Tenure*, that Milton, “adapts his republican theory to the exigencies of the time as well as to his underlying assumptions about slavishness and citizenship, arguing that good men who love liberty... may rightfully act as ‘the people’ in these extraordinary circumstances” (232). Furthermore, Lewalski claims, “Most theorists assumed... that ‘the people’ who have rights as citizens are an educated, propertied, male elite” (233). Hence, it seems that the people must establish their rights by merit even in *Tenure* again demonstrating consistency in Milton’s thinking. Despite his response to the “exigencies of the time,” his republicanism seems more evident than any firm support of popular sovereignty.

brutally executed and others imprisoned” (398). Milton escaped punishment, aside from being imprisoned in 1660 for a short time; nonetheless, “Milton thought himself in imminent danger as he hid for more than three months at an unidentified friend’s house” (399). Indeed, he had great cause for concern. Others convicted of treason were subjected to horrific deaths⁶, and some who had written tracts similar to Milton’s, not to mention the fact that he had served as Secretary for Foreign Languages for the Commonwealth, were found guilty and summarily executed no doubt increasing Milton’s anxiety. It was also during this time that a steady stream of vitriolic writing against Milton was published, in which many attributed Milton’s blindness to punishment by God (402-407). Aside from serious political concerns, Milton also had to deal with his loss of stature and the effect it had on his daughters. Lewalski writes, somewhat ironically, that his daughters “broke out in open *rebellion* in 1662, as they tried to get money from their blind father by stealing from the household expenses and by the despicable act of selling his books” (409; emphasis mine). His daughters were likely upset for several reasons, including the loss of “financial security, dowry, and marriage opportunities that his disgrace brought upon them” along with the difficulties of caring for a blind man whose needs, both bodily and intellectual, were difficult to fulfill (408).

If there was ever a time Milton could clearly be associated with rebellion, it was in the years following the Restoration. Having been a supporter of the regicide whose goals ultimately failed relegated him in the minds of many of his contemporaries as an enemy of the state and someone who deserved severe punishment. Critics called several

⁶ Their deaths included one such punishment in which the victim was hanged, cut loose, subjected to castration and disembowelment, then had to watch as their parts were burned before them, and finally were beheaded. Their bodies then quartered and done with as the king pleased (Lewalski 400).

of his works into question during the Restoration. In 1645 one author concerned about *Doctrine on Discipline and Divorce*, Ephraim Pagitt, who clearly viewed Milton as a threat, claimed that Milton and others were, “Atheists [who]... preach, print, and practice their heretical opinions openly; for books, *vide* the bloody Tenet, witness a Tractate of divorce, in which the bonds [of marriage] are let loose to inordinate lust: a pamphlet also in which the soul is laid asleep from the hour of death unto the hour of judgement” (Lewalski 202). Pagitt’s contempt is perhaps one of the strongest examples against Milton’s writing, but he was not the only one to disparage Milton for the *Doctrine on Discipline and Divorce*. Lewalski claims:

In November, 1645, the Scots Commissioner Robert Baillie charged that ‘Mr Milton permits any man to put away his wife upon his meere pleasure without any fault, and without the cognysance of any judge.’ Baillie also associated Milton with notorious views ascribed to Samuel Gorton and Ann Hutchinson in New England, among them, allowing a woman to desert her husband ‘when he is not willing to follow her in her Church-way.’

(202)

Not only was Milton subject to invective during his life, anti-Milton writings continued well after his death in 1674. One such disparagement comes from a letter to a friend, the author is unknown, in 1690 that complains about some factions wanting to reinstate the practice of regicide. The author claims that these factions have revived Milton and his works as a way to justify their desire to depose the monarch at the time, King William III. The author’s mission with the letter is to vindicate the “Royal Martyrs Sacred Memory from the Antiquated Calumnies and Fictions of the Villain Milton as

They Are Lately Reviv'd" (Anonymous 1). It seems no coincidence that this author refers to Charles as a martyr, which is precisely what *Eikon Basilike* paints Charles as. Milton in *Eikonoklastes* disputes that notion directly, and it seems more than likely that this particular author was aware of that dispute. Furthermore, the author, though there is no direct reference to *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, also claims that, "No sober Heathen can think of, but with Horror and Detestation, dare now, with the very quintessence of Impudence, revive their former Shame, in defiance not only to GOD and Man's Laws, be even Natural Modesty" (Anonymous 2). Again, though the author does not reference Milton's work directly, the author seems acutely aware of Milton's endeavors to prove that defying a monarch is in no way an affront to God, but it is instead sanctioned by God and is in fact natural since any monarch is no more divine than his/her subjects. The author then compares Milton, and others, to Machiavelli by stating,

Well, for Politicians commend me to these Modern Machiavels; when the world began to be so good natur'd, as almost to have pardon'd, and forgot the Infamous Authors of that accursed Rebellion, and all its Miseries, they scorn the Forgiveness both of Heaven and their Neighbour, and openly declare, that the Devil and they want nothing but a Golden Opportunity, to shew us the same Play a second time.

(Anonymous 3)

That "play," of course, refers to Charles' execution. The string of invective in this letter, obviously, does not paint Milton or other's sympathetic to his views in positive light.

So, again, there is a wealth of information, both in Milton's writings themselves and in the response to them by his contemporaries, that could lead to the conclusion that

Milton was, indeed, a rebel. From an objective standpoint, it seems difficult to argue otherwise. However, should we take Milton's own words into account, and perhaps some new understandings of his writings, we may find that Milton did not, in any way, consider himself as a rebel. Instead, Milton, "presents himself as a classical republican orator recalling freeborn citizens to their 'ancient liberty' of free speech and divorce, and also as a Christian prophet who recovered in his divorce tracts the gospel truth that makes men free' (Lewalski 203).

Throughout all of his experiences post-Restoration, however, Milton remains constant in his understanding of republicanism and his stance on rebellion provided in *Tenure*. Rather miraculously, Milton was able to finish and publish the first version of *Paradise Lost* in 1667, and in it he makes his position on rebellion as clear as he does in *Tenure*, despite many scholar's arguments that Satan is in fact a sympathetic character or even a tragic hero.

It is very easy to claim that Satan is treated unfairly, and is even the hero, in *Paradise Lost*. The romantics were the true progenitors of this idea; Shawcross states, "The reading of Satan as the hero of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* has had a long history. The view of the Romantics like William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley and later commentators has often been cited" (104). Indeed, William Blake famously said that Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it." Perhaps the strongest reason for interpreting Satan as sympathetic is the fact that it is much easier to see Satan in human terms than perhaps any other character. To begin with, just after the fall Satan speaks to Beelzebub and states, "All is not lost; the unconquerable will, / and study of revenge, immortal hate, / and courage never to submit or yield" (1.106-108). This poignant

message demonstrates Satan's steadfast resolve, and at once sums up his character. Satan will attempt to remain unconquerable, devote himself to revenge against God, and never to submit to God again. Attempting to make the best of the situation, Satan claims that "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (1.254-255). Considering that Hell is a physical reality for Satan and his fallen angels, this conviction is admirable to say the least. Satan continues consoling himself and Beelzebub and states, "Here at least / We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built / Here for his envy, will not drive us hence" (1.258-260). Again, Satan affirms that "all is not lost," by stating that at least in Hell he and his angels can be free from God's persecution. Many readers could draw parallels to themselves in the event of defeat, and draw inspiration from Satan's optimistic outlook. Again, that he holds such an optimistic view is truly admirable given the fact that he is literally in Hell.

Furthermore, paramount to Satan's status as sympathetic is his consuming desire for free will. Satan tells his angels, "Me though just right, and the fixed laws of Heav'n / did first create your leader, next, free choice, / with what besides, in counsel or in fight, Hath been achieved by merit" (2.17-21). Here Satan is telling the angels that, through his help, they have come to revere free will as their master instead of God, and that the angels have achieved the right to their free will through the battle. Satan's commitment to freedom from God is, again, admirable and even inspirational. Satan speaks many more lines like the ones above, but it is not only Satan's optimism that makes him sympathetic, but the representation, perhaps unfortunately, of God.

God in *Paradise Lost* seems very much like the tyrant Milton describes in *Tenure*. The narrator claims that "Him [Adam] God beholding from his prospect high, / Wherein

past, present, future he beholds” (3.78). Here, God knows the future. More specifically he knew that Satan would rebel. Despite foreknowledge, God insists that Satan fell from grace of his own free will, and that he granted free will to all his creations so that their love of him would be true, since any forced love would be disingenuous (3.99-106). However, implicit in this message is that God desires his creation’s allegiance, and Satan’s sorry state in Hell confirms that desire. Hence, God grants free will with a stipulation. It is this stipulation that Satan cannot abide by, and that is why Satan rebels. Satan’s angels seem to agree. In the debate concerning the angels’ next move the angel Mammon entertains the idea that God would forgive them and they could return to heaven. Mammon states, “And receive / Strict laws imposed, to celebrate his throne / With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead sing / Forced hallelujahs” (2.240-243). These “strict laws” imply that God’s angels, while granted free will, were not entirely free in Heaven. Hence, God appears tyrannical in his demand for love and allegiance. Indeed, the narrator of *Paradise Lost* claims that God, “created evil” (2.623). That God created evil suggests that Satan is something of a slave to his nature, and is punished for being what God created him to be. All of this leads to the interpretation that Satan is treated unfairly, especially since God knew he would rebel and potentially knew that before even creating him. Therefore, Satan receives sympathy while God seems cold and uncaring. He seems especially so when He states, “But mercy first and last shall brightest shine,” because while that mercy is real for Adam and Eve, Satan receives none. (3.134). Of course, Adam prays for forgiveness and Satan does not, but that implies yet another stipulation: Mercy will only shine if one is repentant, which given Satan’s nature may not even be possible. Danielson argues that “Milton’s effort to encapsulate evil in Satan was

not successful. That is, those readers who have left their reactions on record have seldom been able to regard Satan as pure evil, and some of the most distinguished have claimed that he is superior in character to Milton's God" (161). In terms of human relation, Danielson is absolutely right. It is much easier to identify with Satan than it is to identify with God for all of the reasons given above. Though there exist several more reasons to see Satan as sympathetic, one author takes an interesting stance on the subject by relating a sympathetic interpretation of Satan to Milton's contemporary religious context.

In more recent scholarship, John Stachniewski affirms that Satan is indeed a sympathetic character. Stachniewski argues:

In order to understand properly why Satan is sympathetic in *Paradise Lost* we need to know how in the protestant imagination the devil had become less alien, more intimately involved in human thought processes, with a resulting confusion of spiritual values. Once God's hatred had become an imaginative reality the human response became indistinguishable from the formerly alien and shocking demonic response.

(349)

Stachniewski's argument is based on an analysis of Calvinism at the time, which essentially led people to wonder whether they were a part of God's elect or not. The effect of Calvin's teachings, according to Stachniewski, was often psychologically damaging, and he says that "there were actual people around whose social alienation was so preyed on by Calvinist preaching that they were convinced of their reprobation and sometimes, like Faustus, even took the small next step of thinking themselves demonic" (345). From that, "The unfit many, it may be inferred, could find their own mental

processes mirrored in Satan's" (344). Though Stachniewski may be right that some of Milton's contemporaries identified themselves in some way with Satan's own rejection and therefore would have found Satan a sympathetic character, he also acknowledges that "Milton repudiated Calvinism's most distinctive tenets" (332). Specifically, Milton repudiated the notion that "if God alone determined that some would turn to him he was responsible for the fact that the rest could not and did not, and for their unavoidable wickedness" (333).⁷ It is the purpose of the following argument to demonstrate why, according to Milton's position on rebellion, he would not have wanted Satan to be read as a sympathetic character regardless of whether some of his audience could relate to him.

Indeed, Milton would likely have argued that anyone who read Satan as sympathetic had simply misunderstood his writing or perhaps had a predisposition towards that reading in the first place. As he writes in *Aeropagitica*:

To the pure, all things are pure...the knowledge cannot defile, nor consequently the books, if the will and conscience be not defiled...Wholesome meats to a vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome, and best books to a naughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evil.

⁷ Milton must have recognized that, though he repudiated this Calvinist tenant, there are very few examples of men who are righteous. Indeed, when Michael tells Adam of the future of humanity, only Noah and Enoch are righteous (11). However, God says that Man fell because they were deceived by Satan, but that Satan fell because he was "Self-tempted, self-depraved" (3.130-131). Therefore, man shall have mercy specifically because man, Adam specifically but also in a general sense, was not "Self-tempted, self-depraved." Furthermore, God does not determine who will turn to him and who will not, but only possesses foreknowledge of their actions. God says, "they themselves decreed / Their own revolt, not I: if I foreknew, / Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault, / Which had no less proved certain unforeknown" (3.116-119). Though in these lines God is referring to the fallen angels, it does not seem errant to attribute these lines to humanity as well. Hence, Milton refutes the idea that God is responsible for anyone who does not receive redemption. God says, "I formed them free, and free they must remain, / Till they enthrall themselves" (3.124-125)

Here Milton makes clear that even those books which are good can lead to evil, but those that are “pure” will suffer no ill consequences, so in Milton’s mind it seems he would dismiss any readings of Satan as sympathetic due to some impurity of mind, especially in the case of his contemporaries. Surely, Stachniewski is on to something when he explains why some of Milton’s contemporaries may have viewed Satan as sympathetic, but the question at hand is what Milton attempted to demonstrate through Satan’s character regardless of his relative success. It will be clearly demonstrated that Milton intended to represent Satan as totally unsympathetic, especially because of his association with rebellion. Though, admittedly, he may not have been entirely successful. Satan is, as he should be, an appealing and interesting character, and is much more relatable than God to humanity.

Milton establishes in the beginning of *Paradise Lost* that Satan and his angels are rebellious. Milton writes that Satan was cast, “out from Heav’n, with all his host / Of rebel angels” (1.37-38). Here Milton explicitly associates Satan and his angels with rebellion. Milton also mentions justice in direct contrast to Satan’s actions when he claims, “Such place eternal justice prepared / For those rebellious, here their prison ordained” (1.70-71). These lines demonstrate Satan’s rebellion as one which was unjustified, for if it were justified, then what need would there be for “eternal justice” to make a prison? If it were justified, which according to the Miltonic definition no rebellion can be justified, circumstances would obviously have been different. Hence, Satan’s actions are unjust and constitute rebellion. Furthermore, Milton claims, “Though of their names in Heav’nly records now / Be no memorial, blotted out and razed / By

their rebellion, from the books of Life” (1.361-363). In this way, God additionally condemns Satan’s rebellion by striking the names of the angels from the record books of Heaven, thus demonstrating that the lives of those who rebel are not worth remembering or should be forgotten. Milton, ever desiring to immortalize himself as a great poet, may have taken inspiration from the burning of his own books and in these lines demonstrates that while Satan, a rebel, has been stricken from “the books of life,” he, in his mind no rebel, would suffer no such fate especially because of the completion of *Paradise Lost*.

Satan acts, in *Paradise Lost*, much like the rebel that Milton describes in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, and since Milton detests rebellion and plainly depicts Satan as a rebel, readings of Satan as sympathetic are difficult to substantiate. Satan begins *Paradise Lost* with a steadfast resolution, i.e. “to wage by force or guile eternal war” (1.121). Satan says this to his second in command Beelzebub, but soon after Satan’s statement the angels have a debate in order to determine what their next course of action should be. Moloch is bent on immediately resuming the war on Heaven and God, Belial promotes inaction so that God may one day forgive them or at least will not heap greater punishment upon them, and Mammon suggest that the fallen angels work to make Hell more like Heaven (2.51-284). However, the entire debate in hell, since Satan had already resolved to his course of action, is “mere window-washing. Satan and Beelzebub had decided what to do beforehand; they go through the appearance of discussion, but there is no debate, no discussion” (Wilding 216). Furthermore, as Milton implicitly states in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, rebellion is the “resisting of superior powers.” That “superior force” is, in this case, God. Indeed, “Satan’s system is like earthly monarchies—indefensible, because the ruler is not omnipotent” (Wilding 219). Hence,

Satan is engaging in a rebellion and not any sort of lawful act; it would be impossible for there to ever be a righteous rebellion against God.

Williams writes that Satan is motivated in part by his pride but mainly by envy (259-260). In support of his claim he refers to a line in Book I where Milton describes Satan: he “set himself in glory above his peers / He trusted to have equaled the Most High” (1.39-40). Williams writes that Satan’s rebellion begins the moment that God demands the exultation of The Son, and thus creates Satan’s envy (262). Interestingly, it is possible in this context to see the possibility for both pride and envy in Satan, but not in the actions of those who deposed Charles. Since, as previously mentioned, Milton writes that men are created equal in *Tenure*, but God clearly delineates his desired hierarchy in Heaven, it does not seem possible to attribute the deposer’s actions as prideful or envious since they are already on the same level as the king. Indeed, that the king *can* be deposed demonstrates the indistinguishable qualities of commoners and kings, and that God, Satan, and The Son are distinguished is precisely the reason that Satan cannot win and his actions constitute a rebellion. Furthermore, Forsyth astutely notes that “Satan has in him... Charles” (64). Given Charles consistent claim to and belief in the divine right of kings, a parallel between Satan and Charles is evident; like Satan, Charles “set himself in glory above his peers / [and] trusted to have equaled the Most High.” Hence, Milton is able, if interpreted this way, to make Charles’ actions akin to those of Satan, and further justify the notion that Charles was punished by God just as Satan. Given the relation between Charles and Satan, and Milton’s plentiful anti-Charles attitudes, sympathy for Satan continues to dwindle.

Though Satan states his intentions at the beginning of *Paradise Lost* in an unequivocal manner, Satan, much like the Presbyterians whom Milton discusses in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and associates with rebellion, frequently questions his own resolutions as the plot of *Paradise Lost* unfolds. Indeed, hearkening back to Milton's treatment of the Presbyterians on the subject of regicide, one can draw a clear parallel to Satan. Take, for example, Satan's ruminations when he arrives at Eden. Satan says to himself, "Nay cursed be thou; since against his thy will / Chose freely what it now so justly rues. / Me miserable!" (4.71-73). Much like the Presbyterians Satan questions his earlier convictions. An important difference here, however, between the Presbyterians and Satan is that the regicide was a justified and lawful act, whereas Satan's rebellion was never anything but a rebellion and therefore unjustified from the beginning. Regardless, a key characteristic of rebellion for Milton is an equivocal stance. Loewenstein writes that Milton presents the "malevolent Presbyterians as treacherously equivocal in their religious politics" (185). Satan is able to halt his lamentations shortly by reassuring himself that if he were to return to heaven he would again be unhappy, but upon seeing Adam and Eve Satan again equivocates. Satan says to himself:

O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold
Into our room of bliss thus high advanced
Creatures of the other mold, earth-born perhaps,
Not spirits, yet to Heav'nly spirits bright
Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue with wonder, and could love.

(4.358-363).

Here, Satan, whose original intention was to corrupt humanity, again questions his motivations. He states that he could love them, and is even grieved at their sight since he has come to corrupt them. Satan's hesitation, again, echoes the Presbyterians. Therefore, Loewenstein is right when he claims, "Milton stresses the mercurial language and politics of the orthodox clergy: 'restless for power' like the equivocal arch-rebel of *Paradise Lost*" (185). Loewenstein also argues, "Milton associates the maneuvering behavior of the Presbyterians with treacherous artifice. Like the poet of *Paradise Lost*, he aims to unmask such artificers and expose their calumnious art" (189). Hence, Milton is working to condemn the Presbyterians in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, and Satan in *Paradise Lost* for the same reason, that is, their rebellion.

While Milton has traditionally been viewed as celebrating rebellion in *Paradise Lost*, he actually celebrates martyrdom through the figure of Abdiel. When Satan rouses several other angels to his cause before the war in Heaven, Abdiel is the only one to object. John Knott notes that "Although Milton articulated the ideal of 'Heroic Martyrdom' in *Paradise Lost* and adumbrated it in Michael's prophecies of Christians persevering in true worship despite persecution, he never developed this ideal as fully as one might expect given the pressure he put on it to counterbalance the dramatically powerful example of Satan" (168). Knott argues that Milton defines martyrdom as the "readiness to defend the truth, to the point of dying for it" (165). Though presumably Abdiel, as an immortal angel, does not fear death, the sentiment is much the same in his renunciation of Satan's intentions against God. When Abdiel returns to those who have not rebelled he is celebrated; God speaks:

well hast thou fought

The better fight, who single hast maintained
Against revolted multitudes the cause
Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms
And for the testimony of truth has borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence.

(6.29-35)

Importantly, though some might consider Abdiel's denouncement of Satan to be an act of rebellion against Satan's recently acquired leadership, Milton makes clear that Abdiel did not act in a rebellious way. Instead, Abdiel, much like those that rose against Charles, recognizes Satan's unlawful power and so lawfully resists it. Indeed, when God sends forth his army He says, "lead forth my armed Saints / By thousands and by millions ranged for fight; / Equal in number to that godless crew / Rebellious" (6.47-50). Clearly, Milton demonstrates the rebellious, and therefore unjust, actions of Satan while praising Abdiel's defense of truth and devotion to God.

Given their similarities, one can assume that the War in Heaven parallels the English Civil Wars. That being the case, the triumph of Abdiel and the other angels, steadfast in their devotion to God, win because of that devotion. They, just as the regicides in *Tenure*, are victorious because God chose them as his agents. In much the same way, Satan, who again, "trusted to have equaled the Most High" and parallels Charles, loses because of his rebelliousness. Furthermore, since Abdiel can be considered as a martyr as described earlier, a further parallel to Charles becomes apparent. Abdiel, ready "to defend the truth, to the point of dying for it," becomes an inversion of Charles

and his *Eikon Basilike*, in which Charles attempts to paint himself as a martyr but whom Milton reveals, “as a plagiarist of other’s prayers” (Lewalski 270). Though Charles’ *Eikon Basilike* would have its readers see Charles as a victim, and even as a Christ-like figure, Milton no doubt saw him as untruthful, especially since, “Though he knew better, Milton dealt with the book as the king’s” (Lewalski 248).

Later on in Book VI when the narrator describes the end of the battle in Heaven, he writes of the fallen angels,

Nameless in dark oblivion let them dwell.

For strength from truth divided and from just,

Illaudable, naught merits but dispraise

and ignominy, yet to glory aspires

Vainglorious, and through infamy seeks fame:

Therefore eternal silence be their doom.

(6.380-385)

Admittedly, this may be a stretch, but here is one of only two examples of the word “laud,” or its derivatives, in the whole of *Paradise Lost*, the other being “applauded” when Abdiel returns to the angels still in God’s service. The significance of this is in relation to William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury previously mentioned, who was responsible for many of the changes to the Church that Puritans such as Milton disagreed with. It seems at least possible that Milton snuck in a snub to Laud in this section. As one who “through infamy seeks fame,” (Laud was despised by many) Laud was ill-able to unite his strength with truth.

However, as Knott mentions, it is not only Abdiel that demonstrates his willingness to stand against those who would rebel against God. In “Michael’s prophecies” Milton also mentions Noah, who is in Knott’s mind also a “Heroic Martyr” (168). When Michael discusses with Adam the “effect which thy original crime hath wrought” he describes the flood and Noah, though he does not mention Noah by name (11.424). Michael speaks of:

One man except, the only son of light
in a dark age, against example good,
Against allurements, custom, and a world
Offended; fearless of reproach and scorn,
or violence, he of their wicked ways
Shall them admonish, and before them set
The paths of righteousness.

(11.808-814)

One might consider Noah’s actions to be rebellious since he is apparently the only person in the entire world to behave differently, but what he does not do is resist any “superior powers.” Hence, Noah’s devotion to God and admonition of his peers is not a rebellion just as Abdiel’s speech against Satan is not a rebellion. Hence, if anyone in *Paradise Lost* is intended to be sympathetic it is at least Abdiel, Noah, and, though he is not elaborated on here, Enoch. Each of these characters holds steadfast in their defense of truth even against a vast majority, but Satan, who resists “superior powers,” is punished for his acts of rebellion.

In any case, it is clear that Satan is unequivocally associated with rebellion. Given Milton's position on rebellion, a reading of Satan in *Paradise Lost* as sympathetic thus becomes indefensible. While on a personal level one can certainly find many admirable qualities in Satan, and feel a great amount of sympathy for him, recognition of Milton's stance on rebellion in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and its application to Satan in *Paradise Lost* makes it difficult to argue that Satan is sympathetic.

Conclusion

Milton continues to express an abhorrence for rebellion in his later work, *Samson Agonistes*, as well. During Samson's discussion with Harapha, Harapha accuses Samson of being a murderer, or at least for killing some of Harapha's countrymen unjustly, and a "revolter" (1180-1191). In response, Samson says that the Philistines considered him,

a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presumed
Single rebellion and did hostile acts.
I was no private but a person raised
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n
to free my country; if their servile minds
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for naught,
Th' unworthier they; hence to this day they serve.

(1208-1216)

The word rebellion, the only use of it in all of *Samson Agonistes*, is important here because Samson associates it with the evil that he is accused of by Harapha when he accuses Samson of being a "revolter." Samson attempts to show to Harapha that his actions were not those of rebellion but instead were sanctioned by God. Certainly, his unnatural strength lends his claims some credence, but in a Miltonic universe doing God's will is the ultimate, just act. As Milton writes in *The Tenure of Kings and*

Magistrates, “the trial of justice, which is the sword⁸ of God, superior to all mortal things, in whose hand so-ever by apparent signs his testified will is to put it” (1025). No doubt, Samson wields that sword. Of course, Samson loses his ability to wield it when he divulges the secret of his power to Delila, which he had been forbidden to do, but in the end Samson successfully ends the Philistine’s reign and therefore acts justly and not as a rebel.

As has been demonstrated, Milton makes his position on rebellion, that of absolute abhorrence, abundantly clear in several of his works. Of course, this realization may be strange since Milton is often described as radical, rebellious, and even seditious. Indeed, there is no doubt that Milton wrote works which flew in the face of generally accepted norms and conventions. However, In Milton’s mind, there could be no rebellion against that which was unjust or untrue. Hence, he derides rebellion and defends truth in the works here treated, and through an understanding of that derision Satan cannot be interpreted as sympathetic. Milton’s cause was to guide his countrymen towards the truth, and in that cause there was no rebel.

⁸ Here, justice, which is the “sword of God,” may also hearken back to the “two-handed engine” found in *Lycidas* that symbolized a promise of retribution against corrupt clergyman and is often interpreted to be either the sword of Michael or the sword in *Revelations* (Turner 562).

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