

SOME RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
BELIEFS OF MILTON.

by

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A C K N O W L E D G M E N T

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I.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

Milton gives most of his religious beliefs in the pamphlet "De Doctrina Christiana" or "Christian Doctrine." This interesting work was not known until 1823, and not published until 1825. It is quite probable that it was not published during Milton's life time because, after the Restoration, he hardly dared to spread such a doctrine. It is believed that this was to have formed the theological basis for a united program of liberal Christianity. It was written in Latin in order that leaders of European thought might read it. The Doctrine consists of quotations and references from the Bible, arranged under proper headings, with a general introduction. It stands as a monument to Milton's knowledge of the Bible and his wide acquaintance with the numerous varieties of Christian thought. Whether or not he accepts a doctrine depends entirely upon its conformity with God's word as revealed in Bible.

In Chapter III of the Doctrine Milton affirms his belief in the operation of free will, and thus denies the theory of predestination. He gives Biblical references to support his contention "That the most high God has not decreed all things absolutely." (1)

(1): -- Milton: Prose works, ed. by Bohn, V. 4, p. 33.

Milton says further that if one believe in predestination he must believe that "if God have at all events decreed my salvation, however I may act, I shall not perish." (1). This would remove all personal responsibility. In Paradise Lost he brings out his idea even more clearly:

" So will fall He and his faithless progeny: whose fault? Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me all he could have; I made him just and right sufficient to have stood, though free to fall." (2). And in Book III he reiterates:

" For so I formed them free; and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves; I else must change.
Their nature, and revoke the high decree
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
Their freedom; they themselves ordained their fall." (3)

Milton believed, according to the Doctrine, that there is but one God, and that Christ is inferior to him. As usual he searches the Scriptures for his proof:

"Since it is most evident in the first place, from numberless passages of Scripture, that there is in reality but one true independent and supreme God." (4)

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, ed. by Bohn, V. 4, p. 32.

(2) -- Paradise Lost: l. 95-99.

(3) -- Paradise Lost: III l. 124.

(4) -- Milton: Prose Works, ed. by Bohn. V 4, p. 87.

In "Paradise Lost" he presents his belief in the supremacy of God when he says:

"Seem I to thee sufficiently possessed
Of happiness or not? Who am alone
From all eternity; for none I know
Second to me or like, equal much less." (1)

Not only does Milton ascribe supremacy to God, but he also believes God to be the author of temptation:

"To this view of providence must be referred what is called temptation, whereby God either tempts men, or permits them to be tempted by the devil or his agents. . . . An evil temptation is when God, as above described either withdraws his grace, or presents occasions for sin, or hardens the heart, or blinds the understanding. . . . A good temptation is that whereby God tempts even the righteous for the purpose of proving them, not as tho he were ignorant of the disposition of their hearts, but for the purpose of exercising or manifesting their faith or patience, as in the case of Abraham and Job." (2).

Milton divides sin into two classes -- "that which is common to all men, and the personal sin of each individual." (3) He believes in original sin, and in the resultant suffering of each human being. Infants, however, he would consider in a slightly different light:

(1) -- Paradise Lost III line 124.

(2) -- Milton: Prose Work, ed by Bohn. V. 4, p. 209.

(3) -- Ibid p 253

"The difficulty is solved with respect to infants, by consideration that all souls belong to God; that these, though guiltless of actual sin, were the offspring of sinful parents, and God foresaw that, if suffered to live, they would grow up similar to their parents." (1)

As a result of this original sin, death came unto the world, and this Milton divides into four degrees,-- the death of guiltiness, spiritual death, death of the body and death eternal. The first, he says, is not death in its true sense, but is the "prelude" and was manifested by Adam and Eve when they realized their sin and were afraid.

He expresses it in *Paradise Lost*:

"Innocence that as a veil had shadowed them
from knowing ill was gone,
Just confidence and native righteousness,
And honour, from about them, naked left
To guilty shame." (2)

The second degree or spiritual death is "the loss of divine grace, and that of innate righteousness wherein man in the beginning lived unto God." (3) It consists in the loss of right reason to discern chief good, and in slavish subjection to sin and the devil.

(1) -- Milton: *Prose Works*, Bohn edition, V. 4, p. 257.
(2) -- *Paradise Lost*: IX, 154.
(3) -- Milton: *Prose work*, Bohn ed. V. 4, p. 265.

But even spiritual death does not totally extinguish the divine image, for man still possesses understanding and liberty of will.

"The death of the body is to be considered in the light of a punishment for sin; . . . the bodily death from which we are to arise again originated in sin, and not in nature." (1)

Milton denies the belief in purgatory held by the Catholics, for he says:

"No one supposes that the souls of men are occupied from the time of their death to that of the resurrection in endeavors to render themselves more acceptable to God in Heaven; that is the employment of the present life, and its reward is not to be looked for till the second coming of Christ." (2)

In the final or eternal death, Milton included the destruction of the world itself, but he was not sure but that this was to be accomplished by means of a change in constituent parts. Hell, he placed in the center of the earth:

"Besides, if, as has been shown from various passages of the New Testament, the whole world is to be finally destroyed by fire, it follows that hell, being

Milton: (1) -- Prose Works, Bohn ed. Vol. 4, p. 269.
(2) -- Ibid. p. 283.

situated in the center of the earth, must share the fate of the surrounding universe and perish likewise." (1)

Milton believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that through him, humanity is redeemed and restored. He believed in the miraculous conception of Christ:

"Of his conception, the efficient cause was the Holy Spirit The object of this miraculous conception was to obviate the contamination consequent upon the sin of Adam." (2)

Christ, according to the thinking of Milton, is a mediator between God and man:

"Men hereafter may discern from what consummate virtue I have chose

This perfect man, by merit call'd my Son
To earn salvation for the sons of men." (3)

Christ possessed three functions, that of Prophet, that of Priest, and that of King. As Prophet, he is "to instruct his church in Heavenly truth, and to declare the whole will of the Father." (4)

(1) -- Milton: Prose Work, Bohn ed. V. 4, p. 491.

(2) -- Ibid, p. 296.

(3) -- Paradise Regained II l. 164.

(4) -- Milton: Prose, Bohn ed. Vol. 14, p. 299.

His priestly function is that of sacrifice, and of intercession in behalf of sinners.

The government of the Church, thru inward law and spiritual power, gives to Christ his Kingship. He governs "not the bodies of men alone, as the civil magistrate, but their minds and consciences; . . . hence force ought never to be employed in the administration of the kingdom of Christ, which is the Church." (1)

The same thought is expressed in "Paradise Regained":

To guide nations in the way of truth
By saving doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more kingly: this attracts the soul,
Governs the inner man, the nobler part
That other o'er the body only reigns,
And oft by force, which to a generous mind,
So reigning, can be no sincere delight." (2)

Milton believed that the sacrifice of Christ is to redeem all mankind, not just the elect as some believed. In this he again shows his disbelief of the doctrine of predestination, and the necessity of a purgatory to purge men of their sins. "For (besides

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn ed. vol 4, p. 303.

(2) -- Paradise Regained: II l. 473.

that there is no mention of any such place in Scripture) if it be true that the blood of Christ has made complete expiation for us, and purified us thoroughly from all stains, it follows that there is nothing left for the fire to purge." (1)

I have endeavored to bring out the fact that the measure of final judgment to Milton was the Holy Scripture. A doctrine, to be authentic, must have Biblical sanction, must be supported by authority from either the Old or the New Testament. He was most decided against the right of the Church to interpret Biblical law and to force its decisions on the people. This is again his belief in liberty of conscience:

"Every believer has a right to interpret the Scriptures for himself, inasmuch as he has the Spirit for his guide, and the mind of Christ in him; nay, the expositions of the public interpreter can be of no use to him, except so far as they are confirmed by his own conscience. . . . It is not therefore within the province of any visible Church, much less of the civil magistrate, to impose their interpretations on us as laws, or as binding on the conscience; in other words, as matter of implicit faith." (2)

The gospel gave to man both the written word, or Scriptures, and the inner or Spiritual, written in the hearts of men. The written word might become

(1) -- *Prose Works*, Bohn, p. 318.

(2) -- *Ibid*, p. 444.

changed thru translation or corruption, "but the Spirit which leads to truth can not be corrupted, neither is it easy to deceive a man who is really spiritual." (1)

Only thru the attainment of spiritual insight may one see the true meaning of the Word of God. This understanding can be obtained only by prayer and by perfect sincerity.

"The truth
Left only in those records pure
Though not but by the Spirit understood." (2)

This belief, "the doctrine of the inner light," was firmly held by Milton. He expresses it in different writings.

"God hath now sent his living Oracle
Into the world to teach his final will,
And sends his Spirit of Truth henceforth
to dwell
In pious hearts, an inward oracle
To all truth requisite for men to know." (3)

There is no particular sanctity to a church, a shrine or a cathedral. The heart is the worshipping place of God, and any sanctity given to a place of external worship is due to the presence of the divine ideas within the heart of the worshipper.

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, ed. by Bohn V. 4, p. 448.
(2) -- Paradise Lost: XII -- 511-14.
(3) -- Paradise Regained: I -- 460-64.

"God attributes to place
No sanctity, if none be thither brought
By men who there frequent, or therein dwell." (1)

That there shall be a second coming of Christ, Milton did not doubt. And as usual, he turned to his precious Bible for authority. Since the day of the second coming is "known to the Father only ... it will be sudden." (2) There will, however, be certain signs -- "the destruction of Jerusalem, false prophets, persecutions, pestilence, and famine, . . . impiety and almost universal apostacy." (3) The event will be "glorious" and "terrible." This will be followed by the resurrection from the dead, which will take place "partly thru resuscitation of the dead and partly thru a sudden change operated on the living." (4)

"When thou attended gloriously from heav'n
Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send
The summoning arch angels to proclaim
Thy dread tribunal; forthwith from all winds
The living, and forthwith the cited dead
Of all past ages, to the general doom
Shall hasten: such a peal shall rouse
their sleep.

Bad men and angels; they, arraign'd, shall sink
Beneath thy sentence. (5)

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- (1) -- Paradise Lost XI 836-38.
(2) -- Milton: Prose Works, ed. by Bohn, v. 4, p. 476.
(3) -- Ibid , p. 477.
(4) -- Ibid , p. 477.
(5) -- Paradise Lost: II -- 323.

Milton again reveals his belief in individualism when he says, concerning the Day of Judgment:

"The rule of judgment will be the conscience of each individual, according to the measure of light which he has enjoyed." (1)

Following the judgment, Christ will reign on earth.

"Till . . .

Earth be chang'd to heav'n, and
heaven to earth,

One kingdom, joy and union without end." (2)

Then will be fulfilled the saying in
Mathew 25: 34:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit
the kingdom prepared for you from the
foundation of the world Depart from
me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared
for the Devil and his Angels."

Milton was extremely broad in his religious views, even tho there were times when, during the heat of controversy, he lashed his opponents with arguments that cut like a whip. Throughtout his entire life, Milton was confident that God's will is right,

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, ed by Bohn, V. 4, p. 483.
(2) -- Paradise Lost: VII 160.

and even in old age, the loss of his sight, the failure of his political principles, and his disappointment in his daughters, failed to alter his firm trust in his Maker.

II

POLITICAL VIEWS.

The court of the Star Chamber in 1627 issued a decree that all books must be licensed for publication, but in 1640 the court itself was abolished, and with it its decrees. For three years following, printing was practically free. This period was filled with a multitude of pamphlets which gave every shade of political and religious opinion. But in June 1643 Parliament, then controlled by the Presbyterian party, passed an act which again required that books be licensed by a government censor before publication. To Milton, this was taking away one form of liberty, and a move against progress and reform, besides a threat to him personally. His pamphlets on divorce were very likely to be suppressed by this new law, since "The Doctrine and Discipline" had been attacked before Parliament in a sermon by Hubert Palmer. From a statement in "Reason of Church Government" (1641) we learn that he believed most firmly in the freedom of the press before the ordinance of book licensing was passed, or his own pamphlets were attacked. He says:

"For me, I have determined to lay up as the best treasure of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me, the honest liberty of a free speech from my youth." (1)

Milton says in the Areopagitica: "For this is not the liberty which we can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the commonwealth: that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty obtained that wise men look for." (2) From this it would seem that Milton possessed a very sane view of liberty. Freedom was not theoretical; it was not existent in a world beyond the seas; it was not a will-o-the-wisp, now here, now there; but it was a very concrete thing within reach of every Englishman if the nation could be brought to "hear freely, consider deeply, and reform speedily the complaints" of the people of the commonwealth. Indeed, he feels that the very fact that he is discoursing on the subject proves that England has gone a long way on her journey toward the goal -- liberty.

A knowledge of good and of evil came into the world at the same time -- "It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped into the world.

(1) -- "Reason of Church Gov." -- in Hanford, A Milton Handbook, p. 74. Quoted.

(2) -- Milton: Prose Works, (Bohn), Vol II. p. 50.

And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil; that is to say, of knowing good by evil." (1) For this reason, says Milton, man can not view one without the other. He must know vice before he can recognize virtue: therefore, England, by refusing to allow the publication of certain books, is refusing her subjects the freedom of choosing or recognizing the good.

"Since therefore the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with less danger, scout into the regions of sin and falsity, than by reading all manner of tractates, and hearing all manner of reason?" (2)

It is the firm opinion of Milton that evil, in the home or in the nation, can be obliterated, not by ignoring it, but by recognizing both evil and good, each in its own garb, and then by the aid of reason choosing the good. This is a part of his philosophy of liberty, that men be left free to choose.

He is a no less firm believer in freedom of thought than of choice, for he says:

"Well knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compered in scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works (Bohn) Vol. II p. 68.

(2) -- Ibid. p. 68.

progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, tho his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. " (1) This is evidence that Milton has no patience with blind faith, and if the liberty of choice is taken away by refusing to allow certain books to be printed, Parliament is taking away the very thing which gave the creed of most of its members its birth -- the right to doubt, the right to reason, and the right to choose.

Because he was such a believer in the rights of men to view and to judge for themselves, Milton would allow each to abide by his choice. This belief in toleration is boldly stated:

"There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any many dissent from their maxims. It is their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their syntagma. There are the troubles, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to write those dissevered pieces, which are yet wanting to the body of truth. To be still search-

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol II p.

(2) -- x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

ing what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneous and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold and neutral, and inwardly divided minds." (1)

Milton says very plainly that he believes all men are born free, because they are "the image and resemblance of God himself", and that they so lived until Adam's transgression. Then each saw the danger of destruction and made agreements and leagues to defend themselves, one group against the other. Thus grew up towns, cities, and commonwealths, in which, because faith itself wasn't sufficiently binding, it was necessary to ordain some authority to administer justice. This was all right for a while, but soon the power given for protection became too great a temptation, and injustice and partiality resulted. Then counsellors were added. Thus grew the kings, magistrates and parliaments. Tracing the growth in this way, Milton lays a foundation for his statement in "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates":

"It being thus manifest, that the power of kings and magistrates is nothing else but what is only derivative, transferred, and committed to them in trust from the people

(1) -- Milton -- Prose Works, Bohn, Vo. II p. 90.

to the common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and can not be taken from them, without a violation of natural birthrights." (1) Sovereignty resides then, says Milton, in the group. Kings and Magistrates, even parliaments rule only by virtue of the right given them by the people.

Therefore the relation between governed and governor was that a civil contract, and could be terminated at will by either party. If the people of England chose to depose their king it was their right to do so. "It follows lastly, that since the king and the magistrate holds his authority of the people both originally and naturally for their good, in the first place, and not his own, there may the people, as oft as they shall judge for the best, either choose him or reject him, retain him or depose him, though no tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of free born men to be governed as seems to them best." (2)

Divine right has no place in Milton's politics:

"Secondly, that is to say, as is usual, the king hath as good a right to his crown and dignity as any man to his inheritance, is to make the subject no better than the king's slave, his chattel or his possession that

(1) -- Milton: Prose work, Bohn, Vol. II p. 11. ---
(2) -- Ibid. P. 14.

may be bought or sold." (1)

"Thirdly, it follows, that to say kings are accountable to none but God, is 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: for if the king fear not God, (as how many of them do not,) we hold our lives and estates by the mere tenure of his mere grace and mercy, as from a god, not a mortal magistrate." (2)

Milton believed all freedom of man to be either spiritual or civil liberty. There are cases when each is dependent upon the other. Spiritual liberty consists in liberty of conscience, of believing as one sees the gleam from within. He says in "The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth.":

"The whole freedom of men consists either in spiritual or civil liberty. As for the spiritual, who can be at rest, who can enjoy anything in this world with contentment, who hath not the liberty to serve God, and to save his own soul, according to the best light which God hath planted in him to that purpose, by reading of his revealed will, and the guidance of His Holy Spirit.

The other part of our freedom consists in civil rights and advancements of every person according to his merit: these never more open, than in a free commonwealth." (1)

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol. II p. 12.

(2) -- Ibid. p. 13.

(1) -- Ibid. pp. 132, 135.

When we consider that Milton lived over two hundred years ago, when monarchs were supreme, and feudalism scarcely cold, we must realize what a superb figure he was. His political doctrines were not accepted then, but who knows the influence they may have had on the growth of democracy in both England and America?

SOCIAL VIEWS -- EDUCATION.

When Milton returned from his European journey, going to live at the home of his sister, he tutored her two sons. Soon he was persuaded to take more pupils, the children of friends. These boys were taught according to Milton's own ideas of education. They were trained in athletics, in military sports, in poetry and in philosophy, reading an immense store of books, chiefly in Greek and Latin.

From this teaching experience Milton drew much material for his tractate on education, which he published anonymously in 1644. The tractate, in the form of a letter, is addressed to a Samuel Hartlib, an educational reformer of the day.

This treatise was written nearly three hundred years ago, but it is surprising to note that we, in our modern educational system, have recently embodied some of the ideas expressed by Milton previous to the Restoration. For example, Milton would supplement text books with actual contact and experience. "To set forward all these proceedings in nature and mathematics, what hinders but that they may procure as oft as shall be needful, the helpful experience of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries; and with the other sciences, architects, engineers, mariners, anatomists; who doubtless of would be ready, some for

reward, and some to favor such a hopeful seminary." (1) This is the germ of our vocational educational work, and even in the less technical, we endeavor to give the child as much first hand experience as is possible. We have him care for plants and animals which are his own, so that he may watch their growth. As the child advances, we equip laboratories so that he may learn at first hand the truths of physical science. Our colleges maintain farms, support geological trips and in every way attempt to make knowledge a personal experience, just what Milton advocated in 1644.

The aim of education is, for Milton, religious. Seemingly, our modern idea of a "practical" education, that is deliberate training for financial gain, would have little place in his scheme. He says:

"The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection." (2)

He would have boys study the languages of other people, because "every nation affords not experience and tradition enough for all kinds of learning." (3)

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol. III p. 471.

(2) -- Ibid, p. 464.

(3) -- Ibid, p. 464.

We Americans would fall short of Milton's standard here, for we find it necessary to make it a requirement that two foreign languages be mastered before a Doctor's degree be granted, so little are languages studied.

Milton is very decided against learning a language merely for the language itself. To him language is a tool, with which one secures the knowledge of other people who speak a different tongue. He says that the system of his day spends too much time "scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek, as might be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year." (1) He regrets not only the time lost, but the "idle vacancies" created by expecting children to compose themes, give orations and form verses which require years of experience and much understanding of life. In other words, he would fit the subject to the child, and not expect to put "old heads on young shoulders." From the practise of attempting to do that which is too difficult for them they mix their Latin, Greek, and "Anglicisms" and get rather a barbarous result.

This seems nothing more or less than a seventeenth century statement of our present day psychological law of habit formation. In contrast to the current practise of his day, Milton would have languages taught in this manner:

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol. III p. 465. ---

"Whereas, if after some preparatory grounds of speech by their certain forms got into memory, they were led to the praxis there of in some chosen short book lessoned to thoroughly to them, they might then forthwith proceed to learn the substance of good things, and arts in due order, which would bring the whole language quickly into their power." (1)

Milton had little sympathy for the manner in which the arts were presented to students. It seems that they had barely mastered the rules of grammar when they were given controversial treatises or portions of logic involving a great deal of abstract thinking. This Milton objected to most strongly and in his criticism of the practise he seems to aim particularly at the Universities. This feeling of Milton's is linked with our modern idea in education of progress from the known to the unknown, by stages not too difficult for the child to follow.

Milton's definition of education is broad and inclusive, yet the subject being defined would permit of no other type of definition:

"I call therefore a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and public, of peace and war." (2) I am not sure that, in the years between Milton and Dewey or any of our modern educators,

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol. III p. 466.

(2) -- Ibid, p. 467.

we have improved upon the above definition. This education, or at least the foundation of it, Milton would give the youth between the ages of twelve and twenty-one. In other words, he would consider as education, only that which is given after the child possesses the power of reasoning.

In his outline for an ideal system of education, Milton would ground his pupils in the rules of grammar and pronunciation. It must be remembered that he was a fluent linguist, and used Italian, both in writing and speaking, so correctly that his Italian sonnets hold a place of honor in the country of their language. He would emphasize the pronunciation and enunciation of words, especially where children of a northern country learn a language of the southland. This is because the position of the mouth and vocal organs differs when sounding the soft vowel sounds of the Latin languages, and the harder, more nasal tones of the Teutonic stock.

The teacher, if he would conform to Milton's idea, must be an inspiration to his pupils. The person who has no interest in his work, other than its remunerative value, or as some of our modern wags have it, as "a royal road to matrimony", would fail miserably, or have no place at all in Milton's plan. From the tractate, "On Education", it would seem that he favored the so-called Socratic system as an inspiration to both pupil and teacher.

Today we have "discussion groups" and seminars which follow somewhat the same trend.

To serve a double purpose, Milton would use authors of agriculture such as Cato, Varo, and Columello; for by reading such, the pupils would gain a mastery of prose, and at the same time learn methods of agriculture to "improve the tillage and remedy the waste" of the soil of his own country. Geography he would teach by using globes and maps, both ancient and modern, so as to gain a familiarity with the changes which have taken place. This plan has been adopted in some English schools, particularly at Eton, where ancient and modern maps are bound face to face. (1)

It is well that a youth should have a knowledge of medicine, at least enough to serve in an emergency, or to keep his own body healthy. If he possesses this general knowledge, he may prove a great boon to himself as well as to his friends.

During the adolescent stage, Milton would have the youth instructed in ethics, in the love of duty and the hatred of vice. He evidently realized the importance of the stage between childhood and manhood, when ideals become so firmly fixed. Following their daily

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Ed. not p. 459. ---

lessons in the moral works of authors such as Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and Plutarch; he would have them read from the Scriptures, especially David or Solomon.

Politics, as a science, was studied during Milton's time, and he does not omit it from his curriculum. Young gentlemen must study it so as to do their duty in supporting the commonwealth and not be "such poor, shaken uncertain reeds, of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counsellors have lately shown themselves." (1) Then follows a study of law, first as expounded by Moses, then by the Greeks, Lycurgus, Solon, Zalenus, Charondas, followed by the Roman Justinian, and lastly by the Saxon, including the common law and statutes of England.

Puritan that he was, Milton would of course include theology in his educational plan. He would instruct the youth in both ancient and modern church history and since they would have already studied Hebrew, he would have them read the Scriptures in the original, and even in some cases add the Chaldean and Syrian dialects. After this he would have them read choice histories, heroic poems, and tragedies. Milton clearly declares himself a classicist when he says that by the study of poetry he means not prosody, but "that sublime art which in Aristotle's poetics, in Horace, and the Italian commentaries of Castel-

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol III p. 472.

vetro, Tasso, Mazzoni, and others, teaches what the laws are of a true epic poem, what of a dramatic, what of a lyric, what decorum is, which is the grand masterpiece to observe. This would make them soon perceive what despicable creatures our common rhymers and play-writers be; and show them what religious, what glorious and magnificent use might be made of poetry, both in divine and human beings." (1)

When all this material has become a part of the youth, when he has imbued himself with the knowledge of the ancients, he may then hope to become either a writer or a public speaker of both grace and wisdom, for he will have attained a "universal insight into things". So far, the views of Milton on education have followed rather closely the Greek pattern, except in the study of theology. But Milton says that the chief defect of that system was in training the youth chiefly for war. He intends to train his youth for peace as well.

Partly to carry out this view and also to keep preserved a healthy body, he would have training in athletic sports, such as fencing and wrestling. It is his view, as well as Aristotle's, that the culture of the body is important, not only from a health standpoint, but as an inspiration to courage, patience and fortitude. Closely allied to the athletics were instructions in military art, "in all the skill of embattling, marching, en-

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol III p. 473-4.

camping, fortifying, besieging and battering, with all the helps of ancient and modern strategious, tactics, and warlike maxims." (1) This was to prepare them for taking charge of an army, if necessity should demand such service.

Milton was himself an accomplished musician, and it is not to be expected that he would omit from his educational outline the art of music. He recommends that the youths following their exercise or athletic sports, should rest before eating, and during that period they should "compose their travailed spirits with the solemn and divine harmonies of music, heard or learned." (2) Such procedure would have a great power over their dispositions and manners, soften their harshness and attune their minds to the study which follows.

He would also provide for foreign travel, not only as a pleasure, but as a means of adding first hand information to their store of knowledge by observing nature.

He is not averse to the youth gaining a practical knowledge of sailing and of the navy. In traveling abroad, he would have one observe the best and so conduct himself as to gain the regard of the most eminent.

It can be seen from the examples I have chosen, and from the general outline of the tractate

(1) -- Milton: Prose Works, Bohn, Vol. III p. 477.

(2) -- Ibid. p. 476.

"On Education," that Milton's educational ideas were unusually broad.

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III

(Continued.)

SOCIAL VIEWS -- MARRIAGE - DIVORCE.

Milton's treatises on the subject of divorce appeared between August, 1643, and March, 1645. The publication of the first pamphlet is usually associated with his own matrimonial difficulties about that time. In the spring of 1643, Milton somewhat hastily married Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist. Mary was only seventeen, accustomed to a rather jovial, hilarious home, always filled with the gayety of young people. It is no wonder that this child should find no happiness with a man over twice her age, and with a stern rigorous standard of conduct so different from her own. She had no interest in books, and no doubt her education was slight, certainly so compared with her husband's. And so Mary, about three months after her marriage, returned to her father's home. Shortly after, the first pamphlet appeared, but Milton himself declares that it was simply an impersonal step in the cause of liberty.

"When, therefore, I perceived that there were three species of liberty which are essential to the happiness of social life -- religious, domestic, and civil; and as I had already written concerning the first, and the magistrates were strenuously active in obtaining the third, I determined to turn my attention to the second, or

the domestic species. I explained my sentiments, not only concerning the solemnization of marriage, but the dissolution, if circumstances rendered it necessary; and I drew my arguments from the divine law, which Christ did not abolish." (1) Some claim that though the divorce pamphlets were the result of Milton's experience, once the subject was started, personalities were forgotten and the subject was considered from the viewpoint of public policy. Milton says little or nothing about desertion as a cause for divorce, seeming to take for granted the acceptance of that idea, even tho it was not recognized by statute. His chief concern was with incompatibility, which echoes his philosophy. Marriage to him was more than a mere physical bond, and for that reason he resented its being dissolved only on physical grounds.

Milton says that when God first ordained marriage he "taught us to what end he did it, in words expressly implying the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life, not mentioning the purpose of generation till afterwards, as being but a secondary end in dignity tho not in necessity." (2) Thus he believes that marriage is, first of all, for companionship. It is easy to see, then, how with such a belief he would feel that when such

(1) -- Hanford: A Milton Handbook, p. 31, Quoted. 2nd Def.
(2) -- J. St John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol III p. 181.

onship ceased to exist, the marriage should be
ed.

"That indisposition, unfitness, or con-
y of mind arising from a cause in nature unchange-
able, hindering, and ever likely to hinder the main
benefits of conjugal society, which are solace and peace;
is a greater reason for divorce than natural frigidity,
especially if there be no children, and that there be
mutual consent." (1) This view Milton defends in Chapter I
of the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce", by applying
the Biblical law in Deuteronomy 24:1: "Because he hath
found some uncleanness in her, let him write her a bill
of divorcement." Translators have rendered "some un-
cleanness that which in the original Hebrew is "nakedness
of aught." This, says Milton, refers to the mind as well
as the body, and unfitness of mind is the greatest hindrance
to the happiness of the married couple.

Throughout the entire treatise on divorce,
Milton constantly refers to the "companionship of the
mind", emphasizing always the idea of mutual pleasure
thru the powers of the intellect. This is an unusually
broad view for the times, because it puts women on an
intellectual par with men. It is true that the Puritan
belief in the "brotherhood in Christ" put woman on a
higher plane than ever before, but it would seem that Milton

(1) -- J. St. John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol III P. 185.

is even broader than most of the Puritans, for he would believe that great and noble men can find intellectual companionship in the society of women. This is contrary to the general belief that Milton thought lightly of woman's society.

Milton met the argument that marriage was a divine institution and therefore could not be dissolved by man with the following statement:

"But marriage is more than human, 'the covenant of God', Proverbs II, 17; therefore man can not dissolve it. I answer, if it be more than human so much the more it argues the chief society there of to be in the soul rather than in the body, and the greatest breach thereof to be unfitness of mind rather than defect of body: for the body can have least affinity in a covenant more than human, so that the reason of dissolving holds good the rather." (1) Here Milton clearly states his belief that if marriages "are made in Heaven," it is all the more reason why incompatibility should be a sufficient cause for divorce.

If then, Milton thought unsuitableness of temperament so important as to be considered a cause for dissolution of the marriage bond, what would he consider a true marriage? He answers in Chapter Thirty-Nine of the pamphlet "Concerning Divorce":

(1) -- J. St. John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol. III, p. 210.

"By which definition we may know that God esteems and reckons upon these four necessary properties to be in every true marriage. 1 -- That they should live together, unless the calling of God require otherwise for a time. 2 -- That they should love one another to the height of dearness, and that in the Lord, and in Communion of true religion. 3 -- That the husband bear himself as the head and preserver of his wife, instructing her to all godliness and integrity of life; that the wife also be to her husband a help, according to her place, especially furthering him in the true worship of God, and next in all the occasions of civil life. And 4 -- That they defraud not each other of conjugal benevolence, as the apostle commends, I Corinthians 7." (1) This, it seems to me, certainly gives a high place to marriage, and shows that in Milton's thought, it was an institution above the plane on which it was placed by those who would permit divorce only for adultery. In this statement one also sees that Milton is a true Puritan in that he places God's command above civil demand, when he gives as a reason, and the only reason, for a married couple not living together -- "unless the calling of God require otherwise for a time."

In the problem of divorce, Milton was very fair to women. The "equality of the sexes" certainly had

(1) -- J. St. John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol. III p. 305.

found no beginning in the days of the Puritan Poet. Women were still considered intellectually inferior, and certainly possessed little or no civil status. Upon marriage, the property of the wife became her husband's in name and control, and she herself scarcely more. But Milton would give to the wife the right to divorce.

"But of the man deserting his wife they (the Christian Emperors) did not so determine: yet if we look into the word of God, we shall find that he who though but for a year without just cause forsakes his wife, and neither provides for her maintenance, nor signifies his purpose of returning, and good will towards her, when as he may, hath forfeited his right in her so forsaken." (1)

Milton was very decided in his view that the good of the nation depended upon the individuals who made up that nation. That is, a nation could reach the highest standard of perfection only in that measure in which each individual obtained perfection. This was a common Puritan belief. And so Milton views the question of marriage and divorce from a national, as well as a personal, vantage point. It isn't just a question of the better course for the two persons concerned, but for the group as a composite whole. He concludes a portion of his discourse "Concerning Divorce" with this statement:

(1) -- J. St. John; Prose Works, Milton Vol. III p. 206.

"And who knows not, that chastity and pureness of life can never be restored, or continued in the commonwealth, unless it be first established in private houses, from whence the whole breed of men come forth? " (1)

This quotation also carries within it, Milton's own view as well as the general Puritan idea, the home and its place in society. He puts it as the integral part, and its status or condition determines the kind of men that issue forth to comprise the nation. As the home is, so will the nation be.

Some people would grant that divorce is allowable provided there be no children. But, following his views regarding the home, Milton states that it is better that the children follow one parent than live in an atmosphere of contention and unhappiness with the two.

"And where the household stands in this plight, what love can there be to the unfortunate issue, what care of their breeding, which is of main conducement to their being holy? God, therefore, knowing how unhappy it would be for children to be born in such a family, gives this law as a prevention, that, being an unhappy pair, they should not add to be unhappy parents, or else, as a remedy that if there be children, while, they are fewest, they may follow either parent, as shall be agreed

(1) -- J. St John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol. III p. 212.

or judged, from the house of hatred and discord to a place of more holy and peaceable education." (1).

There are those who say that divorce breaks the command of God in the part of the marriage vow which reads: "What therefore God had joined, let no man put asunder." This is seemingly a difficult point, but Milton views it as merely a question of determining what "God had joined", and he seemed very sure in his own mind that God did not join "error, fraud, unfitness, wrath, contention, perpetual loneliness, perpetual discord; whatever lust, or wine, or witchery, threat or enticement, avarice or ambition, hath joined together, faithful and unfaithful, Christian with anti-Christian, hate with hate, or hate with love; shall we say this is God's joining?" (2) In other words, Milton wasn't shifting the responsibility of unfortunate marriages to God. Such marriages were not of God's joining; therefore in putting such bonds asunder, one was not breaking God's command.

All these views regarding marriage and divorce Milton supported before Parliament, and attempted to have laws passed carrying out his contentions. He was unsuccessful, however, except in drawing attention to himself. The clergy became alarmed, and one clergyman, Herbert Palmer, declared before Parliament that Milton's pamphlet ought to be burned. (3)

(1) -- J. St. John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol. III p. 360.

(2) -- Ibid, p. 377.

(3) -- Dictionary of National Biography -- Milton.

Milton, himself, had the courage of his convictions, because when Mary, his wife, did not return to him, he set about making arrangements to marry a "handsome and witty gentlewoman," the daughter of a Dr. Davis. (1) This was not done because, for various reasons, among them the decline of the Royalist Cause, and consequently of the Powell fortune, Mary returned to the home of her husband.

Milton's views on divorce were certainly radical for his day, but like some of his ideas of education, they have been carried out in our modern times. Few people, today, do not consider incompatibility a just cause for divorce, excepting those bound by religious beliefs prohibiting divorce.

Milton also believed that those who were divorced were free to enter the marriage contract with another. This was, of course, in opposition to the belief that death alone dissolved the marriage tie. But he was willing to let that part of the question be settled as an individual matter, for he says: "because it concerns only the offender, I leave him to search out his own charter himself in the author." (2)

(1) -- Phillip's Life of Milton -- Quoted by Hanford, p. 27.

(2) -- J. St John: Prose Works, Milton, Vol. III p. 311.

It can be easily seen that in his ideas on marriage and divorce, Milton was extremely radical for his age. But the majority of his doctrines along this line of thought have become a part of our modern view point, and again, as in his political ideas, he proves himself an advance guard of civilization.

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P R E F A C E :

In this thesis I have endeavored to select those beliefs of John Milton which make him stand out a true Puritan in the broadest sense. I have made no attempt to record all, or even the majority of his doctrines.

For my quotations, I have drawn largely from his prose works, and Paradise Lost, not because these are the only writings in which he reveals his beliefs, but because in these they are most apparent.

I have grouped the material under three main heads, Religious, Political, and Social Views; and I have included in the Social View his ideas on Education and on Marriage and Divorce.

A. D. W.

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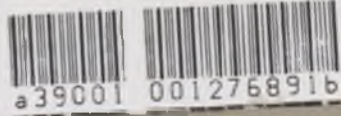
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