

Poet of the Latter Days: Andrew Marvell

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Two Volumes

Volume I

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I have been concerned to demonstrate the two major propositions suggested in the Introduction: that Marvell's major theme is eschatology, and that his characteristic poetic procedure is that of the problematic. From the early lyrics to the late prose works, eschatology is his constant concern: its doctrines, its Protestant version of the past, and its imagery, reveal a unity in all his works which has hitherto remained elusive to commentators. In the problematic, Marvell formulated a poetic procedure which could manifest the strategies of a chiliast for understanding and revealing the nature of his times; and attain the complexity of the historical process itself. To this end Marvell concentrated the force of his eclecticism: as is instanced particularly in his transformation of classical models in the service of his eschatological theme. The general impression of Marvell's work has always involved its quality of "balance" or "detachment", its ambiguities and "elusiveness". That sense of balanced judgement is in fact the effect of the problematic, with its controlled ambiguities and manipulation of antitheses. Ambiguity is a salient constructive force in Marvell's poetry. And the problematic expresses his strong convictions, against the oft-repeated critical claim that he refrains from assertion. His poetry is arcane and self-reflexive, and therefore difficult of access; equally difficult has proved his use of a joco-serious tone, which is an aspect of that self-regarding poetry. The explanation of these features, and of his work in general, is given here to demonstrate that in his poetry eschatology is a dynamic literary force.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### texts

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Andrew Marvell, <u>The Rehearsal Transpros'd and The Rehearsal Transpros'd The Second Part</u> | <u>RT</u> |
| - <u>The Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government</u>   | <u>GP</u> |
| John Milton, <u>Paradise Lost</u>  | <u>PL</u> |
| Edmund Spenser, <u>The Faerie Queene</u>   | <u>FQ</u> |

### periodicals

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <u>Bucknell Review</u>                                 | <u>BuR</u>        |
| <u>College English Association Critic</u>              | <u>CEA Critic</u> |
| <u>Critical Quarterly</u>                              | <u>CQ</u>         |
| <u>Durham University Journal</u>                       | <u>DUJ</u>        |
| <u>Etudes Anglaises</u>                                | <u>EA</u>         |
| <u>Essays in Criticism</u>                             | <u>EIC</u>        |
| <u>A Journal of English Literary History</u>           | <u>ELH</u>        |
| <u>English Language Notes</u>                          | <u>ELN</u>        |
| <u>English Literary Renaissance</u>                    | <u>ELR</u>        |
| <u>English Studies</u>                                 | <u>ES</u>         |
| <u>Huntington Library Quarterly</u>                    | <u>HLQ</u>        |
| <u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>       | <u>JEGP</u>       |
| <u>Journal of the History of Ideas</u>                 | <u>JHI</u>        |
| <u>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</u> | <u>JWCI</u>       |
| <u>Modern Language Notes</u>                           | <u>MLN</u>        |
| <u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>                       | <u>MLQ</u>        |
| <u>Modern Language Review</u>                          | <u>MLR</u>        |
| <u>Modern Philology</u>                                | <u>MP</u>         |
| <u>Notes and Queries</u>                               | <u>N&amp;Q</u>    |
| <u>Publications of the Modern Language Association</u> | <u>PMLA</u>       |
| <u>Philological Quarterly</u>                          | <u>PQ</u>         |
| <u>Review of English Studies</u>                       | <u>RES</u>        |
| <u>Renaissance News</u>                                | <u>RN</u>         |
| <u>Renaissance Quarterly</u>                           | <u>RQ</u>         |
| <u>Studies in English Literature</u>                   | <u>SEL</u>        |
| <u>Studies in Philology</u>                            | <u>SP</u>         |
| <u>Shakespeare Quarterly</u>                           | <u>SQ</u>         |
| <u>Times Literary Supplement</u>                       | <u>TLS</u>        |
| <u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u>                 | <u>UTQ</u>        |
| <u>The Yearbook of English Studies</u>                 | <u>YES</u>        |



## A NOTE ON THE TEXT

All references to, and quotations from, the English Poems and the Letters of Marvell are from The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, (2 vols., I: Poems, II: Letters) edited by H.M. Margoliouth, Pierre Legouis, and E.E. Duncan-Jones, third edition (Oxford, 1971). All quotations from, and translations of, the Latin poems are taken from The Latin Poetry of Andrew Marvell, edited by William A. McQueen and K.A. Rockwell (Chapel Hill, 1964). The Rehearsal Transpros'd and The Rehearsal Transpros'd, The Second Part, edited by D.I.B. Smith (Oxford, 1971) is the source for quotations from that work, except where otherwise indicated. For all the other prose works of Marvell I have used, in the absence of a more modern edition, Volume IV of The Complete Works of Andrew Marvell, edited by A.B. Grosart, Fuller Worthies Library (1872-5).

References to the works listed above are indicated in the notes by the name of the editor (or, in cases where there is more than one, the first editor), followed by the volume number and the page reference. For example: Margoliouth, I.255.

All quotations from Milton's poems are from John Milton, Poetical Works, ed. Douglas Bush (London, 1970).

In quotations the original spelling and punctuation, including original italics, have been retained when they appear in the edition cited.

## INTRODUCTION

The modern critical history of Marvell could be said to have begun in the Twenties, when T.S. Eliot launched this poet as a proper subject for critical endeavour.<sup>1</sup> Opinion of Marvell's status as a poet has risen steadily since then, and there has been a torrent of books and articles on this poet that shows no signs of abating in the near future. Yet, despite this massive critical attention, it cannot be said that there is any consensus about Marvell's method, his meaning, his politics or his major concerns. At all levels, the corpus of Marvell criticism has tended to establish more problems of interpretation than it claims to solve.<sup>2</sup>

In the history of Marvell studies there have been successive vogues: in the early years of this century, he was generally regarded as a poet of 'Nature';<sup>3</sup> Legouis, his first authoritative biographer, preferred literalist interpretations of the poems (for instance, he took To His Coy Mistress to signify that Marvell was once involved with 'a real live mistress'.<sup>4</sup>) Leishman concentrated on classical and contemporary sources for Marvell's treatment of literary genres, an approach which was amplified by Rosalie Colie's "generic" study, My Ecchoing Song. In recent decades, several critics have suggested that Marvell is a systematic Neo-Platonist or hermeticist; and such "systematic" studies have informed Røstvig, Wallerstein and Toliver in particular.<sup>5</sup> The "naturist" characterization of Marvell has re-surfaced in critical descriptions of his contrary impulses to 'action' and 'withdrawal':<sup>6</sup> for his desire to 'withdraw' from the world has been associated with such poems as The Garden, Upon Appleton House and the Mower series. John M. Wallace broke away from such



"philosophical" approaches when, in Destiny His Choice, he explicated the Cromwell poems as expressions of political 'Loyalism': placing Marvell's political views especially in the context of current discussions of monarchy and legitimacy.<sup>7</sup> Of late, the biography of Marvell - a difficult topic, due to a comparative dearth of information - has been more fully treated by John Dixon Hunt and W. Hilton Kelliher.<sup>8</sup> In critical works, however, there has been no resolution of the outstanding difficulties in Marvell's poetry; rather, critical disagreements have appeared to multiply.

My own approach to Marvell aims to suggest both a characteristic poetic procedure in Marvell's canon, and a unifying theme that inspires both the poetic and prose products of his whole life. In this manner I am attempting to answer the three main questions posed by Marvell studies. These are, first, whether his oeuvre may truly be divided into three distinct temporal phases: the early "Cavalier" period of amatory and occasional lyrics, the "great" pastoral lyrics associated with the 1650s and Nun Appleton, and the "degenerate" final phase of satires and political pamphlets, which are linked with his career as an M.P. in the Restoration parliament.<sup>9</sup> To this pattern of mostly speculative chronology, classification and value-judgements most critics have adhered in some degree. I argue, on the other hand, against this view: indicating that one central theme and its constituent motifs inspire the whole range of Marvell's works.

Attached to these Marvellian "phases", outlined above, has been a critical argument about his political affiliations: which has tended to suggest that Marvell was initially either a Royalist or a neutral observer in politics, becoming in the 1650s a convinced Parliamentarian; and remaining fundamentally



Parliamentarian in outlook until his death.<sup>10</sup> Against this view I argue that Marvell's major beliefs - his central thematic concern - demanded of him a consistency in political action, that is reflected in all his political works.

The second critical problem posed by Marvell's work concerns his poetic methods. Both novice and experienced readers of Marvell tend to complain of his "elusiveness": that he undermines his poetic statements (by 'irony' or similar methods) to such a degree that it is impossible to locate his meaning. In some cases this enigmatic effect has been so much admired that it has been elevated into a critical idol, as an expression of Marvell's "exquisite impartiality" or his inability to take sides.<sup>11</sup> In this thesis I suggest that, while this universally recognized "difficulty" and ambiguity<sup>12</sup> is certainly present in his works, it is an effect for which he strove; not to tease, nor to abrogate judgement, but precisely to express his strongest convictions. For Marvell ambiguity and even arcane statement were constructive effects, and the persistent failure of critics to recognise his procedure is the source of many of their own problems of explication.

The third critical problem suggested by Marvell studies is associated with the sheer variety of his oeuvre: its use of many distinct genres, its "private" and "public" areas, its apparent volatility in terms of theme and treatment.<sup>13</sup> Here too I would argue with received opinion: certainly Marvell makes use of many genres, but each poem involves an aspect of his major unifying theme.

It will be evident that, in attempting to answer these three critical queries, I am suggesting in each case that Marvell's work is distinguished by consistency: at the levels of theme, poetic method, and canonical integrity. In this manner I am attempting to reveal a Marvell who goes against the grain of most received critical opinion, which has tended to transform his alleged "inconsistency" into a principle and even a virtue.

### The Approach of this Thesis

My own approach to Marvell is based upon the idea that literature, literary history, and the history of events are inseparable from one another in the concerns of the critic. We ignore history, and literary history, at great cost to our

understanding of literature. The main justification of the literary critic is that, by training, he should be equipped to interpret literature in a manner which would enlarge our understanding of it: and it seems to me that the histories of literature and of events are parts of that equipment. This is a fortiori true of the literature of the Seventeenth Century, not merely because it is literature of the past, but also because that century in particular presents great challenges to critic and historian alike. In a recent article, Dr. Blair Worden has noted the unsatisfactory state of relations that exists between the studies of history and of literature, and emphasizes the value of their co-operation. The poet who prompts him to these remarks is Andrew Marvell.<sup>14</sup>

This necessity of co-operation is not a justification for the critic and the historian to trespass on each other's territory, armed only with ignorance and temerity; but an informed sense of each other's investigations is something worth striving for. History tends to shed light mainly upon poetic content, literary history illuminates poetic treatment. In this thesis, I have made use of historical studies to elucidate Marvell's crucial relationship to his own time; and of literary history (both Classical and Renaissance) to reveal his adaptation of traditions to the major preoccupations of his own time. In addition, I have indicated that Marvell's own particular poetic method is itself derived from contemporary thought. The relationship between Marvell's beliefs, his method, and his times, is an integral one.

In the explication of this relationship between Marvell and his times, my central propositions concern, first, his major theme; and, secondly, his characteristic poetic procedure. My central thematic proposition is that Marvell shared the eschatological preoccupation of his period. The importance of eschatology in seventeenth-century thought cannot be too much stressed: as recent historical researches have revealed.<sup>15</sup> That prominence is reflected in Marvell's writings throughout his life.

My formal proposition is that the habits of thought which are manifested in seventeenth-century eschatology were decisive for the manner in which Marvell shaped his poetry. Explaining the provenance of this relationship between procedure and theme, I suggest which of Marvell's personal characteristics were crucial to the formulation of his poetic relationship to contemporary thought.



In essence, my formal proposition indicates that Marvell's poetry is characterized by a consistent 'problematic'. The outlines of this problematic are sketched in the first chapter, but it is given demonstration in the subsequent chapters, in relation to particular poems. My statement of this problematic is a way of codifying the characteristics peculiar to Marvell's poetry: and it thus provides a method for the study of his work.

At this point, before detailing the structure of the thesis, it is pertinent to mention one recent strand in Marvell criticism. That strand represents a perfunctory attention to the pressure of historical studies. It may most probably be traced to the suggestions of Christopher Hill's first essay on Marvell, and a more recent lecture in which he tried to stimulate some interest in an "historical" approach to Marvell.<sup>16</sup> This most recent essay was in fact delivered in lecture-form some time after I had begun my studies, and although Christopher Hill and I disagree on *some* points we share an anxiety for the conflation of historical and literary investigation.

In another essay, the critic Joseph Summers groped for 'Some Apocalyptic Strain' in Marvell,<sup>17</sup> in a manner sufficient to warn off other talented critics from this area. Since there is an explicit "millenarian" section in Marvell's First Anniversary, such attentions should have been inevitable, even if uninformed; but critics have shown a surprising resistance to that passage. For instance, J.A. Mazzeo, pursuing his own "Davidic" thesis, considered the passage irrelevant<sup>18</sup> - an act of critical hubris, since Marvell himself chose to write it. And James Carens, commenting on the Cromwell poems, described this passage as reflecting the views of the Fifth Monarchy Men; the latter are in fact roundly condemned by Marvell himself later in the poem, so it seems at least illogical to ascribe their views to him. The only truly "political" thesis on Marvell - that of James Wallace - underplays this passage; and only reluctantly acknowledges its "millenarianism", without recognizing its features or its function within the poem.<sup>19</sup> In general, such comments - sparse as they are in Marvellian criticism - indicate at once a massive ignorance of the structure of such beliefs at this time; a reluctance to associate the "refined" Marvell with such "cranky" ideas; and an inability to recognize that these ideas are not isolated in one passage or a single poem, but fundamental to his writings as a

whole.

In the light of my thematic and formal propositions, this thesis explicates a large range of Marvell's poems. It proposes new sources and analogues, in addition to original interpretations; and it treats those poems which have created the greatest difficulties for critics, as well as some which have suffered critical neglect because their thematic importance has remained unrecognized.

### Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is intended to demonstrate both propositions - formal and thematic - in a progressive or cumulative manner. The first chapter is a preliminary to the main body of the thesis, indicating the nature and theory of my propositions, and outlining those features of Marvell's personality which will be demonstrated as crucial to the poems themselves. In this manner it provides guidelines for the rest of the thesis. The second chapter provides the historical background necessary to my thematic proposition, giving a brief account of the importance of eschatology in the Seventeenth Century: surveying its tenets and indicating its political effects. The third and fourth chapters demonstrate its importance for Marvell in particular: using poems and prose from various periods in his life to manifest that eschatological principles remain dominant in his religious and political concerns throughout his career. In the fifth chapter, I begin detailed analyses of other poems by means of an initial survey of the literary effects of eschatology for Spenser and Milton, both of whom provide instructive comparisons for Marvell. After, in this chapter, giving an account of the eschatological theme in Upon Appleton House, I proceed in the next to show how eschatological theme and the structure of the problematic combine, in An Horatian Ode. There I indicate the importance of the Horatian model to Marvell's purposes; and in the following chapters demonstrate how another classical model - in this case, Virgil - provided a fertile expression for eschatological concerns both in Marvell's Latin poems, and in Upon Appleton House. Thus the sixth, seventh and eighth chapters demonstrate that, in Marvell's poetry, classicism and contemporary eschatology go hand in hand. Pursuing suggestions made in these



chapters, the ninth chapter explicates other poems written in the 1650s: as expressions of the Protestant Imperialism generated by eschatology. In the course of this chapter Bermudas, Blake and The Character of Holland are related to some of the later satires. In the tenth (and final) chapter, another "maritime" poem, The Unfortunate Lover, is discussed: indicating the eschatological concerns of a poem that has hitherto proved the most recalcitrantly enigmatic of Marvell's poems. This is followed by the Conclusion. Each of the chapters contains both theoretic and exemplary content, and thus participates in the cumulative development of my propositions.

### Sources and Other Materials

When discussing seventeenth-century eschatological thought, I confine myself to those interpretations of Daniel and of Revelation which were current and orthodox at the time. I do this because the variations in interpretation of minutiae were often considerable; whereas the features of mainstream chiliasm remained relatively unchanged until 1660. Therefore, for commentary upon the relevant scriptural authorities I have made use only of the more influential writers of the period - like Brightman, Mede, Napier, Mayer: and, above all, the commentaries of the Geneva Bible, the influence of which was considerable during the Seventeenth Century.<sup>20</sup> The other scriptural books relevant to prophecy and eschatology - Isaiah and Peter, for instance - are also invoked. Also, in the appropriate chapter, I have sketched the controversies which raged over interpretation of the Revelation, as the features of these controversies are themselves important to an understanding of the context of much of Marvell's poetry.

A similar principle of "orthodoxy" has guided my treatment of the chronology of the poems, and of Marvell's biographical details. The latter are somewhat distressingly sparse and uncertain, so in the absence of evidence to the contrary I have accorded with the accepted chronology of Marvell's life. Similarly, with the poems, I have followed the generally accepted view of their dates of composition.

With regard to non-Marvellian materials, I would like to emphasize that none of these are to be regarded as 'sources' unless I explicitly state that they are. Again, where I intend to



indicate an analogue for Marvell, I will definitely say so. Otherwise such non-Marvellian materials are to be considered merely as 'shedding light' upon the subject in hand, or upon a literary tradition relevant to my purposes. Thus the status of these materials, unless I indicate the contrary, is generally that of 'shedding light' upon Marvell's poems. In addition, Appendices will be used wherever I consider that the material they cover requires fuller treatment than would be feasible within the text itself.

References to the Bible will be given in brackets after the appropriate word in the text. In the case of Biblical quotation, references will follow the quotation. Line- and stanza- references for Marvell's poems are treated in the same way, as are references to his prose works. In the case of Appendices and of some analogues, it has proved preferable to include references in a similar manner. Other references will be contained in the Notes.

Finally, some terms are used constantly within the text, always in the same sense as that in which they were first introduced. These terms are 'problematic', 'Final Image', and 'poetic narrative' (all of which are explained and demonstrated on the first occasion). The word 'eschatology' is used to denote not only the doctrines of the End, but also the Protestant interpretation of history which was attached to those doctrines.

## CHAPTER I

### INTIMATIONS OF MARVELL

This brief, introductory chapter is concerned to adumbrate some of the basic principles of my approach to Marvell. It is, therefore, formed by a series of brief sections, each introducing such a principle. The first of these suggests that Marvell can be studied only in the light of his own time, and its eschatological thought: repudiating a purely literary-critical approach to his work. The second section then suggests my own critical method for the study of Marvell's poetic structure, introducing and defining the terms 'problematic' and 'Final Image': which will be used in these particular senses throughout the thesis. The third section suggests a relationship between Marvell's characteristic poetic structure and his personality; and the fourth section points to a similar relationship between that structure and the nature of the period in which Marvell was writing. The final section suggests the nature and provenance of Marvell's general 'style', which was suitable to his eschatological concerns.

Each of the principles outlined in this chapter will be exemplified in the poems analysed by subsequent chapters. Additionally, at appropriate points in those chapters these principles will be amplified in relation to certain poems.

#### i. Marvell, the Poet of his Time

Andrew Marvell was, according to Milton (himself a prodigy of learning), a scholar, classicist and linguist.<sup>1</sup> Today, his poetry is acknowledged to be highly allusive, "difficult", and even abstruse. Thus recent criticism has taken the lesson from these characteristics: that Marvell's poetry requires of the reader a high level of scholarship. However, such critics have tended to neglect that area of study that best elucidates Marvell's theme and method - the history of his own time. Marvell's interests and statements engage with his times: not only with contemporary eschatological thought, but also with the very nature of his own period as a temporal unit, as a part of the process of history. His poetry is locked within its temporal setting to such a degree that, unless some attempt is



made to recapture that setting, his poems will continue to be literary enigmas. This high degree of engagement with his own time is not only the dynamic of his work, but also the source of its enigmatic qualities: for it was a necessary concomitant of Marvell's attitudes that his poetry should be of limited access to any audience but a contemporary one. This point will be fully elucidated in later chapters, but for the present some of the bases of this "limited access" will be indicated in the following sections.

## ii. The Problematic

Marvell's characteristic poetic procedure is, I suggest, of a nature hitherto unrecognised. In fact, the major issue of Marvell studies, ever since Eliot's crusading article, has been the problem of how to evaluate Marvell's poetic statements: he is a highly ambiguous poet, and frequently considered to have undermined his poems' seriousness by a proliferation of irony and ambiguity. Thus the effect of much Marvell criticism has been to leave upon the judicious reader the impression that the critic has been highly selective in his recognition of Marvell's meaning; and that such selectiveness has proved inevitable because a "whole" reading - observing ambiguities - would seem to suggest a meaning-less poem: Marvell's ambiguities appearing to exert a deconstructive effect upon his statements. It has, therefore, been a salient critical policy in the past to suppress (doubtless unconsciously) such deconstructive effects, since these might seem to be at odds with claims for Marvell as a "serious" poet of some stature. On the other hand, since it is a modern fashion to admire "difficult" poetry, other critics have sometimes chosen to elevate Marvell's supposed "deconstructiveness" to the status of a poetic virtue. These two strategies might be described as the Scylla and Charybdis of Marvell criticism.

I would suggest, however, that ambiguity in Marvell's work is a constructive force, carefully manipulated precisely in order to create "meaning". It is not, then, deconstructive, nor is it used to imply an 'inclusiveness of mind', or 'an ability to see both sides of the question', as some critics would have it. Marvell utilises ambiguity in order to make statements, not to evade them. In his poems irony and ambiguity are



constituents of his characteristic procedure, which I shall call the 'problematic'.

Before explaining the nature of the 'problematic', it is necessary to highlight one of its components, the 'Final Image'. This is, in general, the last few lines of a Marvellian poem (where that poem is not punctuated by stanzas), or its last stanza; consisting, usually, of a pithy couplet or a distinctively self-enclosed image, often of a descriptive or iconographical kind. During the course of the thesis various examples of this will be discussed; for the moment, two examples of these enigmatic, self-enclosed endings will suffice:

But now the Salmon-Fishers moist  
 Their Leathern Boats begin to hoist;  
 And, like Antipodes in Shoes,  
 Have shod their Heads in their Canoos.  
 How Tortoise like, but not so slow,  
 These rationall Amphibii go?  
 Let's in: for the dark Hemisphere  
 Does now like one of them appear.

(Upon Appleton House, LXXXXVII)

And he in Story only rules,  
 In a Field Sable a Lover Gules.

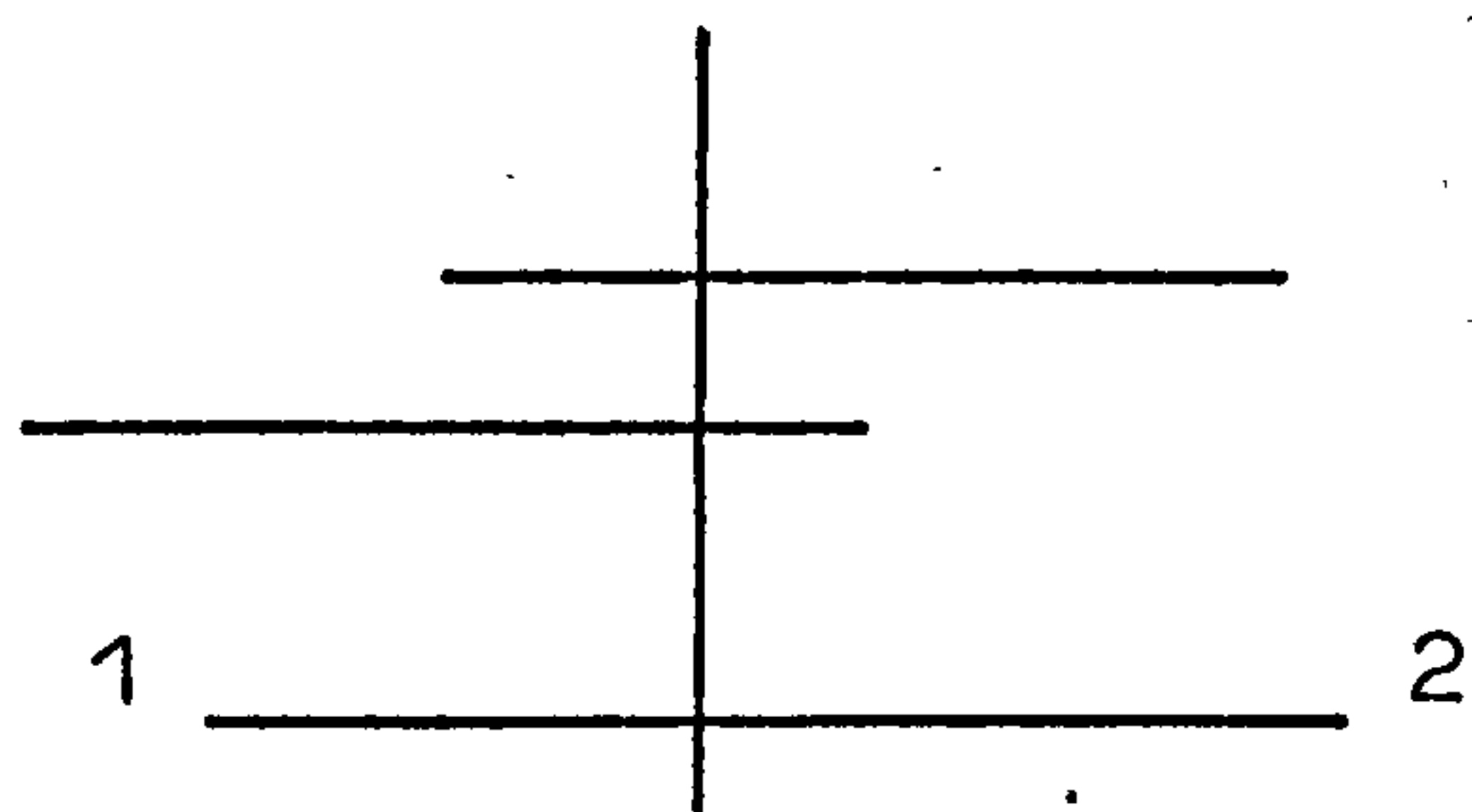
(The Unfortunate Lover, 63-4)

These two examples (which will be explicated later in the thesis) are characteristic of the Final Image. They are, as usual, more descriptive than enlightening. Indeed, they have provided great difficulties for critics, many of whom, in an uncharitable view, would appear to have paraphrased, evaded, or selected their way out of these difficulties; few are honest enough to admit, for instance, that they have no idea why Appleton House should end in this manner; why it highlights tortoises and fishermen; or how this ending relates to - let alone finalises - the concerns of the poem. I mention this critical bafflement (which is true also of other such Marvellian conclusions), because such difficulty is characteristic of Marvellian endings. The Final Image is an entity, usually descriptive rather than overtly conclusory, and for this reason highly resistant to explication. But Marvell's Final Images are, as we shall see, summations of the poems' arguments; each being a unit of meaning that participates in Marvell's characteristic procedure.

Marvell's procedure - his method of presenting poetic narrative - is the problematic. This problematic involves the use of two narratives or arguments within a single poem:

sometimes these narratives run parallel, sometimes they appear to contradict one another (rather like the thesis and antithesis of dialectic). This 'double' narrative is achieved by the almost constant use of ambiguity, a form of language which can allow two meanings, even two contradictory meanings, to coexist within one statement. Thus the bifurcation of meaning that constitutes ambiguity also creates, in the aggregate, a bifurcation of the narrative of the whole poem. At the conclusion of the poem, these two narratives synthesize - are resolved - within the Final Image. In cases where the two narratives of the poem appear irreconcilable, the Final Image reconciles them. In this manner a conclusory force is achieved.

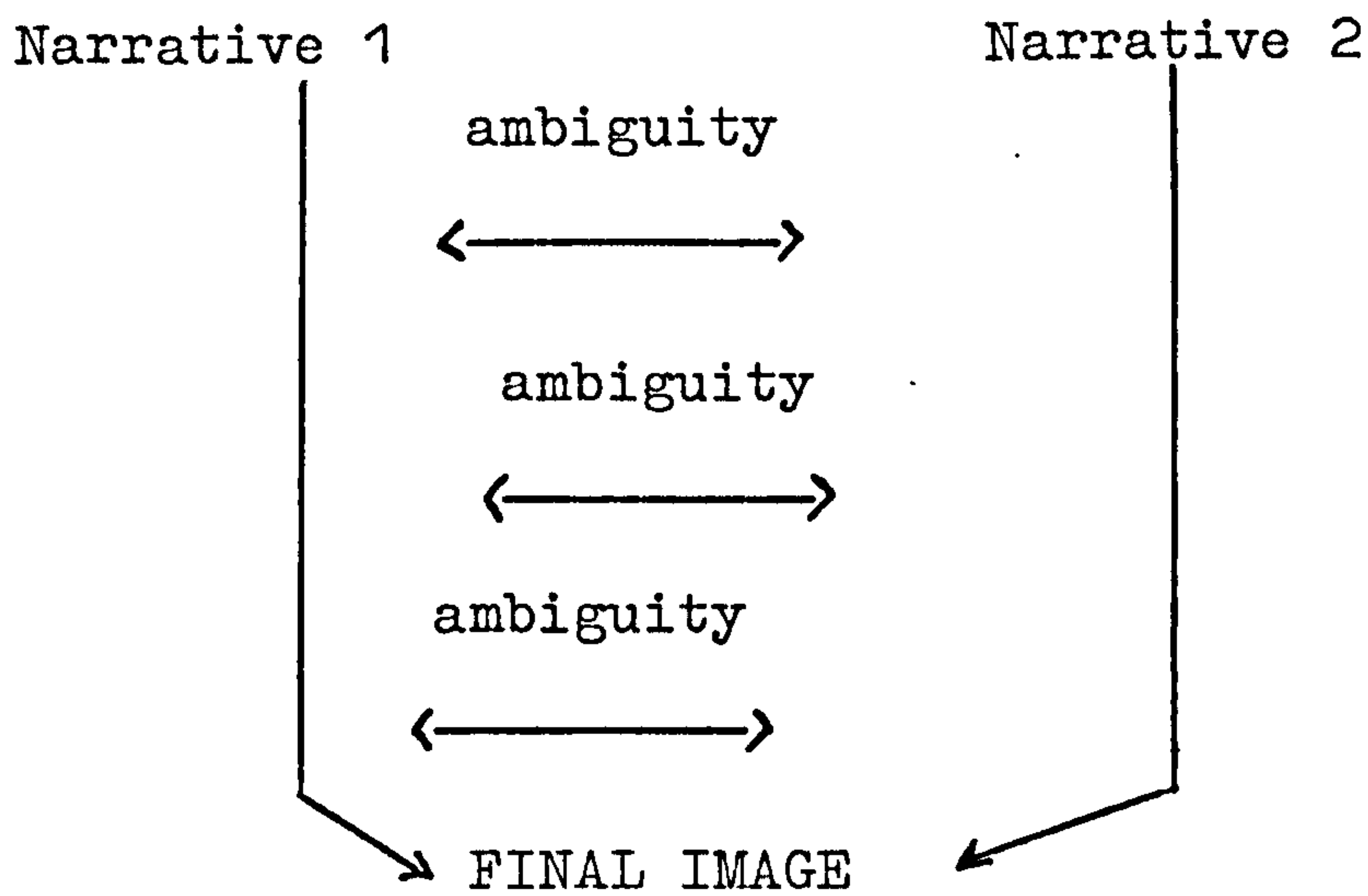
At this point I am concerned merely to define this procedure, which will be demonstrated in the course of analysing the poems themselves. It is precisely because Marvell's procedure is a matter of building such ambiguities into complex structures, that it is difficult to display without analysing a whole poem. Therefore it seems best, here, to provide a diagram that may clarify the problematic: the diagram being an unfortunate necessity. Here the poem is represented as a vertical line, the horizontals being the various points at which ambiguities occur.



In this manner the poem "opens out": at one end of each line in the diagram is the overt sense of the ambiguity (1), and at the other, its secondary sense (2). The resulting diagram represents the grid of relationships within the poem. In some cases the ambiguity may imply more than two levels of meaning, but every meaning is subordinate to one of the poem's two narratives. This is a system of meanings, not a proliferation of possibilities such as Empson might suggest.

Thus, to complete the diagram, it is necessary to add denotations of the two poetic narratives and of the Final Image.





In this manner the two lines of narrative, constructed from the accumulation of ambiguities, converge at the end of the poem into the Final Image. This procedure is that which I have suggested as characteristic of Marvell. As long as this procedure remains unrecognized, his poems look 'out of joint' - as indeed they have for many readers - because elements of the poem are omitted or misplaced in the experience of reading and explication. Once the problematic is recognised, it is possible to reveal the status and function of a statement in a Marvellian poem, which otherwise appears confusing in its implications. By means of this problematic, ambiguity and irony become contributory factors in a highly organized poetic structure; and this intellectual procedure is the manner in which Marvell's 'wit' functions - structurally.

It is evident from this model that ambiguity is the foundation of Marvell's method. This is no less true of poems in which the two narratives of the problematic are "contradictory": in such cases, Marvell's procedure would be impossible without ambiguity. The only alternative would be couplet after couplet of overt antithesis, which would be tedious in the extreme. (In this relation, it is not insignificant that Marvell also wrote a deal of satirical poetry, in which the double level of statement is a simple and traditional method - similar, indeed, to sarcasm.) Ambiguity is poetic because subtle, harnessing the energies of language precisely as one expects that poetry should. It is the poetic expression in Marvell's work of an argumentative procedure, or problematic.

I have chosen the term 'problematic' because it carries the correct connotations for this procedure; and in so doing I am

redefining the term in one significant manner. In a certain school of criticism the term denotes in part a system of relationships within a literary work which is not recognisable by the author. That proposition I have turned on its head, because Marvell's case requires it. In my use, the term denotes a system of meaning not explicit within Marvell's work, and unnoticed by most readers, but of which he himself is fully conscious. (I shall be treating his motives for this method, and its thematic significance, later.) For my purposes, the term describes that system of relationships - represented by the diagram - which is characteristic of Marvell's procedure. It is not an inflexible model, since the problematic is capable of variations from poem to poem. What I have proposed, then, is a method for the interpretation of Marvell's lyrics, based upon his own construction of those lyrics. The problematic is, therefore, a means of codifying Marvell's poetic structure for the purposes of analysis.

### iii. A Man 'of very few words'

In this and subsequent sections I am concerned to discuss the temperament which provided part of the motivation for Marvell's problematic. When considering the relationship between Marvell and his poetry, I would emphasize that he should be seen as one highly sensitive to the events of his own time: a reaction which manifests itself not only in the themes of his poetry, but also in the mode which he adopted for their expression. First, I consider a trait in Marvell's character (as recorded), which is decisive for his choice of a poetic procedure; and, secondly, I amplify these observations in relation to his times.

The most striking element in Marvell's character, if one reads his works with any care, is his obsession with self-protection; an aspect at which critics have made gestures when they have chosen to call him an 'elusive' writer. In fact, there are traces both in his works and his life of a deliberate self-effacement, which I shall be remarking in the following chapters. For the moment, I wish to indicate the nature of this trait in a more general way.

When John Aubrey wrote his tantalisingly 'Brief Life' of



Marvell, he characterised the poet as one who bordered on the anti-social. He does mention a few of Marvell's close friends, but observes that 'He had not a generall acquaintance.' Moreover, he indicates that Marvell was extremely cautious: a man who, in hard-drinking times, 'was wont to say that he would not drinke high or freely with any man with whom he would not intrust his life.'<sup>2</sup>

This pronounced element of caution is nowhere more evident than in Marvell's letters, in which he rarely expresses overt opinions on political or other sensitive issues; even when writing a private epistle to his nephew. Now and then an opinion is indeed expressed, but usually in an ambiguous or even enigmatic fashion. In the letters dating from the Restoration period, this reticence may partly be attributed to Marvell's awareness that his mail might be intercepted by government agents: for he was a member of the Opposition and suspected of subversive literary activities as well (cf. Chapter IV). Indeed, a typical example of such caution is his letter to his nephew on the subject of one such controversial tract. The letter refers to one 'Andrew Marvell', who, it seems, is not numbered amongst the writer's 'generall acquaintance':

There came out, about Christmass last, here a large Book concerning the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government. There have been great Rewards offered in private, and considerable in the Gazette, to any who could inform of the Author or Printer, but not yet discovered. Three or four printed Books since have described, as near as it was proper to go, the Man being a Member of Parliament, Mr. Marvell to have been the Author; but if he had, surely he should not have escaped being questioned in Parliament, or some other Place. (357)

Here caution and humour are mingled in his indication to his nephew of how provocative his last tract had been. Elsewhere he makes his anxiety for concealment more obvious: for instance, when he rebukes his constituents for divulging the contents of one of his letters to a stranger:

although I object nothing to Mr. Cressets fidelity and discretion... yet seeing it is possible that in writing to assured friends a man may giue his pen some liberty and the times are something criticall beside that I am naturally and now more by my Age inclined to keep my thoughts private, I desire that what I write down to you may not easily or unnecessarily returne to a third hand. (166)

Here Marvell admits that he is 'inclined to keep my thoughts

private', supplementing his assertion of the political wisdom of secrecy: that 'the times are something critically'. Moreover, he adds that 'neither do I write deliberately any thing which I feare to haue divulged': a statement which, while appearing to confirm his ingenuousness, actually indicates that he takes care to couch his statements cautiously. Marvell had good reason to be careful, as we shall see.<sup>3</sup> Doubtless his circumspect choice of drinking companions was due to a sense that, in his cups, he might let loose a dangerous word. And in general, according to Aubrey, 'He was in his conversation very modest, and of very few words.'<sup>4</sup> It could be said that Marvell was the originator of his biographers' difficulties, by his own capacity for concealment.

This reticence, the fostering of enigmas, is no less marked in his poetry - as critics have testified. They tend to assume that the so-called "unresolved" or ambivalent stances of his poems reflect his own lack of commitment to specific views. On the contrary: it was because of his tendentious writings, in the Restoration period, that Marvell adopted politic language in his letters. His advertisement of his committed views, in those writings, justified a caution in his personal life. And in his poetry, as in his letters, his statements are habitually circumspect expressions of his views: not abrogations of commitment. That is, his self-protectiveness affects mainly the manner in which he chooses to express himself.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Marvell should have adopted in his poetry a problematic which was, first, arcane: and, secondly, depended upon ambiguity. Since verbal ambiguity is, by nature, indirect and "non-committal", it produces statements which appear to contain their own qualification: at a basic level, ambiguity provides - as it were - a smokescreen for the poet. On the other hand, Marvell made of it a tool which might, by its very indirections, express his views in a covert manner. Thus ambiguity in Marvell is a 'two-handed engine': at once protecting and expressing his meaning. As we shall see, this fact is of great importance for Marvell's treatment of his major theme, and peculiarly suited to it. For the moment, it suffices to note that, just as Marvell was an almost obsessively 'private' man who kept his own counsel as far as possible, so in his poetry he adopted the covert indirections of ambiguity.



In this fashion his poetry imitates its creator: it does not court a 'generall acquaintance'. His lack of interest in its publication reflects this fact. The majority of the lyrics unpublished in his lifetime manifest a self-reflexive verse, intended for an audience of one. If the problematic is a supremely difficult procedure for the reader to comprehend, that is because Marvell was usually writing for himself - an audience that would have experienced no difficulty in comprehension. The "privacy" of his poetic method is an extension of his own nature.

#### iv. The Bias of the Times

If Marvell's temperament, interacting with the 'critical' nature of the times, affected the language of his poetry, it must be said that the times were such as to affect men deeply.<sup>5</sup> The Civil War and the regicide evoked a variety of strong reactions in men of all political colours, and the ensuing Protectorate revised many traditional aspects of the national life; there were conflicts of loyalties at all levels of human relationship, as well as a new series of problems for the unfamiliar government. In sum, the Civil War presented to Englishmen of the time a puzzling and disturbing picture, and the propaganda of both sides at this date should not obscure the fact that psychological repercussions were inevitable when one nation split into two. As we shall see, that split was neither absolute nor simple, but its very confusions served to make it the more distressing; it seemed to contemporaries that the times were out of joint in a fundamental way (see Chapters VI-VII). In Marvell's works, this national division provoked images of division at various levels, and decisively affected his choice of a poetic procedure.

One of those who meditated upon the unfortunate consequences of the times was the Royalist poet, Abraham Cowley, who mourned the loss of 'Reason' - and, with it, of the 'Thracian lyre' - in the Civil War: 'In senseless Clamours, and confused Noise,/ We lost that rare, and yet unconquer'd Voice'.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in his poem To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems (1649), Marvell expatiated upon his fellow-poet's "victimization" at the hands of Parliament: averring that 'th'infection of our times' had drastically affected the nature of poetry.

Our times are much degenerate from those  
Which your sweet Muse with your fair Fortune chose,<sup>7</sup>  
And as complexions alter with the Climes,



Our wits have drawne th'infection of our times.  
 That candid Age no other way could tell  
 To be ingenious, but by speaking well...  
 These vertues now are banisht out of Towne,  
 Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke crowne.  
 (1-12)

Here, the 'Civicke crowne', which is implicitly compared with the crown of 'Bayes' (8) proper to the poet, represents the virtues of civic life: it was the reward for virtuous action in that sphere. Thus Marvell draws a parallel between the breakage of social virtues in Civil War and the destruction of true poetic values. Because of this vital connection between the social and literary orders, Marvell asserts that in time of Civil War it is not possible to write good poetry: 'Our wits have drawne th' infection of our times'.

With this recognition of the effects of division on poetry, we can connect Marvell's frequent use of images of division or "doubleness". It would appear that the vision of a divided nation provoked a keen sense of internal division within men themselves. Thus one contemporary divine chose to stress anew that

there is since the fall, a separation betweene God and  
 man, betweene Angels and man, betweene man and the  
 creatures, betweene man and himselfe. 8

Similarly, noting this inner division, Marvell remarks the 'double Heart' of man, and his 'double... Mind' (A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body,<sup>10</sup>; The Mower Against Gardens,<sup>9</sup>). Such a sensitised attention to man's doubleness is equally apparent in the writings of Thomas Browne at this period of civil strife: who noted, for instance, that each man is a 'world of contraries'<sup>9</sup> - imitating the antagonisms of Civil War within his own psyche.

Marvell's fullest statement of this internal 'Civil War' is his Dialogue Between the Soul and Body. Here Soul and Body clash in a traditional Christian Agon, each reproaching the other for its persecutions. However, as one commentator has noticed, Marvell has departed from tradition by allowing equal weight and space of argument to both interlocutors: normally, the Soul overwhelmed the Body in this argument.<sup>10</sup> In this manner Marvell maintains an equipoise of argument, so that man's internal division between flesh and spirit is seen to be at once absolute and equal in its elements. The moralitas of the poem is a covert one: that the internal Civil War is unwinnable in these terms; equally tortured by one another, Soul and Body reveal the futil-

ity of their antagonism.

Soul. O who shall, from this Dungeon, raise  
A Soul inslav'd so many wayes?

Body. . . .  
O who shall me deliver whole,  
From bonds of this Tyrannic Soul?  
(1-2, 11-12)

Here Soul and Body make an identical complaint each against the other (pointed up by the symmetry in line-numbers) - the grievance of 'enslavement'. This internal echoing marks the whole poem, showing the essential identity of Soul and Body even in their quarrel - it is both the source of that quarrel, since they each chafe against it, and the obstacle to its resolution until death itself breaks their bond. And there is a political lesson here. In essence, the lesson, for those who prosecuted civil strife at this time, was that division was both innate and intractable; but that also this division merely expressed and confirmed the problems of what must be, willy-nilly, a single entity. In other words, like the Soul and Body, the two warring parties within this one nation must learn that such differences have to be lived with: that they are intrinsic elements of the Body 'politic', which could not be resolved by outright war. Thus the Dialogue points a moral for the nation by analogy with its traditional counterpart, man himself. Civil strife is figured by the conflict between flesh and spirit; in both cases, identity, whether national or personal, involves integrity too - and both forms of strife occasion damage to that integrity. Marvell makes that relationship between selfhood and nationhood explicit in the political metaphor of 'Tyranny' (12), the crime of which Charles I was accused at this time; the metaphor highlights the fact that the body of man had long been a simile for the political order. Thus, in a time of schism, the same metaphor relates the riven body politic to the divided self.<sup>11</sup>

Another Marvellian image of the divided or "double" man is the 'Amphibium': literally a creature able to live either in water or on land, it becomes in Marvell's poetry a symbol of human and national "doubleness". Thus, in the last stanza of Upon Appleton House, some fishermen are described as 'rational Amphibii' (Marvell's italics); representing at once the divided nature of man, the 'rational' creature, and the more acute 'doubleness' of men who inhabit a nation split in two. (The line has another meaning, relevant to these concerns, which I shall discuss in context.) Similarly, in The Unfortunate Lover the



eponymous hero is described as 'Th' Amphibium of Life and Death' (v; Marvell's italics). He is - as Christian man is said to be - a double creature, with a vital soul and a mortal body. Moreover, as we shall see, he is more acutely "double" because he experiences the divisions of the English Civil War (see Chapter X). In all these cases, the traditional Christian image of man is given a contemporary force by public events; and, accordingly, it is appropriate to these poems - as later chapters will show - that the Christian idea also highlights a modern problem. Hereby tradition and contemporaneity reinforce each other.

These images of "doubleness" are important in Marvell's case because they reflect his problems as a poet in 'th'infected' atmosphere of Civil War. To realize the spiritualized force of his characterization of it thus in Lovelace, it is sufficient to notice there that Marvell is making a play on Sidney's famous description of the results of the Fall: that men have now both an 'erected wit' and an 'infected will'; thus the enormity of this poem's situation, where 'wit' too has 'drawne th'infection'. This view of the War as a sort of 'Fall' recurs in other poems too (cf. e.g. Chapter V); here it dramatizes the poet's problems in the face of the catastrophe. In order to approach these problems, it is useful to observe that Thomas Browne also chose to describe man as an 'Amphibium':

thus is man that great and true Amphibium, whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds. 12

This remark is interesting for the present purpose, because - having here remarked the 'divided' nature of man - Browne later re-uses the amphibious metaphor to convey a similar quality in language. He uses the term 'amphibology' to denote a statement with two opposite meanings.<sup>13</sup> The relationship between these terms in Browne's conception points to an analogy between the double man (amphibium) and the ambiguous or "double" statement (amphibology); it could be said that the "double" man was the incarnation of ambiguity, and ambiguity the sign - in language - of the 'double Mind' of man. These analogous quantities, the divided man, the divided statement, and the divided nation, provided the poetic structure which Marvell chose for his writings in time of Civil War. In this manner the bias of his



times inspired the problematic of his poetry.

In particular, the manner in which the problematic made use of ambiguity - the double statement - meant that Marvell could not only reflect the 'doubleness' of things, but could also redress it. The reflection of 'doubleness' is, of course, achieved by the use of a double narrative based upon a series of ambiguities. In turn, the resolution of doubleness - the re-attainment of singleness and certainty - is achieved by the synthesis of these two narratives in the Final Image. In this manner Marvell can simultaneously reflect the state of man and the nation in his times, and stand off from that division: re-creating in poetry the unity that his times have lost. The problematic acknowledges and expresses doubleness in the times, but it also attempts a rehabilitation. In later chapters, I shall show how necessary it was to Marvell's purposes, first, that he should reflect the nature of his period; and secondly, that he should engage with that nature in his poetic structure. Here, it is sufficient to note that he had asserted the evils to poetry of the 'infected' times; and the struggle from division to synthesis that occurs in the problematic redresses the effects of those times.

#### v. The Tempering of a Style

Finally, to close this review of Marvell's poetic characteristics, it is necessary to make some general observations upon the nature of Marvell's 'style', or rather upon the attitudes that determine it. His use of wit, understatement, hyperbole, levity, and so on has been the cause of much difficulty for critics of his work. Most of these problems - largely concerning the status of his remarks, their seriousness and local functions - are in fact resolvable once the problematic of a poem is understood, since the function of the problematic is precisely to organise meaning. Here I wish rather to consider that stylistic peculiarity of Marvell which has been described, since the very inception of Marvell criticism, as his combination of 'levity and seriousness'.<sup>14</sup> In this discussion I am concerned to indicate why Marvell should have adopted such an admixture, and how it related to his characteristic poetic procedure. Essentially, Marvell is accustomed to treat a serious theme of which he is convinced and to which he attaches the highest importance - eschatology: as we shall see. However, his mode of expression for



this theme exploits both wit and comedy, even at times to the verge of irreverence. Such use of comedy and wit is not only true to Marvell's temperament, but also fully sanctioned by Christian tradition and the devotional attitudes of his time.

First, it is relevant to note here Marvell's predilection for self-protection. The most effective form of "defence" for a writer tender of his own convictions is wit, a protective and even tolerant wit: and Marvell proved his sensitivity to this fact in his controversial prose works. There wit and comedy are at once defensive, and a sharp weapon of attack upon his opponents. To present one's beliefs in comic form - or rather, in a manner acknowledging comedy - allows their affirmation while anticipating any assault upon them; paradoxically, to treat such beliefs without pomp is to make their contradiction appear a great deal too serious for its own good. And, as an offensive weapon, wit provides a peculiar impact in satire; but, more important, it can give a cutting edge to one's own convictions. Thus, describing his method in The Rehearsal Transpros'd, Marvell asserted that

That which is solid and sharp, being imp'd by something more light and airy, may carry further and pierce deeper, and therefore I shall look to it as well as I can, that mine Arrows be well pointed.  
(187)

Wit and comedy, then, are instruments of conviction; sharpening the impact of Marvell's asseverations. He further described this style as 'betwixt Jest and Earnest' (187); an admixture that, as it has been rightly observed, distinguishes his poetic style as well.<sup>15</sup> When he said that it was possible to be at once 'merry and angry' in a serious religious debate (145), Marvell was confirming both the seriousness of his convictions and the witty efficacy of the mode he had chosen for the expression of those convictions.

The best test of that mixed style, 'betwixt Jest and Earnest', is that it succeeded admirably in its aim of impressing Marvell's points: his prose tract was judged to have worsted his opponent 'in the severest but pleasantest manner possible.'<sup>16</sup> Part of this success is due to the third effective quality of a mixed style - that an injection of comedy into a crucial argument guarantees the "good sense" of the writer: that, despite the strength of his convictions, he has enough sane detachment to treat them in this joco-serious manner.



That impression of "sanity" given by comedy was already well understood within the Christian tradition, and supplemented by Renaissance ideas. The fact that such wit and comedy could, first, impress Christian ideas, and secondly, create an atmosphere of "saneness" about them, had been recognised in the Middle Ages. Even "vulgar" laughter - at, for instance, a shrewish wife in a Miracle play - was valued 'as an indication of sanity, indeed almost of holiness'.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in extreme cases, even blasphemous wit has a niche in the Christian tradition; as T.S. Eliot observed, 'It is only the irreligious who are shocked by blasphemy. Blasphemy is a sign of Faith'.<sup>18</sup> (We will come to the seventeenth-century manifestation of this paradox in a minute.)

Renaissance tradition confirmed the joco-serious mode of religious expression, in the form especially of serio ludere. This form of expression involved a sort of inverse decorum: which acknowledged the distance between divine and human levels by wrapping the divine in the insulation of comedy. In a way, beliefs were too serious to treat seriously without still falling short of them; so one chose to fall deliberately short of them. A similar rationale - which, in essence, avows humility before sacred things - could motivate a Calvinist like Marvell (cf. Chapter III). For Calvinism stressed the irretrievable corruption of man and nature, and the consequent imperfection of all things: a doctrine memorably expressed by Marvell himself.<sup>19</sup> To understand how this doctrine of imperfection could underwrite the joco-serious treatment of Christian beliefs, one has only to recall Eliot's further observation, that the irreverence of the believer 'retains its respect for the divine by showing the failure of the human'.<sup>20</sup> This timeless form of Christian affirmation was seconded by 'the spirit of sacred drôlerie' in the Renaissance.<sup>21</sup>

In the Seventeenth Century the joco-serious treatment of strong beliefs is apparent not only in the poetry of the period (Donne's To His Mistress Going To Bed is a good example), but also in its general writings. Religious devotion was, of course, strong in this period: and the obverse side of this devotional coin, its "sane" and inevitable concomitant, was the obsessive treatment of religion in jokes. Thus, one recent study remarks not only the 'sheer obsessiveness' of religious topics, but also that one of its effects was that 'Coarse



ballads, innumerable mock-litanies, even the chapbooks of jokes of the period, all focus on religion.<sup>22</sup> This was the reflex, not of disrespect, but of familiarity and conviction.

As such, it is apparent not only in Marvell, but also in his father - a clergyman. It was noted by a contemporary that Marvell Senior was 'Facetious and yet Calvinistic';<sup>23</sup> a mixture comprehensible in terms of the joco-serious tradition. Similarly, Marvell himself was observed to be at once a caricatured Puritan and a coffee-house wit;<sup>24</sup> and fellow Puritans appear to have been the most enthusiastic audience for his 'very celebrated wit'.<sup>25</sup> Marvell, then, was a man of his time in his adoption of a mixed style; utilising comedy and wit in the expression of religious topics, and (as later chapters will show) most of all <sup>in</sup> his treatment of his major theme, Christian eschatology.

## CHAPTER II

### A REVELATION FOR THE TIMES

Before giving an account of Marvell's religious and political beliefs - which are chiliastic in kind - it is necessary to give an account of their context. To do this I will consider the salient religious preoccupations of Marvell's time, and particularly those of the period in which he is supposed to have written his lyric poems: 1640-60. Every age tends to adhere to particular emphases in its religious thought, and Marvell's was no exception. The preoccupations of the first half of the Seventeenth Century are an important facet of the relationship between Marvell's poetry and his times.

The chapter falls into three sections. The first introduces the seventeenth-century interpretation of Scriptural eschatology: the second demonstrates the sort of consequences for the life of the period entailed by such an interpretation. The latter section thus introduces the atmosphere in which Marvell wrote his poetry, while the former section establishes the doctrinal principles of that atmosphere. In the third section I discuss the reaction to eschatology which characterized the life of the individual at this time.

In my discussion of the doctrinal and theocratic concerns of the period I cannot hope to emulate the detail of whole books upon the subject: but that is neither my purpose nor the function of this chapter. What I intend is to sketch those particular features of seventeenth-century thought and activity relevant to my study of Marvell. This chapter is intended to show how eschatology could have become Marvell's 'philosophical system'.<sup>1</sup>



## Introduction

In 1643 a biblical commentary published in London bore on its title-page the quotation from the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, 'for the time is at hand'. This commentary was called The Key of the Revelation: it was an interpretation of the cryptic symbolism in that Biblical Book, and of the allegory of history which it contained. The author chose the epigraph, 'the time is at hand', because he wished to indicate that the Seventeenth Century itself was 'the time' described in the Revelation - thus providing the topical relevance of his commentary. The translation of this work into English was commissioned by Parliament itself. Similarly, another commentary on Revelation, Napier's Narration (1641), carried this epigraph: 'a subject very seasonable for these last times.' These men believed that the 'last times', the end of the world, might be seen in their lifetimes.<sup>2</sup>

Well, one might say, every century has its cranks. However, these men were not cranks, not for their own century at any rate. Their books, and many others on the same subject, were widely read and highly influential. In the first half of the Seventeenth Century the quantity of writings on the subject of the 'last days' was enormous.<sup>3</sup> By the 1640s the two works I have mentioned were among the most distinguished of them. Their authors, Joseph Mede and John Napier, and a divine called Thomas Brightman, had an incalculable influence upon the religious thought of the period.<sup>4</sup> Nor was their audience limited to a "lunatic fringe": study of the Apocalypse was 'a serious business which concerned Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican of every variety.'<sup>5</sup>

To indicate just how important Revelation was to the Seventeenth Century, I will mention a few recent studies of the subject. From a theological point of view, Brian W. Ball's A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660 (Leiden, 1975), discusses

the doctrines of eschatology and their importance to the religious writings of the period. Amongst other historical studies, Dr. Christopher Hill - in addition to many articles - has written Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England (London, 1971), a study of the influence of this figure from Revelation in the politics of the period: and The World Turned Upside Down (Harmondsworth, 1975), which traces the influence of eschatology upon radical sects and parties in the Seventeenth Century. In addition, William M. Lamont has studied the political theories arising from eschatological belief, and their effects upon English history in this period. There are many other historical studies of this century which are devoted to similar topics. In fact, without considering eschatological thought we cannot appreciate the salient features of Marvell's time.

Before considering the influence of such thought, however, it is necessary to explain a little of its history and its major concerns, since these bore directly upon the activity of eschatological speculation in Marvell's century.

#### i. Features of the Eschaton

Since the eschatological Books of the Bible were subject to so many interpreters, and were indeed so cryptic that interpretation of their minutiae varied a great deal, it is best for the purposes of this brief study to adhere to the mainstream of eschatological interpretation. The features of this mainstream are those of continuous importance from 1600 to 1660. They were generally accepted ideas, while controversy raged over the rest.

The word 'eschatology' itself implies this restriction to the mainstream. 'Millenarianism' describes a particular version of eschatology which subscribed to the rule of Christ on earth for a thousand years; 'apocalyptic' thought is that which is expressed cryptically. Therefore,



when speaking of the general corpus of beliefs on this matter, I shall confine myself to the terms, 'eschatology' and 'chiliasm'.

Eschatology is the doctrine of the Universal End: it comprises the doctrines relating to the Second Advent of Christ, the ending of the world, the resurrection of the dead, and the Last Judgement, as described in the Revelation. Thus it is a doctrine reflecting the spiritual consummation of history; literally, the Revelation 'reveals' God's termination of human history. The Latin root, 'revelatio', means 'that which was previously hidden or unknown'. Thus the Revelation displays the teleology of history in advance of events. It describes this process as a providential one, purging the world of evil and enacting Christ's promise of salvation.

As a doctrine of future events, eschatology is based upon the premise that human history is directed by God for a providential purpose.

According to the traditional Christian view of the world, God makes history. He stands at the beginning and the end of time; and in the intervening area, when the course of temporal events is being shaped, providential guidance is continually operative. This is the major premise on which the older Christian interpretation of history is based.<sup>6</sup>

As one divine put it, 'Whatever is transacted on earth is first designed and settled in Heaven.'<sup>7</sup> In this view, every historical event became an example of God's hand in history. Each event on earth drove onwards to the final purpose.

In the chronicling of God's purposes the Bible was of course the supreme authority. Moreover, it was itself a history: in its descriptions of Jewish history and of the life of Christ it was considered to be an historical as well as a spiritual testament. On the literal or historical level, it portrayed the "earthly city" of men; on the "anagogical" level it portrayed the "celestial city" of God. Each of the events in Scripture was both historically real and an intimation of God. Similarly history was both a series of real events and a revelation of divine

actions. Thus the events of the Bible were implicated in human history, while human history reflected the prescriptions of the Bible. By means of typology, figuralism and prophetic utterances the past, present, and future were organically related.

The historicity of the Bible made it a document for human history; but this historicity was a manifestation of divine purpose. When the Bible spoke of future events, its historicity guaranteed the reality of those events.

The Bible was authoritative not only in its record of the past and in its guidance for the present life and doctrine of church and believer, but equally in its pronouncements of future consummation.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the Bible's relevance to past and present indicated a general teleology for the future: all three tenses of time participated in a pattern, which tended towards the resolution of time. Because the Revelation described this resolution, it was in effect the "summation" of the Bible.<sup>9</sup> All Scripture tended towards it, and all history was implicated in the process that it completed.

Since, like the rest of the Scriptures, the Revelation was both literal and anagogical, its narrative described simultaneously the last real events and the last spiritual events of human history. In other words, whichever was the 'last age' in history would be characterized by the events related in the Revelation. Therefore, on the one hand, events such as those described in Revelation, taking place in contemporary history, would reveal that contemporary age as the 'last time'. On the other hand, an understanding of biblical prognostications revealed what would occur in the future.

Thus the Christian view of history encouraged a constant correlation, by historians and observers, of current events and the pronouncements of Scripture. If one understood these pronouncements one could understand history, and vice versa.



The implications of such an attitude were considerable. Men conditioned to these ideas saw not only the past but the present in certain 'spiritual' ways. A King, a national War, or a Schism in the Church were all capable of this sort of scrutiny. It is vital that we apprehend this habit of thought if the eschatology of the Seventeenth Century is to impress us for what it was. It was not odd or fanciful to such men: it was a complex system integral to their view of their times and of themselves.

Within this atmosphere the central features of eschatology assumed particular forms for the men of this period. The bases of these particularities were, however, quite traditional: they were found in Daniel and Revelation. In the former Book the history of the world was envisaged as a series of four 'Kingdoms' or world-empires. These gave way to the Fifth Kingdom, which was that of Christ (Dan. vii.18, Rev. xx.4). Before the latter could come into being, however, the world-empire of Babylon had to be destroyed. In Revelation, Babylon is the throne of the Scarlet Whore (Rev. xvii), and in the course of the Book she and her City are indeed utterly destroyed. Two other Satanic forces also require extermination before the 'new heaven and new earth' come into being. The first of these is the 'Beast', who appears in both Daniel and Revelation, and of whom the Dragon of Revelation xii. was considered to be an avatar (Dan. vii., Rev. xiii, xvii.). The second infernal character is Antichrist, or the 'Man of Sin'. During the course of the Last Days in Revelation he and the Beast are duly destroyed, and in Revelation xxi. the 'new heaven and new earth' are revealed. These are the central 'characters' in the eschaton, and for the moment I would like to elaborate a little on their functions in history.

The narrative in which they participate exists within a tripartite model of history. In this model the first element is the Fall, the second the Incarnation, and the third the Second Coming. The relationship between these elements, in spiritual terms, was that the Incarnation and Crucifixion promised the Grace necessary for man after the Fall, and the Second Coming would enact that promise. Since the Second Coming was the enactment of grace, it was doctrinally more important than the Incarnation itself.<sup>10</sup> For it was not until the Second Coming that grace would take effect, the dead would be resurrected in both soul and body, and translated to heaven: and the fallen earth dissolve, to be replaced by the 'new earth'. In pre-millennial belief, the eschatological doctrine most general in the Seventeenth Century, it was understood that Christ's Coming would precede the foundation of God's Kingdom: would, in effect, precipitate it. Thus both the Fall, and the Incarnation were predicates of the consummation in Revelation; without the Last Day God's plan for the salvation of man remained unfulfilled.

Between the Fall and the Incarnation the world was, one might say, unregenerate; the Incarnation inaugurated the 'Church Age', the age of belief when the message of God was spread abroad in the world. However, in the course of time the Church was corrupted, and infiltrated by the devil: it came under the sway of a false Christ, 'Antichrist'. His power was founded on the fact that his Church appeared to work for the true belief while in fact deceiving men into the service of the devil. In fact his power is an aspect of the decline of faith which was understood to precede the end of the world. 'That day [the Last Day] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition' (2 Thess. ii.3). Antichrist's hallmarks are illusions of Messianic power: he is 'even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs



and lying wonders' (ii.9). Thus he misleads those who are weak in spirit, and they will perish at the Second Coming (ii.10-11). Finally, Christ will return to the earth, overthrowing this Man of Sin and establishing his own Kingdom (ii. 8-10; Rev. xix. 11-20, 6). This, the Pauline description of Antichrist's nefarious career, is that enacted in the Revelation.

But Antichrist presented a problem to the diviners of human history: how to identify him and his Church, which one must do before one could oppose him and his works. After the Reformation in England, anti-catholic propaganda was concerned to suggest that the spiritual 'degeneration' of the Catholic Church had made of it a 'false Church', presided over by a papal Antichrist. This strain of thought in English Protestantism was based upon the notion that the Protestant was not a revolutionary Church, but rather that it represented a return to the true 'primitive' Christian Church which had been obscured by centuries of dogmatic elaboration. Such elaborations (so the thought went) had allowed the forces of evil to pervert the Catholic Church for their own ends.<sup>11</sup>

Thus between 1600 and 1660 the orthodox interpretation of Antichrist in the Revelation took it for granted that Antichrist was the Pope, and Babylon - the world-empire of evil - was Rome. The Catholic Church was characterized by the 'idolatries' of the Scarlet Whore.<sup>12</sup>

As eschatology became a subject for rhetoric, this standard interpretation tended to a conflation of the properties of Antichrist, the Whore, and the Beast. The 'harlotry' or 'spiritual fornication' of the Scarlet Whore was understood to refer to idolatry;<sup>13</sup> and hence the Antichrist tended to be described as a 'harlot' also. So in rhetoric at least the character of the Pope was hermaphroditic. An example of this interweaving of Revelation's imagery is James Ussher's definition

of Antichrist, in A Body of Divinity (1645).

Who is that Antichrist? He is one who under the colour of being for Christ, and under title of His Viceregent, exalteth himself above and against Christ, opposing himself unto Him in all his offices and ordinances, both in Church and Commonwealth; bearing authority in the Church of God; ruling over that City with seven Hills, which did bear rule over nations and put our Lord to death; a Man of Sin, a harlot, a mother of spiritual fornications to the kings and people of the nations, a child of perdition, and a destroyer, establishing himself by lying miracles and false wonders. All which marks together do agree with none but the Pope of Rome. <sup>14</sup>

[my italics]

'A Man of Sin, a harlot, a mother of spiritual fornications': this compounding of the attributes of evil characters in the eschaton was characteristic of the time. Antichrist himself was the product of combination: the Antichrist of the Epistles of John was identified with the Man of Sin in 2 Thessalonians and also with the second Beast of Revelation xiii.<sup>15</sup> As for his character as the Pope, this was the orthodox and even unarguable interpretation from the later years of Elizabeth's reign until the Restoration.

Since the Bible's historicity was unquestionable, this interpretation of Antichrist was given an historical basis. The new Rome, the Catholic Church, was understood to be an Anti-Type of Ancient Rome: both were world-empires or 'Kingdoms'. Thus the Geneva Bible, commenting on the Roman Catholic 'empire' of the Second Beast, asserts that 'the first empire Roman was as the pattern, and this the second empire is but an image and shadow thereof.' As the Anglican Ussher understood it, the Ancient Romans crucified Christ and the contemporary Roman Church vilified Him. This 'historical' aspect of Revelation was confirmed by Milton, even though he did not share Ussher's Anglicanism: eschatology was common to all colours of Protestantism. He remarked that Rome was 'endeavouring to keep up her old universal empire under a new name and mere shadow of a catholic religion.'<sup>16</sup>



Thus in Post-Reformation England the conviction grew that Antichrist had been 'revealed' by the reforming spirit of Protestantism, because this had exposed the infamy of Catholicism. According to St. Paul, Antichrist's triumph and its discovery must precede the Second Coming; therefore, men reasoned, since Antichrist had been discovered, that Advent must be close at hand. Bishop Latimer, for instance, was convinced that the Signs of the End were visible:

the end of the world is neare at hand. For there is  
lacke of fayeth now. Also the defection is come and  
swerving fro the faith. Antichrist the manne of synne  
the sonne of iniquity is reveled, y latter dai is at hand.<sup>17</sup>

[my italics]

The world was generally thought to be in its last phase.

All that remained to be effected was the actual destruction of Antichrist, and the universal teaching of the Christian faith to those who were as yet unconverted. This work constituted the 'ingathering of the nations', the conversion of unbelievers in readiness for the Last Judgement: and in especial the conversion of the Jews.<sup>18</sup> This Conversion was of the utmost importance if the world was to prepare itself for the Second Coming, and it became a prominent topic in English thought between 1640 and 1660. Its topicality is reflected in literature: for instance, Vaughan's poem The Jews anticipated the Conversion, and Marvell refers to it in To His Coy Mistress: 'And you should if you please refuse/ Till the Conversion of the Jews.' This theme was important in practical politics too; expectation of the Conversion prompted Cromwell to consider, in 1656, the readmission of the Jews to England.<sup>19</sup>

Emphasis on this matter of Conversion was due to the fact that the nations would not convert themselves; it was necessary for Christian peoples to convert them by their own 'zeal'. The same ethic of Zeal applied also to the destruction of Antichrist. It was thought that men must be active in the realization of the new

Kingdom.

One sees a monolithic campaign in the literature of the time....to stress the imminent founding of the New Jerusalem in the Last Age of the World; to proclaim the importance of zeal.<sup>20</sup>

Zeal was to be the overriding concern of the Protestant Church, a return to the 'pure' evangelism of the Apostles. It was to be active proof, men thought, that Protestantism was not new, but a re-establishment of the original Church.

In England this Protestant Zeal was coloured by a sense of national destiny. The Puritans in particular emphasized that the English were a 'chosen race', a sort of New Israel.<sup>21</sup> And High Anglicanism did not disagree with this view: Lamont notes that the Protestant martyrologist John Foxe 'conditioned generations of English Protestants to a belief in the historic mission of their role', and 'to the idea that they were involved in a Holy Crusade against Antichrist.'<sup>22</sup> The Puritans saw England as the champion of Protestantism in Europe, fighting in a last-ditch stand against the victorious cohorts of the Beast. There was a sense of urgency, that Protestantism was fighting to survive.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, the sense grew that England's peculiar mission was to forward the Kingdom and to facilitate the Last Day, by her activism against Antichrist. Both a strong anticatholic prejudice in the country, and a nationalist impulse, played parts in this sometimes hysterical activism.

Divines of various sectarian groups were constantly pressing this role upon the authorities in England. One of many such sermons, delivered to the House of Commons in 1641, apostrophized them:

you are the promised people, you are the Parliament....  
of his Majesty's three kingdoms to be leaders and  
examples to the Christian world to pull down that part  
of Antichrist that is yet standing.<sup>24</sup>

[my italics]



Hugh Trevor-Roper remarks that 'all through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it had been an axiom of faith that the Church was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Satan.' He sees the witch-craze - especially that of 1645 - as inextricably linked with this chiliastic concern: witches were considered to be agents of Antichrist himself.<sup>25</sup> The battle against them was an aspect of the national war against the Beast.

Antichrist had an intense reality for men of this time; he inspired a personal fear and hatred. The "personalization" of Antichrist and of the Whore, the historicity of Scripture, and the contemporaneity of the Revelation, all were aspects of a literal apprehension of the eschatological vision. The involvement of individuals and of their country's destiny with this vision was a very immediate involvement.

Urgency, Zeal, and the 'mission' were evoked by an interpretation of Revelation, to the point where the concerns of the age are inexplicable without attention to the eschatological sense. The history of England was understood as eschatology in progress.

## ii. The Eschaton and the National Life

During the reign of Elizabeth, eschatological speculation had grown to the point where, in the early decades of the Seventeenth Century, it began to dominate the thought of all classes and sects. By 1640 eschatological expectation was at its apogee, and remained a constant obsession in the national life until the Restoration. Chiliasm became 'the spirit of the age.'<sup>26</sup>

The supremacy of eschatological thought in the Seventeenth Century was founded upon the unquestioned authority of the Bible; even secular and political matters were referred to the Supreme Court of Scripture. Therefore it is not surprising that the political turbulence of this period was characterized by chiliastic views, and its controversy by religious polemic.

In fact the contemporary ambience, in which religion was all-pervasive, would have allowed nothing else. Christopher Hill suggests that

When we find that John Pym, Oliver Cromwell, John Lilburne, Gerrard Winstanley, Henry Oldenburg, Secretary of the Royal Society, and the great Sir Isaac Newton himself were all interested in Antichrist, it is clear that there is something important here.<sup>27</sup>

In fact, William Lamont's thesis is that Anglicans, Puritans, Levellers and parties of all kinds were equally preoccupied with chiliastic ideas: that they were ranged at different points along the single line of eschatological obsession.<sup>28</sup>

It might be asked why a religious idea should affect the political parties of the day. First, of course, there was the prevalent conviction that England as a nation had an eschatological role: that as rulers of the Elect Nation her government had religious responsibilities. Second, most of the political interests of the time were religious interests also. Religion was 'an all-embracing force that shaped [men's] ideas and gave meaning to their lives.'<sup>29</sup> Thus politics became a branch of religious activity. Such a frame of mind may seem strange now, but for men of that time it was natural. Theology and politics had become intimately related, and any form of government had to possess some theory of its divine authority before it could gain acceptance.<sup>30</sup> For centuries the use in politics of liturgical formulae had made political thought theocratic in kind: the conflation of politics and religion was absolute. Religious quarrels became political squabbles, and viceversa.<sup>31</sup>

The place of eschatology in theocratic disputes is best illustrated by a brief survey of its character in the critical years after 1640. Previous to this date the principle of Dei Gratia kingship had been established as authority for the Stuart monarchy. Men like Foxe had already associated the Reformation monarch with the traditional idea



of the Christian Emperor. This hallowed figure was he (or, in Elizabeth's case, she) who led the world in the struggle against Antichrist; he was God's agent on earth, and as such his government was divinely sanctioned.<sup>32</sup>

However, with the growth of episcopal power in the early decades of the century, the bishops of High Anglican persuasion began to stress the iure divino aspect of their own authority, and to subordinate to this the authority of the King.<sup>33</sup> The Laudians saw themselves as the lieutenants of God, building His Kingdom. Under the influence of Laud Charles I became a champion of these episcopal claims: thus allying the monarchy with the episcopal interest. Meanwhile the Puritan parties (they were not truly a single party) united in the face of episcopal supremacy. The supposed 'Arminian' tendencies of Laud and his colleagues were seen by Puritans (including Marvell) as a re-imposition of 'Catholic' features upon the reformed Church.

Much of the success of Puritan anti-episcopal propaganda was due to the national hatred of Catholicism. Anticatholicism and anticlericalism went hand in hand at this time; and anticlericalism was widespread in England.<sup>34</sup> Since Charles had accepted episcopal claims, he too was tainted with a reputation for 'Papist' leanings. This was aggravated by his possession of a Catholic Queen, who indeed added fuel to the fire by her own actions.<sup>35</sup> At any rate, the Puritans' religious resistance was inevitably a political matter also, in which they were ranged against both King and Bishops. This was not a matter of antimonarchism (at this stage), but rather opposition to the theocratic alliance of King and Bishops. This supposedly 'Papist' alliance was the most damaging charge against Charles in the eyes of many Englishmen. The secretary of state, Edward Nicholas, thought that 'the great obstacle....to the king's regaining the affections of his people was the universal fear of Popery'.<sup>36</sup> Charles and the Anglican

establishment were thus implicated, in Puritan eyes, in the eschatological war against the Beast of Catholicism.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, it was felt by Puritans that the corruption of the true religion of the Elect Nation by her clergy represented a national sin.<sup>38</sup> Thus a Parliamentary divine enjoined Parliament that:

The drunkennesse, profaneness, Popishnesse of the English Clergie [is such that]....there is no way to vindicate the Honour of our Nation, Ministry, Parliaments, Sovereigne, Religion, God; but by causing the punishment [to be effected]....that our adversaries that have triumphed in their sinne, may be confounded at their punishments....the personall acts of these sonnes of Beliall [are]....become Nationall sinnes.<sup>39</sup>

Such a national sin of 'Popishnesse' evoked the wrath of God upon a nation, as this preacher and others confirmed:<sup>40</sup> to prevent that wrath Parliament must purge England of her corrupting episcopacy.<sup>41</sup>

By so doing they enacted, they thought, the judgement of God. This, as they saw it, was the purgative effect of the Civil War, as such a judgement upon the 'Popish' sins of the nation.<sup>42</sup>

As far as the Puritans were concerned, the bishops were obstructing the full reformation of the Church that was necessary in the Latter Days. And politically, the Reformation would not be complete until England had a godly government. The process of this complete polarization of Puritans and Anglican episcopacy was gradual, since doctrinally speaking the origin of both religious parties was identical: they shared the premises of eschatology. Simply, the political conclusions that they drew from that doctrine were quite different.<sup>43</sup>

The crux of political thought at this time was the matter of how one interpreted Biblical pronouncements. This crux was due, ultimately, to the belief in a providential history tending towards the eschaton. In the political sphere this notion led to a belief that effective government was government in accordance with the will of God, and most especially with the will of God as revealed in history. In turn,



this belief was based upon a conviction that it was possible for men to discover God's will.

For this purpose there were three main methods of divination. First, careful attention to the Scriptures, and especially to the predictions of human destiny in Daniel and Revelation, provided divine guidance. Second, prayer could purify the individual so that his interpretations and his actions, based upon those interpretations, should not err. Third, one could study what God's hand had already effected, by scrutinising the history of the past.<sup>44</sup> Thus one could correlate history and scriptural prophecies: and from the identification of prophecies already fulfilled one could identify those as yet unfulfilled.

Unfortunately, people's interpretations of the divine purpose tended to vary somewhat. The bishops held to their interpretation, and the Puritans held to theirs: and so on. Eventually matters reached a pass where 'Antichrist stood for bad, papal, repressive institutions: exactly which institutions was anybody's choice.'<sup>45</sup> The consequences of this motley group of interpretations were later to harass a Puritan government also, but during the 1640s the label of 'Antichristian' was most frequently attached to the King and to the bishops, as 'agents of Antichrist' or papists.<sup>46</sup>

Thus to his own party the King remained the vestigial Christian Emperor; whereas to his antagonists he was an enemy of that Emperor, a representative of Antichrist in England. Within this central opposition many variations arose. But eschatological concepts were crucial to the views of both camps in the Civil War, and to the religious debate which preceded it. One group of Roundheads expressed their sense of divine mission in this way:

'tis prophesied in the Revelation, that the Whore of Babylon shall be destroyed with fire and sword.... this is the time of her ruine, and....we are the men that must help to pull her down.<sup>47</sup>

This, the Puritan interpretation of the Civil War, is expounded also in the Declaration of the English Army in Scotland, in August 1650:

Under the sad sufferings of the people of God our souls mourned, and understanding by the manifold gracious promises in the word of God, that a time of deliverance was to be expected to the Church of Christ, and destruction and ruin to Babylon, our hearts, together with all the true godly in England were exceedingly stirred up to pray to the Lord.....that he would arise to destroy Antichrist, and to save his people....we found our hearts extraordinarily stirred up by the Lord, to assist the Parliament against the King, being absolutely satisfied in our judgements and consciences that we were called forth by the Lord to be instrumental to bring about that which was our continual prayer....viz., the destruction of Antichrist, and the deliverance of [God's] church and people....we were then powerfully convinced that the Lord's purpose was to deal with the late King as a man of blood....being persuaded in our consciences that he and his monarchy was one of the ten horns of the Beast.<sup>48</sup>

In Revelation the 'horns of the beast' were understood to represent those 'kings of the earth' who were enfeoffed to the Scarlet Whore and her Beast, and it is as such a king that the Army describes Charles in their Declaration. One Royalist divine, to whom some Parliamentarian prisoners had explained that they 'took up arms against Antichrist and Popery', replied that such was the role of Kings alone.<sup>49</sup> This incident reveals the central divergence in interpretation of Revelation that characterized the formulations of the opposing sides in the Civil War.

Some men did recognize this matter of interpretation as the essence of the conflict. One Hayter, writing with hindsight, asserted that 'A great inlet to our late civil wars hath been the misinterpretation of the Revelation';<sup>50</sup> and promptly added his own interpretation of this Book to the long list already extant. The same conviction about 'interpretation' animated the Royalist poet, Abraham



Cowley, who in his poem The Civil War reviled the "divine" inspiration of the 'godly party'. Here he takes advantage of a Parliamentary defeat to revile this inspiritive notion:

Yet theise the men that true Religion boast,  
The pure, and Holy, Holy, Holy, Hoast.  
What great reward for so much zeale is given?  
Why, Heaven has thank't them for't, as they thank't Heaven.

Cowley was also alive to the abuse of eschatological rhetoric, pointing out the elasticity of Puritan identifications drawn from revelatory literature:

Goe now, your silly Calumnies repeate,  
And make all Papists whom yee cannot beat.  
Let the World know some way with whom you're vext,  
And vote them Turkes when they ov'rthrow yee next.

But Cowley is not averse to turning the same rhetoric against them.

Three hundred Chiliasts, who hop'd now t'advance  
Their Paradise, their rare, divine Romance.  
A temp'orall raigne of Saints they expect on Earth,  
And this, this very Parl'ament gives it birth.  
By this indeed wee guesse Christs Kingdome neare,  
For Antichrist (wee know) must first appeare.<sup>51</sup>

Here the last line, basing itself on agreement as to the imminence of the Second Coming, identifies the Parliamentarians themselves as the 'Antichrist' who portends that Advent.

Cowley's satire was accurate enough. Parliamentary sermons were flavoured by an ecstatic impulse, a 'rare, divine Romance': and a strong emphasis upon the practicalities required 't'advance/ Their Paradise.' Outstanding for these qualities is a sermon which was designed to inflame feeling against the King's foremost 'adviser', Strafford, and calling for his execution. Like many such Parliamentary sermons, its purpose is manipulative and practical in the extreme, but its language is that of a fiery chiasm. The sermon calls Strafford and his colleagues the followers of Antichrist:

Oh therefore hast their ruine, and your owne triumph;  
 though Rome were not built in one day, yet it may be,  
 nay it shall be destroyed in a day, Revel. 18.8....  
 our Church hath long time beene in travaile to be delivered  
 of these Vipers, and long travails are perilous....  
 the Dragon and false Prophet, labours with all their  
 might to make the birth abortive, or destroy the issue  
 in the Wombe [Rev. xii], oh do you afford such heale  
 that shall be quick and lively....then shall she forget all  
 her sorrow, and immediately shall follow the Church  
 Hallalujah, even the day that others have desired  
 to see and could not [the Last Day].<sup>52</sup>

In other words, if the Commons impeach and execute Strafford they will be doing the work of God Himself. This passage conveys the eschatological interpretation, and its typical rhetoric, which influenced Parliamentary politics.

It also shows how interpretative rhetoric acted upon politics both before and during the Civil War. Eschatology became a dynamic of the Parliamentary cause. Interpretation was a practical matter, as a satire of 1649 makes clear in derogatory fashion: one's interpretation of God's will ensured that one's own party was 'right'.

The satirical 'sermon' on this subject is put into the mouth of Cromwell:

My text, you see, is Scripture; and Scripture must be believed....but the Malignants [Royalists] they would interpret it one way, and we, the Saints, interpret it another. Now let any body judge, whether they, or we, are to be believed....those ungodly Cavaliers, that sought to uphold tyranny and Antichrist; or we, that in the uprightness of our hearts, fought for liberty and freedom, and for establishing the kingdom of King Jesus. Surely, beloved, it is we that are in the right of it: I think none of you will deny it.<sup>53</sup>

[my italics]

This satire accurately diagnoses the active force of interpretation.

It also reveals, obliquely, the drive which eschatology gave to the Parliamentary cause. As Lamont has emphasized, 'The pursuit of the Millennium was a cause as well as a consequence of the English Civil War.'<sup>54</sup> Without this chiliastic aspect the conflict would have been fundamentally different: in this period chiliasm provided a cause, a language, and an ideology which stamped politics of all colours.



As important as the ideology it provided, were the psychological effects of chiliasm. The New Model Army, for instance, were convinced that their victories were signs that Providence favoured their cause: even, that the Royalists sinned in not voluntarily submitting to this Godly Army.<sup>55</sup> Cromwell's letters, when reporting victories, constantly ascribe these triumphs to the Providence of God.<sup>56</sup> Cromwell also believed in his personal mission: that God had chosen him for a specific purpose;<sup>57</sup> and the Army thought so too.<sup>58</sup> Such convictions gave a sense of determination to the Parliamentary cause; and the anticipation of the Kingdom that this cause would establish gave a mystical purpose to their actions. This attitude is yet another reason why chiliasm was 'a cause as well as a consequence' of the War.

Nor were its causal effects confined to the Parliamentary side. James I had founded his claims for the monarchy upon the Book of Revelation: not only were kings God's lieutenants, and appointed as such by Him, but were themselves semi-divine.<sup>59</sup> His son assumed the same authority (with unfortunate consequences), averring that

[the King] is not bound to give an account to any but to God only, whose immediate lieutenant and viceregent he is in these his realms and dominions by the divine providence committed to his charge and providence.<sup>60</sup>

The hagiography of Eikon Basilike was a development of this attitude towards the sanctity of the monarch. The ideology of Royalism was, like that of its opponent, eschatological in essence.

But the Royalist and Parliamentary interpretations of Revelation did not define the boundaries of chiliastic speculation. When the Civil War was over and Cromwell eventually achieved the supreme power, his enemies found their own interpretations of Revelation. An anarchy of sectarian versions of the eschaton, and of the government demanded by it, riddled political life. Gerrard Winstanley, for instance, had accused the military "Grandeers" of betraying the godly cause in order

to retain power in their own hands. Throughout the late 1640s and the 1650s the Revelation was constantly adduced against the new regime which had founded itself upon eschatological premises. Some factions and persons linked Cromwell himself with Antichrist.<sup>61</sup> Due to the multiplicative nature of scriptural interpretations, anyone who conceived himself to be divinely inspired could gather round him a 'church' and a party. This sectarian bent was partly due to the vagueness of the Calvinist concept of the 'Elect': anyone could feel part of an elite of the Elect, equipped for an authoritarian and theocratic rule of others: or he could espouse a democracy of the Elect. Democracy was not the Parliamentary objective, but the eschatological bias of the Parliamentary cause gave rise to democratic impulses which were ultimately inimical to the Parliamentary regime.<sup>62</sup> 'Instead of building a powerful community united in doctrine and ready to erect the New Jerusalem at a moment's notice, the Puritans found themselves unwittingly fostering the idea that anyone could get to heaven in his own way.'<sup>63</sup> The incipient tendency of Puritanism towards separatism became obvious only when the common enemy of episcopacy was overcome. Thus the period succeeding the Civil War, as much as the period preceding it, was pervaded by eschatological controversies.

From 1600 to 1660 eschatological thought was a political force. Interpretation of the Revelation was the basis of the warring ideologies of this period; and chiliastic concepts provided the very rhetoric of practical politics. The theocratic implications of eschatological belief became the salient features of English national life.

### iii. The Eschaton and the Individual

The pervasiveness of eschatology was such that men lived in the atmosphere of the 'Last Day'; they expected it, and acted according to that expectation. The causes of this widespread chiliasm, and its



effects, have never been satisfactorily explained. It has been suggested that Reformation propaganda, economic problems, political instability and the spirit of epistemological enquiry all played parts in the upsurge of chiliasm. Certainly for the gentry, eschatology had become a matter of Reformation principles, and of political convictions. For the less wealthy classes it may have represented an exciting vision of hope for the future. And for Parliamentarians and all types of Puritan it represented the potential for change.

The core of Parliamentarians in the early stages of the War - men like Manchester and even Fairfax - were not revolutionaries but rather Protestant constitutionalists. They were concerned equally with the power of Parliament and with the safeguarding of the Reformation Church. Indeed, they saw the two concerns as one. But they, as much as anyone, would have responded to the optimism inherent in chiliasm.

I say 'optimism', because seventeenth-century anticipation of the eschaton shared the emotions generated by notions of a 'Golden Age': the Last Day and the Kingdom were their Golden Age. The imminence of the Last Day inspired men not with fear but with enthusiasm.<sup>64</sup> The general susceptibility of men to such beatific visions combined with the intense religious feeling of the age, must have been the most effective causes for chiliasm in this period.

This element of hope was most especially due to the sense that the Last Day would bring the reward of the righteous and the triumph of good over evil. To an age still dominated in every aspect of life by its religious sense, and still affected by the immediacy of things spiritual that had characterized mediaeval thought, the question of salvation was a reality in their lives; they expected that salvation to take effect at any moment, within their own lifetimes perhaps. For them as for mediaeval people the Last Days were

not a phantasy about some remote and indefinite future,  
but a prophecy which was infallible, and which at almost  
any given moment was felt to be on the point of fulfilment.<sup>65</sup>

These men expected to participate in the drama of the world's death,  
and to partake in the joys of a new Paradise.

For Puritans this anticipation was perhaps most powerful, since  
Puritanism is itself highly idealistic, even when compared to other  
Christian groups.<sup>66</sup> The individualism of Puritan doctrine, with its  
stress upon direct communication of the believer with God, made eschat-  
ology a psychological power. This doctrine emphasized the participation  
of the individual in God's unfolding design. The Chosen Elect were  
the agents of God.

the saint was expected to act; he did not sit at home in  
quiet contemplation of his good fortune. He had been called  
but this great privilege carried duties as well as rights.  
As a member of the elite it was his task to do everything  
in his power to advance God's kingdom.<sup>67</sup>

But the form which his action took was dictated by his own interpretation  
of God's will. First, the Puritan became an activist: second, he  
acted according to his understanding of God's will. His 'free will'  
was, in fact, a matter of how he interpreted God's purpose and of how  
he chose to aid that purpose. For

the book of prophecy was the Bible, and it would not  
deceive. If by intensive study men could master its  
prophecies, they would understand destiny and so become  
free.<sup>68</sup>

Belief in the eschaton enjoined a great responsibility upon the  
believer, to interpret and to act in the right way, and thus to find  
a freedom expressive of his conviction. His actions had to further  
the Kingdom of God. Thus 'The Puritan integration of freedom and  
necessity is also an integration of the individual in the historical  
process.'<sup>69</sup> It went without saying that the Last Day would come:  
but it would be delayed by a lackadaisical attitude to events by the



individual believer. The Puritan was driven by a personal responsibility to act in the historical process.

At the same time this activism was individualist in the sense that it was founded upon personal convictions and interpretation. The actions arising out of the individual's interpretation of the will of God reflected the individual who had interpreted that will; thus in a fashion activism was both Godly (and hence unselfish) and self-expressive. It also endowed the individual with an importance in the universal drama of the eschaton. The decisions which he took, as to the form activism assumed in his own life, were vital to the individual's daily actions. The Last Day affected not only men's beliefs, in an abstract sense, but also their evaluation of themselves and the way in which they lived: chiliasm acted upon the personality.

The influence of eschatology extended to the intimate spiritual life of the Saint also. His confrontation with Antichrist was on two fronts: with Antichrist in the world and with the power of Antichrist within himself. For the struggle with Antichrist involved also the internal struggle with temptation and with falsehood. Christopher Hill points out the internalization of eschatological belief:

'The spirit of Antichrist....is in all of us.' 'Thy heart is that temple of God where this great Whore sitteth.' The day of judgement will occur, is occurring, in the heart of each individual: it is the cause 'of all these commotions that are amongst us.'<sup>70</sup>

The Apocalypse was certainly a universal event, but as such it involved each individual. The true battle against Antichrist was fought within oneself, for each soul was a little battleground in the great spiritual war: all these individual battles were part of the eschaton. Antichrist and the Whore were historical entities, but as avatars of the infernal spirit they were also spiritual entities. The 'relationship between belief in Christ's Coming and the present experience of the believer was to prove one of Calvin's great contributions to spiritual

life within the English Church.<sup>71</sup> Each man had a vital role in the eschaton, with which was involved his identity in history and his soul.

Eschatology was the most prominent feature of English thought between 1600 and 1660: its effects were all-pervasive. It contributed to the national life and to the daily life of the individual: allegiance, thought, and emotion were invested in it. It provided the ambience in which Marvell, like the rest of his contemporaries, lived and worked. He cannot have escaped its effects, both as an introspective and as an expressive force: and indeed it is my suggestion that eschatology was a decisive factor both in his life and in his poetry.

Chiliasm was at its apogee in the period when Marvell is understood to have written the bulk of his lyric poetry: between 1640 and 1660. Because eschatology had both external and internal relevance to the life of each believer, it was not unsuited to any lyric form, whether 'public' or 'personal' in subject. On several levels, then, Marvell reflects 'the spirit of the age'. The following few chapters are concerned to show how his lyrics reflect that spirit; and the next two chapters will demonstrate its decisive influence upon both his religion and his politics.



### CHAPTER III

#### A REVELATION FOR THE REFORMER

##### Religion and Politics in Marvell's Writings

In this chapter I am concerned to show how Marvell shared the contemporary preoccupation with eschatology. In his thought, as in that of so many others, eschatology was crucial not only for religious topics, but also for his political attitudes.

Therefore, this chapter is concerned to demonstrate several points cardinal to Marvell's religio-political views. First, it demonstrates his lifelong anticlericalism, thus evincing his pronouncement of one of the prerequisites of eschatological thought at this period. Secondly, the chapter discusses the way in which the elements of Marvell's thought which cluster around this anticlericalism were constituents of the characteristic version of history which distinguished eschatology in his time; and that Marvell's views all cohere within that eschatological historia. Further to manifest Marvell's mainstream eschatological views, the chapter makes continuous comparisons between his works and the statements of Puritan chiliasts, in the period when eschatology was at its apogee of influence - the 1640s. In this manner the chapter demonstrates that Marvell remained, throughout his life, a Puritan chiliast dedicated to the eschatological ideals of Reformation in both Church and State.

In my treatment of Marvell's views, two major questions raised by Marvell studies are answered. First, Marvell criticism has often tended to suggest that Marvell's career is distinguished by 'phases', periods in which his views or his poetic themes changed to a considerable degree. This chapter aims to refute this idea, by manifesting that Marvell's consistent eschatological preoccupation shows the constancy of his views; which at all times flowed from that central preoccupation.

Similarly, the chapter puts forward a consistent view of Marvell's political allegiances, which have also been the subject of critical debate: suggesting that they too follow consistent eschatological principles. As a part of this demonstration of Marvell's political principles, I am here particularly concerned with the Civil War period, in which (for most critics) Marvell's views have proved most difficult to establish. In this chapter, I suggest the way in which his expressed views (dating from the Restoration period) reflect Puritan chiliastic accounts of the Civil War; and that Marvell retained the views of a Puritan chiliast throughout his political career.

The first section of the chapter introduces Marvell's religious views by intimating the effects of his upbringing and education: which favoured the formation of a Puritan chiliast. In the second section his anticlericalism, and its place in Marvell's eschatological thought, is discussed by reference especially to Marvell's Defence of Howe, Mr. Smirke: or, The Divine in Mode, and An Essay concerning General Councils. The third section demonstrates the political attitudes which follow from Marvell's religious views, using as examples The Rehearsal Transpros'd and The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C. Together, this prose work of 1672/3 and the poem of 1654 show, by their common assumption of eschatological principles, the constancy of Marvell's adherence to such principles throughout his life. In the subsequent section, the argument of the chapter is concluded by a survey of Marvell's "variations" in political allegiance: showing that these were in fact inspired by eschatological ideas. In this fashion the chapter provides an explanation of Marvell's religious-political views; as well as a picture of their development in response to the political vicissitudes of his times.



# 1. The Formation of a Puritan Chiliast

Like the majority of his contemporaries, Marvell was a devout man. In a letter to a friend he wrote that the things which 'strengthen and assist' men in their troubles are 'The word of God: The society of good men: and the books of the Ancients' (312-13). This was an unexceptionable statement, but it is the tip of the religious iceberg in Marvell's case: his religious consciousness was complex, and his views were always both resolute and vigorous. He was - as has long been recognised - a Puritan:<sup>1</sup> but, much more important, he was in fact a Puritan chiliast who looked for an imminent Second Coming; opposed all forms of 'Antichrist', and their intrusions into Church and State; and defended the right of believers to their 'true religion' - Protestantism - as established by the English Reformation. His championship of the 'true religion', and his preoccupation with its eschatological context, is manifested throughout his life and works.

In order to understand Marvell's views, it is necessary to trace their origins in his background: his family, provenance, and education. His father, Andrew Marvell Senior, was a minister, who had been an undergraduate at Emmanuel, a Puritan Cambridge college. He

lived with some measure of reputation, both for Piety and Learning: and he was moreover a Conformist to the established Rites of the Church of England, though I confess none of the most over-running or eager in them.

(The Rehearsal Transpros'd, 203-4)

In other words, his father adhered to the state Church, although he was less than enthusiastic about its 'Rites'; evincing a typical Puritan dislike of ritualism.

In fact, Marvell's father could afford at once to remain an 'Anglican' of a sort, and to avoid Anglican ritualism, because his position as Lecturer at Holy Trinity Church in Hull had been (like other such

Lectureships) created precisely to avoid pressures for conformity: it was a civic preaching office, independent of the church, and allowed Puritan citizens the sort of ministry they desired without awkward confrontations with the establishment.<sup>2</sup>

Marvell's father, then, represented a Puritan version of Anglicanism. The town to which he ministered, and in which Marvell grew up, had established the lectureship precisely because it was, in religious terms, of an advanced Protestant kind. Hull was a Puritan town, and had been - ever since the Reformation - one of the most zealous in the 'reformation' of its churches.<sup>3</sup> It was in Hull that Marvell received his schooling.<sup>4</sup>

From Hull Marvell went up to Cambridge. There he attended Trinity College, which was moderate in its religious cast.<sup>5</sup> At Cambridge Theology was still the major subject of study,<sup>6</sup> and any theological speculations which Marvell may have assimilated from his father's sermons would have been amplified there. He was extremely familiar with his Bible, and his later prose works evince a dexterity with biblical texts and exempla which was impressive even at that time.<sup>7</sup> (Marvell himself mentions that the Bishop of London went so far as to discuss one of the former's prose works 'at Council....showing his friends the passages he has noted.')<sup>8</sup>

Besides the theological emphasis of the Cambridge curriculum, the University was at this time one of the strongholds of eschatological studies in Europe. Cambridge had been - like Hull - in the vanguard of the movement to Reformation under the Tudors,<sup>9</sup> and since the late Sixteenth Century several of its members had been involved in the exposition of Revelation along these lines.<sup>10</sup> In the Seventeenth Century one of the most famous and influential of Revelation exegetes, Joseph Mede, had taught at Cambridge: Milton was one of his pupils at Christ's.<sup>11</sup> (Milton was, we remember, later Marvell's friend and



colleague, and himself a chiliast.<sup>12</sup>) Moreover, as well as maintaining and forwarding eschatological speculation, several of the colleges were power-houses of Puritan learning: participating especially in the flowering of Hebraist scriptural studies, which proved vital to the growth of millennial expectation.<sup>13</sup> So Marvell's upbringing and education were of a sort to foster not only a vigorous Puritan belief, but also a chiliastic Puritanism.

## 2. Anticlericalism and Reformation: 'Smirke' and 'General Councils'.

At this point I wish to detail the views which, in Marvell's works, reveal the effects of his eschatological preoccupation. As I have noted, eschatological belief at this time entailed a fundamental anticlericalism: springing from the Reformation thesis that 'Popish' clerics had acted as the agents of Antichrist, corrupting the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. This eschatological anticlericalism is a salient factor throughout Marvell's works: participating in his championship of eschatological 'reformation'.

To begin with, a few general points are necessary. As Marvell himself tells us, he had read Foxe's Book of Martyrs, the book which, more than any other, was crucial to the English version of history as an eschatological process of reformation. Marvell recommends it to an opponent, as a text which illuminates the character and significance of the Last Day.<sup>14</sup> He was, then, familiar with the central theories of eschatology as they were transmitted to his own time.

Moreover, he had an opportunity of judging for himself the nature of 'Popery' - the great villain in Foxeian eschatology - when he toured Europe in the 1640s.<sup>15</sup> There he encountered not only Italy and Spain, prominent Catholic countries, but also the "religious haven" of Holland; to which were drawn all those whose religious views

were not tolerated elsewhere. In a later poem he recalls the religious anarchy that obtained in that country, in a peculiarly revealing manner. As I indicated above, English Protestants considered that Protestantism was a revival of the original faith, the true 'Catholic' or universal Church: of which 'Popery' was an Antichristian distortion. Thus, satirizing the 'spawning' of sects and Churches in Holland, Marvell remarks that the English may believe that theirs is the 'universal' Church, but Amsterdam is 'universal' in the sense that it embraces anything and everything:

Hence Amsterdam, Turk-Christian-Pagan-Jew,  
 Staple of Sects and Mint of Schisme grew....  
 In vain for Catholicks our selves we bear;  
 The universal Church is onely there.

(The Character of Holland, 71-6)

Marvell, then, was not fond of schism, or of 'strange/ Opinion' (73-4) in religion. He was a moderate Puritan, with a distaste for extravagant sects; hence, in his First Anniversary, he castigates the English sectarians as 'defacers' of religion (313ff.).

Equally, as a moderate Puritan Marvell was as far divorced from high Anglicans as from radical sectarians. He favoured 'true religion and practical piety':<sup>16</sup> that is, a faith attaching - as for Puritans it necessarily did - solely to scriptural authority, and requiring of men nothing that could not reasonably be expected.<sup>17</sup> In equally orthodox Puritan manner, he deplored clerical attempts at mediation between man and his Creator; insisting upon 'the intire and inward worship of God, as it was by Christ prescribed'.<sup>18</sup> This emphasis upon purely scriptural authority was a doctrine underpinning Protestant claims to revive 'original' Christianity.

Thus, as Marvell insists repeatedly in his prose tracts, any elaborations of belief proceeding solely from human authority - conciliar, papal, or episcopal - were not deserving of 'Faith'; they



were merely presumptuous speculation, while the scriptures alone could command absolute faith.<sup>19</sup>) Thus doctrinal elaborations of the kind that accrued in the long history of the Roman Catholic Church represented 'a Church historical, devilish believe', because they did not correspond to 'the express words of Scripture' (Mr. Smirke, 69). In fact, the major charge against the 'Popish' church in Protestant eyes was precisely its corruption of 'true religion' by means of doctrinal and ritual elaboration. That charge is levelled at the 'Papists' by Marvell in his Rehearsal Transpros'd (RT):

For when once by those glorious Ceremonies they forsook the pure simplicity of the Primitive Church, they did not much trouble themselves about Holiness of Life, the preaching of the Gospel, the efficacy and comfort of the Holy Spirit: But they fell every day into new squabbles about new-fangled Ceremonies added by every Pope. (115)

In this passage Marvell reflects the basic principles of Reformation eschatology: its proponent of the 'Primitive' or original Church; its abrogation of Antichristian Popish ceremonies, innovations, and neglect of the true ministry; against which Marvell elevates 'that antient and Evangelical Simplicity' (RT, 116) to which Protestantism had returned. This passage is but one example of a note which Marvell sounds again and again in his prose works.

As I noted in the previous chapter, the 'Popish' obsession with the externals of religious observance - of which Marvell here complains - was thought by Puritans to have penetrated the Anglican Church under Laud, in the form of Arminianism. Naturally Marvell shared this view, and he frequently attacks Arminianism - as a backsliding to 'Popery' - in his prose tracts. In RT, for example, he rebukes his high-church opponent for his pro-Arminian views, and their betrayal of Reformation values: such men, Marvell opines, would return England to the bondage of Popery and the persecutions of a Bloody Mary (305-6).

Anti-Arminianism and anticatholicism were indeed aspects of the same prejudice, against 'Antichristian Popery'. Therefore it is unsurprising that they should have been associated in this manner for Marvell also. The lengthiest exposition of his anticatholicism is his An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government (1677), which, as I shall show in the next chapter, bases its anti-Popery thesis upon eschatology. It was, indeed, recognised by contemporaries that Marvell was one of the 'true religion's' most fervent defenders: even an adversary was forced to concede that 'he's a shrewd man against Popery'.<sup>20</sup> His anti-catholic attitudes are reflected also in his letters;<sup>21</sup> and, as we shall see, in his poems as well. At his death it was even rumoured that he had been poisoned by Jesuits, revenging themselves upon their enemy.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, Marvell's repeated attacks upon Popery in his controversial prose works were seconded by an equally consistent attack upon the domestic clergy: and upon the episcopacy in particular, as agents of Antichrist within the Anglican Church itself. Arminian ritualism was, according to Marvell, only one of their modes of subversion within Church and State. For Antichristianism was at once an ecclesiastical and a secular threat, aiming not only at a corrupted Church and doctrine, but also at 'Arbitrary' or tyrannous government: Antichristianism was a civil as well as a spiritual 'bondage'.

This double-headed Antichrist is that reflected in the very title of The Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government. In that work, as in his other prose tracts, Marvell develops the argument that Popish ministers and bishops constantly attempt to subvert the English Elect Nation from within.<sup>23</sup> In pursuing this argument, Marvell is manifesting his own adherence to Puritan religio-political views, of the type that were based upon eschatology and forged in the troublous 1640s.



In that period it was argued that, since Parliament was the guardian of her true religion, only an absolutist government could return England to Popery. Thus absolutism was a secular form of Antichrist, which promoted its spiritual partner, Popery. As a result, it was considered that Protestantism and constitutionalism were allied in the eschatological struggle.<sup>24</sup>

Especially in his opposition to episcopacy, Marvell is continuing the Puritan brief of the 1640s, which involved the attack upon all bishops as 'agents of Antichrist'. And he himself frequently adduced the Laudian episcopacy of the Civil War period as an example of Antichristianism in its most dangerous form, both politically and in the Church; subscribing to the view~~/~~so common during the Civil War itself - that the bishops had been the source of Charles I's ruin (RT, 134). These views evince Marvell's character as an adherent of Puritan chiliast conceptions of history, the Church and the State.

Mr. Smirke, or The Divine in Mode (1676) and the Defence of Howe (1678) show how Marvell's anticlerical stance is developed upon Puritan historical premises. His arguments begin with basic principles of 'true religion'. God, he avers, has never indicated that any 'grace is given in committing the ecclesiastical office';<sup>25</sup> the Saint is always his own true minister, and those appointed by the Church have no necessary mediatory function (Smirke, 50; General Councils, 124). Moreover, because of the clerical assumption of their own special spiritual capacities, they have corrupted Christian doctrine by a too curious speculation upon those matters 'unrevealed' by God Himself; thereby departing from scriptural authority (Howe, 167-8). This clerical speculation has been the source of dissension and of confusion in religion: of

those peevish questions which have overgrown Christianity; wherewith men's minds are [not] only rent and intangled, but from whence they can no more hope for any wholsom nourishment, than to "gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles" [Matt. vii.16]....For, in general, many Divines, out of a vain affectation of learning, have been tempted into enquiries too curious, after those things which the wisdom of God hath left impervious to humane understanding further than they are revealed [by Scripture]. And hence, instead of those allowed and obvious truths of faith, repentance, and the new creature....there have sprung up endless disputes concerning the unsearchable things of God. (Howe, 168)

Thus clerics have not only no vital mediatory function, but they also have 'intangled' men's spirits by a gratuitous doctrinal squabbling. Marvell's implication, that the clergy are not merely unnecessary but positively harmful, is in fact the bedrock of his anticlerical position in all his tracts.

Moreover, the passage from Matthew which he quotes here provides, in the source text, a blistering comment upon the clergy.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?....Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them. (Matthew vii. 15-20)

Marvell's submerged use of this passage is designed to strike a chord in chiliasts. It characterizes, in his use, the Anglican clergy as 'false prophets', wolves in sheep's clothing. Now, that denotation of the clergy as 'false prophets' is a byword of Reformation eschatology. Of these, according to Matthew xxiv - a central eschatological text - the Latter Days would produce large numbers, who would deceive men by their heresies: as Marvell puts it, 'rent and intangle men's minds'. They were understood as the agents of Antichrist in this respect; and the Geneva Bible insists in its glosses that the clerical 'false prophets' are his foremost representatives. Thus Matthew, the Latter-Day warnings of false prophets in the Epistles of Peter, and Revelation itself were all adduced to show that chiliasm must be



anticlerical; a moralitas which the Geneva Bible implemented for the reformers of this time.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in eschatological thought it was axiomatic that such agents of Antichrist were always 'devourers', both in a spiritual sense, and in imagistic terms. (Thus the Beasts of Revelation and Daniel are described as devourers, with ravening teeth.)<sup>27</sup> To describe them as 'wolves', as Marvell does by courtesy of Matthew, was an orthodox chiliastic term: used similarly by Milton in the anticlerical section of his Lycidas.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, elsewhere Marvell describes clerical 'devouring' and 'wolfishness'.<sup>29</sup>

So, here, Marvell is displaying the reflexes of eschatological thought and its salient anticlericalism. This is one of many such examples in his prose, and is distinguished only by its uncharacteristic politeness towards the Anglican clergy: Marvell could be quite abusive on this topic.

Doctrinally, the importance of this example is - apart from its anticlerical bent - its insistence upon scripturalism, and the fact that many religious truths remain 'unrevealed'. It was understood that God's revelation in the scriptures was sufficient for salvation: beyond that sufficiency, his superadded revelations of divine 'Truth' would arrive at appropriate historical moments. In addition, He would enlighten men at various times by 'Signs'. This doctrine of 'progressive revelation' was of cardinal importance to chiliasts, since it showed that history itself was an enlightening process.<sup>30</sup>

It is against this process that divines offend, by presuming to understand 'things unrevealed': their sin is presumption.<sup>31</sup> This implication of Marvell's passage is even clearer in a comparable passage from Smirke: where Marvell denies the efficacy of Popish doctrinal elaboration, by asserting precisely these principles. 'The intention of this [revealed scriptural] faith....is sufficient for salvation, without the chicanery and conveyancing of humane extentions' (50).

By this means Marvell disposes of clerical claims to any function whatsoever, and places guidance in the hands of God Himself, in the form of His 'gradual revelation' to men. He can explicate His will by 'New Revelation' as well as by successive 'Revelation(s)' to men (57); and He may choose sometimes to give a 'single Revelation' for a specific purpose (60). Thus for Marvell, as for other chiliasts, the denigration of clerical guidance on the one hand, involved on the other the assertion of God's own guidance of believers in a successive, historical manner.

Such a description of God's historically unfolding purposes was fundamental to seventeenth-century chiliasm: it was understood to be the means whereby the Elect were guided to effect His will, and thereby to fulfil His Latter-Day designs. Here Marvell demonstrates that for him, as for other chiliasts, eschatology and anticlericalism go hand in hand.

This was particularly true because eschatology guaranteed that full spiritual knowledge which Marvell and other chiliasts denied to the clergy. According to the doctrine of 'progressive revelation', the full divine 'Truth' would be completely manifested at the End of time: the moment which God had ordained for the fulfilment of His 'Revelation'.<sup>32</sup> The anticlerical upshot of this belief is demonstrated by Marvell, when he states that episcopally-determined doctrines are invalid because only scriptural revelation will 'save' men, 'untill the last and full manifestation' granted at the Last Day (Smirke, 49-50). In this manner his belief in 'gradual revelation' allows the dismissal of episcopal pretensions (50).

In addition, the eschatology of 'progressive revelation' is the linchpin of Marvell's famous championship of 'Toleration' for dissenters. Smirke, General Councils and The Rehearsal Transpros'd were all written in order to press for toleration, at a time when dissenters laboured



under great disabilities because of their exclusion from the state Church. Many years before, Marvell's friend Milton had advocated the same measure in Areopagitica (1644), on the same question. He had justified toleration by asserting that, since God's revelation was gradual, no man could impose beliefs upon another: for only at the Last Day would theological truth be certainly 'revealed', and thence unarguable.<sup>33</sup> Till then all true believers should be free from imposition and persecution upon 'unrevealed' topics. Exactly this argument, from 'progressive revelation', is used by Marvell in his General Councils: asserting that full knowledge of doctrine 'can never happen but under a fifth monarch, and that monarch too, to return from Heaven' (127-8). Till then, he insists, toleration is an absolute necessity in any Christian Church (125-6). Thus Marvell's most famous cause is embedded in current eschatological doctrine.

Marvell's prononence of toleration, and his anticlerical assertions, are aspects of an eschatological preoccupation with 'reform'. As the term 'The Reformation' implies, the return by Protestantism to 'true religion' was a 'reform' of worship and of the Church as an institution. From Elizabethan times to the Restoration Period 'reformation' remained the central tenet of eschatology. It was the watchword of Puritan zeal, which saw constant reformation as the only weapon against a "backsliding" into Antichristianism. Marvell and Milton were both 'reformers' in this sense; which is why their views can so often be compared, once Marvell's own chiliasm is recognised.

In particular, Marvell's arguments on the topic of toleration range widely in their treatment of eschatological principles. These principles are fully evidenced in Smirke, and its appended Essay on General Councils.

Marvell's purpose in Smirke was to defend a bishop who had written in support of toleration for dissenters, arguing that the menace from Popery should be the true object of the Church's concern. This was Bishop Croft, whose The Naked Truth revealed its Protestant propriety in its subtitle: 'The True State of the Primitive Church'. Beyond this reformist concern with 'primitive' or 'true religion', it is necessary to understand the respective stances of the antagonists.

Marvell, himself a reformer, is supporting Croft's position because of his own concern for toleration. But he also has a peculiar stake in the Nonconformists' cause, which seconds his concern for toleration in general. For the Nonconformists were, like him, Puritans: they were the heirs to the Puritans of the 1640s, and as such they were "his own kind".

After the Restoration a severe reestablishment of the Anglican Church had imposed severe disabilities upon them: a form of revenge for the 1640s, which high-church Anglicans justified by the claim that the Nonconformists had proved themselves politically subversive in the Civil War.<sup>34</sup> Of course, they had: but that Civil War was being used to justify a current oppression which, as Marvell pointed out in his tracts, was based upon a fallacious use of civil powers for ecclesiastical reasons.<sup>35</sup> At this period Nonconformists were treated as if they represented a danger of no less magnitude than Popery. For Marvell, this constituted the persecution of the very element which best represented 'true religion' by a corrupt and Antichristian Anglican church. In a sense, in defending the Nonconformists he was also asserting his own similar values; and attacking the current form of Anglicanism as a deviation from the true English Church. The great conservatism of the post-Restoration Church had favoured precisely that high-church, 'Arminian' element which was so antipathetic to a Puritan of Marvell's cast. Toleration was a positive assertion



in his tracts, but it also provided a spearhead for a reformer's attack on the 'Popish' Anglicanism of his time.

On this occasion, his adversary - whom he addresses as 'Mr. Smirke' after a ridiculous character in a recent play - was Francis Turner: at this time Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Chaplain to the Roman Catholic Duke of York, who (as James II) would later advance him.<sup>36</sup> Turner, therefore, was a high Anglican with a vested interest in episcopacy and what Marvell would have seen as 'Popish' leanings. Indeed, throughout the tract Marvell implies that Turner is defending a 'Papist' position: and that in the latter's eyes there is no real distinction between Protestantism and Popery (86-7). It is Marvell's purpose in this tract to prove that Turner is really one of those clerics who pervert the 'true religion', and that in attacking Croft such clerics are really assaulting the hard-won purity of Protestantism.

Before moving to Marvell's detailed arguments, it is as well to explain why Marvell's identification of 'Popery' in Turner was so effective in worsting his opponent. Marvell was certainly viewed as a "radical" (as he is now) for such attacks on episcopacy as Smirke displays: but he was not a radical in the true sense of the word, and this fact was important to his success. Marvell's "radical" writings actually spring from his orthodoxy - his unchanging adherence to those religious-political beliefs which eschatology involved in the 1640s, and had been indeed universally held at that time. By the 1670s, after the Restoration of Charles II and the Anglican re-establishment, eschatology had been recognised as a fundamentally disruptive phenomenon: and the new establishments were determined to suppress it, thereby - they hoped - preventing any recurrence of Revolution. Reforming chiliastic views were deemed 'fanatick'; the Nonconformists were repressed, as 'fanaticks'; and the Laudian element in the Anglican Church re-surfaced with a vengeance. On the other hand, as a nation, the English were still preoccupied with

eschatology, and virulently anti-catholic. Hysterical fears of Popish conspiracy and subversion abounded, as the "Popish Plot" of 1678 memorably proved.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in historical as well as popular terms, eschatology was orthodox and traditional: and the new government and Church were the "radicals", in their departure from that tradition. So Marvell was defending what was, to many readers, an unexceptionable position: and to seek and locate 'Popery' in his tracts was to evoke a strong response from those readers. In 1678 his Growth of Popery, for instance, was a factor in the national reaction to the Popish Plot.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in opposing Turner on reforming principles, Marvell was at once affirming his own views and speaking for quite traditional values. This point is no less important for our investigation of Marvell's political views in the Civil War itself, as we shall see. To see Marvell as a radical is, then, to misrepresent him in a fundamental way.

Thus Croft, despite his bishopric, receives Marvell's approbation (10): since he champions the true form of Anglicanism, against its current corruption (19). As such a champion, he is to be excepted from the general run of the clergy - fools and villains (19, 7). Such animadversions form part of Marvell's general thesis in this tract, which locates in the clergy the great political and religious troubles of mankind.<sup>39</sup>

First, Marvell (like Croft)<sup>40</sup> affirms that the true 'Church' is the congregation of the faithful, as distinct from any institution. Upon this distinction rested a central principle of Reformation eschatology, that it was the "saving remnant" of true believers which preserved the true religion while the Roman Catholic Church moved into Antichristianism; and which, at the Reformation, re-affirmed the true religion in the form of Protestantism. Thus, as Marvell put it,

had not the little invisible Catholick Church, and the people that always search'd and believ'd the Scriptures, made a stand by their testimonies and sufferings, the Creeds had destroy'd the faith, and the Church had ruined the Religion. (130-31; cf. 22-3)



This distinction between the 'invisible Church' and the episcopal institution allows Marvell - as it allowed chiliasts in general - to aver that the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church first, did not affect the validity of true belief; and secondly, that this corruption had a clerical source.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, according to Marvell, the influential section of the clergy has always been that concerned with 'false and secular interest' - an interest, that is, in power itself (20). Over the ages they have succeeded admirably in obtaining a good deal of this desirable commodity, and most of their demands upon the civil authorities are motivated by a desire to maintain and extend that power (43). Their current demands for laws against dissenters are an example of this perennial power-seeking on their part (20-21). As such, they imitate a similar situation prevailing under the Laudian establishment (66); and in both cases, unwarrantable doctrinal elaboration has provided their excuse for impositions upon the laity (60). By these impositions, the clergy confirm their own power; and, Marvell insists, they require such penal weapons precisely because they are spiritually bankrupt; had they any vestiges of true spiritual concern, they would not require civil powers to protect their Church. The fault is not in that Church itself, but rather in the men who claim to represent it (27, 18).

Against this vision of clerical hubris, Marvell asserts the proper objects of the Church. Any aggression that claims a sacred sanction should be directed, not against fellow Protestants, but rather against the Popish enemies of true religion. For Marvell, as for chiliasts in general, zeal should be channelled into 'an Holy War abroad, to propagate the Protestant religion'; and the clergy should 'take the front of the battel' (81). The militant assertion of the true religion is the appropriate role of the Anglican Church in the Latter Days, as we saw; a view to which Marvell subscribes.

However, the current object of the Anglican clergy is not to oppose Antichrist abroad, but rather to divide the Elect Nation at home. In pursuit of their own aggrandizement, they follow a policy of "divide and rule": preferring to

lurk....in a fat benefice here, and to domineer above their spiritual vassals, and raise a kind of civil war at home. (81; my italics)

In this accusation, that the clergy foment 'civil war', Marvell is turning the tables upon his opponents. The high-church arguments of the latter suggested that dissenters represented a danger of recurrent Civil War, on the model of the 1640s. Here Marvell replies that the subverters of domestic peace are really the bishops, pursuing their own interests. And by his recollection of 'civil war' here he implies that contemporary episcopacy is repeating the great mistake of the Laudians, who had provoked Civil War thirty years before. This passage demonstrates that Marvell could turn the cherished parallel of Civil War against its clerical proponents. Also, incidentally, it manifests that he shared the general notion - prevalent in the 1640s and still held by some in the 1670s - that the Laudian episcopacy had been the ruin of Charles I: a view that he confirms elsewhere. Certainly Marvell saw fit to use this anticlerical explanation of the English Civil War again and again in his tracts.<sup>42</sup>

The use of implication in this passage is typical of Marvell's anti-episcopal writings in general. Whenever he treads on dangerous ground, or when he might be laying himself open to the (true) description of himself as a 'fanatic' - then Marvell resorts to implication.<sup>43</sup> Even his fairly incisive statements carry further implications. An example of this strategy of simultaneous attack and self-protection occurs when he asserts that

Being conscious of their own unworthiness, and hating to be reformed, it appears that [the bishops] would establish the Christian religion by a Mahometan way, and gather so much force that it might be in their power,



and we lie at their mercy, to change that religion into Heathenisme, Judaisme, Turcisme, any thing....Have they not already, ipso facto, renounced their Christianity [by their persecutions], so contrary to the Gospel? (80-81)

This passage, while obviously condemnatory of eipscopacy, also carries the heaviest charge that could be levelled against them: that they are Antichristian, and that they convert the 'true religion' into that of Antichrist. For Mohammedanism and 'Turcisme' were at this period understood as forms of Antichristian belief:<sup>44</sup> and into these, according to Marvell, the bishops transform the true 'Christian religion'. Moreover, the bishops have seen fit to 'renounce their Christianity': a Marvellian periphrasis for the charge that they are Anti-Christian. Finally, in 'hating to be reformed', the bishops declare themselves the heirs to that Church similarly recalcitrant to 'reformation' - Popery. By these means Marvell has managed to identify the bishops as agents of Antichrist, without expressing himself in such a way that they could brand him a subversive 'fanatick'.

Having thus located the Antichristian menace to the English religion, Marvell again uses a historical example to underline the very real possibility that England may again be submitted to Antichristian rule. Earlier, he had recalled the Civil War in order to suggest the culprits; here he recalls the reign of Mary Tudor, in which the newly-reformed England was officially returned to Popery. His point is that the true religion cannot continue to flourish without constant 'reformation' and vigilance: the Marian example proves the necessity for its defence.

when the Protestants left the Roman Church, when we in England are neither Papists, Lutherans, nor Calvinists, and when in Queen Marie's time we returned to the Roman Church, what and where then was the [universal] Catholic Church that was indefectible...? [Such are the dangers of error that even] we in England, that are another world, that are under an imperial crown, that are "none of them" ....but have a distinct Catholick faith within our four seas, did in the reign [of Mary Tudor]....again make ourselves "one of them". (84-5)

Here Marvell at once supplies a typical definition of England as the home of true religion, and highlights her danger. This is England as the Elect Nation, in her religion 'distinct' from all others; living under the 'imperial crown' of the Protestant Christian Emperor. Even she, he says, was seduced back into Antichristianism at least once: and that is a measure of the ever-present threat of her corruption. Ergo, the bishops cannot claim to be her defenders, given that they have already failed in that office under Mary Tudor.<sup>45</sup> (That queen's reign was, indeed, the great bogey of English eschatology at this time.)

Further, the corruption, contumely, and Arminianism of the current episcopal establishment tempts the judgement of God: the 'hypocrisie' of the Anglican clergy merely serves 'to delay His judgements' (27). This statement is minatory, implying that these Arminians will suffer the same 'judgement of God' that the Puritans had wreaked upon their predecessors: war and dis-establishment.

Throughout the tract, indeed, Marvell shows in such statements the chiliast's attention to the lessons of history for the true religion: and that these lessons, inevitably, menace the episcopal agents of Antichrist. Smirke displays both Marvell's anticlericalism, and the eschatology which inspired it.

In the appended General Councils, Marvell amplifies his anticlerical thesis by outlining the history of episcopal Antichristianism from the very beginnings of the Church. In this outline the classic tenets of reformation eschatology are followed with scrupulous care.

Once again history itself is Marvell's source for argument: he himself states that 'History' is the proof of his position (105). Therefore he returns to the very institution of the Christian religion, under Constantine: in order to show that from the start episcopacy was both corrupt, and subversive to the Church (101-105. 130-31). In this account Marvell is pursuing a history of clerical infamy analogous



to that of the Geneva Bible glosses, which suggested precisely that clerics achieved the corruption of the Church throughout her pre-Reformation history. Indeed, the historia in the Geneva Bible's commentary on Revelation may well have suggested this essay to Marvell.<sup>46</sup>

In that Bible, as in eschatological commentary generally, it was a cardinal principle that the growth of Antichrist within the Roman Church was by divine permission; and that it contributed to the grand Design of history and its ultimately fortunate issue - the triumph of the Saints (Rev. xvii. 17). Therefore, in surveying the early history of the Roman Church, Marvell finds that the Antichristian persecutions instigated by episcopacy were in fact the reflexes of God's 'wise providence':

The divine Nemesis executed justice upon them, by one another's hand....And whoever shall seriously consider all along the succession of the emperors [in the early Church] .... [will take] satisfaction....in this worthy speculation of the great order and admirable conduct of [God's] wise providence, through the whole contexture of these exterior, seeming accidents, relating to the ecclesiastics of Christianity. (139)

This diagnosis of 'providence' managing the vicissitudes of the Church is characteristic of eschatological thought. It has for Marvell, as for chiliasts generally, an anticlerical moralitas: that God is always one jump ahead of the episcopal instruments of Antichrist (139). Moreover, the Christian Roman Emperors themselves - who at times fell under this Antichristian influence in the Church (93-4) - provide for him further examples of the way in which God makes use of human instruments to implement His will in history: whether or not they intend to serve His purposes (149). This notion, too, was characteristic of current eschatological thought;<sup>47</sup> and in Marvell's essay it is typically linked to the manner in which God executes His 'judgements' in history. Those who are 'struck with God's hand' are taught to subserve the providential plan (149). Such principles

of providential history underlie Marvell's whole analysis of the early Church in this essay.

In addition, Marvell observes the natural 'Signs' that accompany God's 'judgements' in those times: observing that such natural disasters as the earthquake that occurred in the reign of Valens, evince God's wrath upon the persecutors of true believers. He draws a parallel between that divine poena and the current state of episcopacy in England:

All which [evidences of God's judgements] put together, could not but make me reflect upon the late earthquakes, great by how much more unusual, here in England, thorow so many counties since Christmas, at the same time when the Clergy....were so busy in their cabals, to promote this [current]....persecution, which is now on foot against the Dissenters: at so unseasonable a time, and upon no occasion.... (148)

This contemporary recurrence of God's judgements upon clerical intolerance leads Marvell to reflect that such natural phenomena or 'Signs' provide evidence of 'the conjunctures of God's admirable providence' (148). Apart from this statement of his belief in providential 'Signs' within history, these animadversions are intended to indicate that the contemporary Anglican bishops are repeating the Antichristian sins of their Papist predecessors. In their persecution of Dissenters they reveal their antipathy to the true faithful.

This parallel between Papist Antichristianism and the current Anglican establishment is the essential aim of Marvell's essay. In documenting the bishops' role in the rise of Antichristianism within the early Church, Marvell is constantly drawing lessons for the contemporary Church: and manifesting that it, too, is undergoing episcopal subversion. He is thus applying the traditional eschatological analysis of theocratic history to his own times; and locating the contemporary form of Antichrist in England.



The linchpin of this analysis is Marvell's thesis that the early bishops, with characteristic ambition, chose to confuse the proper functions of Church and State: thereby arrogating to themselves unwarrantable powers. Thus 'the first' episcopal crime was 'the ambition of the bishops', seconded by their 'calumny, dissimulation, cruelty, bribery....pride, opiniastory, contention' (105): and by such arts they managed to construct various unscriptural doctrines, by the imposition of which they extended their powers.

under that pretence [of new creeds], the dextrous bishops step by step hooked within their verge, all the business and power that could be catch'd in those [times of persecution]....By this means they stalked on first to a spiritual kind of dominion, and from that incroached upon and into the civil jurisdiction. (143)<sup>48</sup>

The bishops' invasion of secular power was contrived by their manipulation of the Emperors, who became their instruments (144ff.). Thus prince and people were estranged, since the bishops' excuse for their persecutions was that religious subversion endangered the state itself (151-2). Hence they achieved their ends

by making true piety difficult, by innovating laws to revenge themselves upon it, and by turning makebates between prince and people, instilling dangers of which themselves were the authors. (153-4)

Marvell's implication, for the contemporary clergy, is that the latter are pursuing the same game: in this case, by insisting that the Dissenters represent a secular as well as an ecclesiastical threat. They are the current practitioners of Antichristian persecution; and, like their predecessors, they are the true fomentors of domestic strife. Marvell makes that parallel explicit towards the end of the tract; and implies, there, that the Civil War is a more recent example of this clerical perfidy (154-7).

Closing his argument, he concludes that Charles II is yet another of those 'Magistrates' seduced by their episcopacy into the ways of

Antichristian persecution (155). Thus Marvell's historical analysis, like many such eschatological histories, is intended to reform current religious evils and thereby to preserve the course of true religion. Crowning his reformer's role with prophecy, Marvell concludes that 'The Naked Truth of History' - the judgements of God - 'will meet with [the bishops], or in the next age overtake them': enacting His usual vengeance upon His Antichristian enemies (156-7). Only their 'reformation' will prevent such a judgement (157).

As a reformer, Marvell's purpose is to prevent a recrudescence of 'all the calamities of the Christian world in those ages, which may be derived from' the bishops (146). They had seduced the lieutenant of God on earth, Constantine: who, for Marvell as for Reformation historians generally, represents the very first 'Christian Emperor' - on whom the Protestant Christian Emperor was modelled by Foxe.

[He was the] glorious and Christian....Constantine the Great, who....by a chain of God's extraordinary Providences seemed to have been let down from heaven to be the emperour of the whole world, and as I may say, the universal Apostle of Christianity. (103)

This ideal of Christian government was eroded by the bishops, according to Marvell: showing that the true Christian state fell together with the true Christian religion (101). For him, as for his fellow chiliasts, state and church together suffered corruption under the Antichristian hegemony.

Thus he states the characteristic reformer's view, that Antichristianism imposes a 'bondage' upon men: that the episcopal tools of Antichrist will never be satisfied 'till they may again have debased the reason and spirit of the Nation, to make them fit for ignorance and bondage' (81). That very complaint had been made, inspired by the same principles, by John Milton in 1649: who complained that the aims of



the prelates....both first and last, hath been the doctrine and perpetual infusion of servility and wretchedness to all their hearers.<sup>49</sup>

For both of these reformers, Antichrist had equally a religious and a secular face: and the salient enemies of Christian religion and government were, in England at least, the bishops.

Thus it is no accident that, in Smirke, Marvell should have recalled the religio-political crux of the Civil War: that the bishops represented a national sin. Their acts under the Restoration are here described in exactly the manner prevalent in 1640s chiliasm: that the episcopal aim is

to make the good people of England walk in peril of their souls, to multiply sin and abomination thorow the Land, and by ingaging men's minds under spiritual bondage, to lead them canonically into temporal slavery. (21)

Here Marvell asserts that now, as then, episcopacy subverts the character of the Elect Nation, both spiritually and politically.

This was the climax of the bishops' historical role, which had always been 'to make all Reformation, not only ridiculous but impossible' (RT, 238). In Smirke and General Councils Marvell explains the eschatological background to that idea. Like his contemporaries, he was anticlerical in the service of eschatological principles. The demands recorded in his tracts of the 1670s are those of mainstream chiliasm three decades earlier; showing that he was a Puritan reformer, of the type refined in the turbulences of that time.

### 3. Providence and Politics

Having discussed the general features of Marvell's eschatological preoccupation, I wish to turn, here, to a more detailed consideration of Marvell's political views: which, as is usual in reformers of his stamp, reflect the religio-political compound characteristic of eschatology at this time.

One point requires elucidation before I may move to an account of Marvell's politics; and it is - not surprisingly in view of the religio-political compound - a religious point. No-one has yet given a satisfactory account of Marvell's religious "classification";<sup>50</sup> mainly because they have failed to recognise the eschatology that underpins his views. In fact, Marvell's religious views were forged in that critical period *before 1640*: and the symptoms of that fact have been traced in the foregoing section. As I have indicated, Marvell's thought was not radical; and he pursued the course of mainstream Puritanism, which rejected high Anglicanism on the one hand and radical sectarianism on the other. In the period when Marvell's views were determined - and in the 1640s especially - the "middle way" in Puritanism was that of the Independents. They were distinct both from the Presbyterians, who represented (relatively speaking) the Puritan right wing; and from the Puritan parties of the Left,<sup>51</sup> for which Marvell expressed distaste. He was also antagonistic, of course, to the Presbyterian claims for establishment and intolerance that arose during the 1650s; for, as in the case of Milton too, they offended against the reforming principles of toleration and inclusiveness that distinguish Marvell's thought. The Independents, however, were dedicated to those very principles: supporting toleration and also the retention of an inclusive, loosely-established state church.<sup>52</sup> Equally, all Marvell's other major tenets were elements of the Independents' platform, which included the eradication of episcopal power and the maintenance of constitutional monarchy.<sup>53</sup> (As the next section will show, Marvell was himself a constitutional monarchist.)

Moreover, Marvell's associations reveal Independent tendencies. His friend, John Owen<sup>54</sup> - whom he defended in The Rehearsal Transpros'd - was a leading Independent;<sup>55</sup> and was close to the heart of Cromwell, another Independent, who became Marvell's hero in the 1650s.<sup>56</sup> Milton,



another friend and co-Cromwellian, was an Independent.<sup>57</sup> And, of course, Independents were - no less than other Puritans - fervent chiliasts. Thus both Marvell's beliefs and his personal associations would tend to indicate that he was an Independent. And Independency, like other religious groups, involved political tenets as well.

Marvell's Independency, then, bears upon the subject of this section: which is to begin my account of his political views. Before pursuing this discussion any further, it is pertinent to mention the current "state of knowledge" about Marvell's political convictions in the crucial period of the Civil War. In purely partisan terms, we know very little, and that little is subject to much controversial speculation.<sup>58</sup> The questions posed about Marvell's allegiances begin with 1648, the year in which the Civil War is first explicitly mentioned in his poetry. It is thought probable that by 1648 or 1649 Marvell was moving in London literary circles,<sup>59</sup> that would have been largely Royalist in sympathy. In 1648 he wrote To His Noble Friend Mr Richard Lovelace, which seems to express a Royalist viewpoint; and in the same year (if it is his poem, and I think - along with others - that it is<sup>60</sup>) An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers, another Royalist poem. In 1650 Tom May's Death was written, criticizing this Parliamentary poet.<sup>61</sup> Thus between 1648 and 1650 Marvell appears to have been Royalist.

However, earlier in 1650 he had written An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland, a poem which has been variously described by critics as Royalist, Parliamentary, or even neither. For the moment, then, it seems wisest to leave this poem severely alone. Soon after it was written Marvell became tutor to the daughter of Lord Fairfax, former Commander of the Parliament's armies: Marvell is supposed to have held this post from late 1650 or early 1651 until

some date in 1652. This so-called "Parliamentarian" phase in his life continues with his appointment as tutor to Cromwell's ward, William Dutton, in 1653; and in 1654, with his poem The First Anniversary of the Government under his Highness the Lord Protector, which that government was pleased to issue in 1655 as a useful piece of propaganda.<sup>62</sup> Other poems written for, and in support of, Cromwell followed. In 1657 Marvell was appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State. Yet, after the Restoration in 1660 he escaped persecution and retained a seat as M.P. for Hull, and travelled on at least one diplomatic mission (to Russia).

Much has been made of this alteration in Marvell's allegiance, from 'Royalist' to 'Parliamentarian'. In some cases critics have gone so far as to suggest that he was never a Royalist at all; or, if they accept his Royalist phase, they sometimes suggest that his enthusiasm for Cromwell was somewhat limited by vestiges of Royalism; or, that his attitude to Cromwell was ironic to the last. These are strongly defined, one might say even simplistic, attitudes to Marvell's allegiance. And those critics who believe Marvell to have been a lukewarm Parliamentarian often shy away from suggesting that he was merely a time-server, who trimmed to the prevailing political wind. Yet on the evidence we have, the image of Marvell as Trimmer may in fact be the readiest explanation of his actions in politics: whether it is the true explanation is another matter.

Information about Marvell's politics before the Restoration is distinguished by its paucity; it seems to me fair, in the light of this dearth of information, to give Marvell the benefit of the doubt rather than to reduce him to Trimming. My purpose, then, is to explicate the principles which guided Marvell's political views.



It is supported by recent historical studies of the Seventeenth Century, whose main issue has been to warn us against speaking too glibly about Puritans, Parliamentarians and Royalists, as if they were strongly defined groups with immutable characteristics. The reality of these 'groups' was quite otherwise. Many of the initial Parliamentarian generals and spokesmen were very conservative in outlook, seeing themselves as defenders of the "Elizabethan" status quo; they came from the solid ranks of the gentry and in many cases were constitutional monarchists. One of these, Manchester, was accused of failing to exploit military advantages because of his respect for the King; and on one occasion he proved reluctant to engage the Royalist army in battle, because the King was commanding it in person. Manchester, defending himself, stated that if Parliament lost the war they would be ruined to a man, whereas whether Charles won or lost, the King would always be the King.<sup>63</sup> Respect for the latter's office was such that, when the King was condemned, it was a difficult task to find the required number of signatories to the death-warrant. Cromwell himself, who by 1649 was convinced of the necessity for the regicide, had done his utmost to treat with the King when the latter was in the custody of the Army.<sup>64</sup> It is safe to say that at the outset of the war hardly anyone could have imagined that events would lead to a course as drastic as regicide. Indeed,

There is the truth that Puritans were as devoted to monarchy as their Anglican opponents were, although Milton for propaganda purposes joined his Anglican opponents in the pursuit of the contrary fiction.

In the event, regicide was reluctantly allowed to happen, rather than actively proposed, by the majority of Parliamentarians.<sup>65</sup>

Difficulties of loyalty existed also upon the Royalist side. Many of the Royalist gentry sympathized with Parliament on several points, but their sympathies were overruled by their loyalty to the King.

Moreover, few of them had any brief for the Anglican bishops who had bedevilled the question of Charles' authority.<sup>66</sup>

As to political aims, there were divisions on the Parliament's side that surfaced most obviously after the First Civil War, when common antipathy to the bishops had been largely satisfied. Thus it would be mistaken

to see English Puritanism in the early part of the Seventeenth Century as a closed spiritual brotherhood, preparing itself for the Revolution and the regicide.

As so often in real life (although not in many textbooks), most of the political events occurring during and after the Civil War arose out of circumstance rather than out of calculation. Hardly anyone had a cut-and-dried view of the issues involved, or indeed of the great men on either side. Response to Cromwell in particular was ambivalent on both sides: a fact which should not be obscured by party propaganda.<sup>67</sup>

If, then, Marvell's response to Cromwell were ambivalent, this would not be surprising in view of the complexities of allegiance at this period; neither is it surprising that the question of what Marvell's political views consisted in, is a vexed one. It should be recalled that many poets other than Marvell changed their allegiance, sometimes more than once: Dryden, Waller, and Tom May amongst them. It is difficult to say whether conviction or mere policy was the motivation for such shifts. One can say, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that men who lived through the Civil War found its events more confusing even than historians do when studying them. In discussing Marvell's politics it is necessary to avoid the more glaring faults evident in simplistic assignments of loyalty.

With this complex background in mind, then, I would like to discuss Marvell's political views: in relation especially to The Rehearsal Transpros'd and The First Anniversary of the Government.



These works, dating respectively from 1672/3 and 1654, manifest the development of Marvell's political thought. They also throw light upon one another: revealing the constancy of Marvell's principles. Those principles were consequent upon a belief in providential history.

The RT displays to the full Marvell's consistent anticlericalism. Indeed, the argument here for toleration and against episcopacy is essentially the same as that propounded in the later General Councils.<sup>68</sup> The two parts of the RT were written to take issue with a divine of high-Church persuasions, Samuel Parker: Arminian, ambitious, an opponent of toleration, and a supporter of what Marvell regarded as 'Arbitrary Government'. In every way he was supremely fitted for Marvell's odium, and to that antipathy the RT is a witty monument. Parker is, says Marvell, 'a mad Priest, which of all the sorts is the most incurable' (29); and this sort of anticlerical satire distinguishes the tract throughout, barbing its arguments against episcopacy (44, 237-8, etc.).

In this tract, also, Marvell once more recalls the episcopal role in the provocation of Civil War. This is the most explicit of his remarks on this topic, and peculiarly revealing of his attitudes to that conflict. Meditating upon the way in which episcopacy has always bedevilled temporal government, Marvell alludes to the political situation of Charles I: as a lesson for the current monarch, whom such Arminians as Parker would send along the same road. According to Marvell's analysis, Charles I - 'the best Prince that ever wielded the English Scepter' - was brought down by self-seeking churchmen:

For his late Majesty being a Prince truly Pious and Religious, was thereby the more inclined to esteem and favour the clergy. And thence, though himself of a most exquisite understanding, yet thought he could not trust it better than in their keeping....But he that will do the Clergyes drudgery, must look for his reward in another World. For they having gained this Ascendent upon him, resolv'd whatever became on't to make their best of him; and having made the whole business of State their Arminian jangles....did for recompence assign him that imaginary absolute Government, upon which Rock we all ruined. (134)

Let us first clear any dross from the substance here. Marvell's praise of Charles I in this passage may be partly motivated by policy: praising the father, to flatter the son. On the other hand, even during the 1640s few had disputed that Charles I was 'Religious': simply, some thought him pious in the wrong - Popish - manner. And Marvell is not mealy-mouthed here. The irony of 'he that will do the Clergyes drudgery, must look for his reward in another World' is incisive enough: it does not spare Charles I, and it challenges Charles II to avoid making his father's disastrous mistake.

In diagnosing Charles I's ruin in this manner, Marvell was by no means unusual. Even in the 1640s, on both sides, it had been common to attribute that King's fall to the episcopal influence upon him.<sup>69</sup> In the RT, it is supported by Marvell's characteristic assertions of clerical perfidy, the threat to reformation, and the bishops' perennial provocation of faction and war. Because of their Papist tendencies, and their urging of absolutism in the monarch, the Civil War had ravaged the nation: the Good Old Cause had some reason in it, because of their activities, but it need never have occurred had the bishops restrained themselves (242). By recalling the corruptions of the English Church at the hands of the clergy - ever since the Reformation itself - Marvell places the Civil War in the perspective of eschatology (130-34, 240); asserting that only true and continuous reformation averts such national tumults. Thus Marvell makes it clear that his is a reformer's - not a radical's - view; and that the principles of true religion lie behind his analysis of political events in England.

Therefore, the climax of his argument consists of the assertion that 'reformation' is the ruling principle both in religion and in politics.

For all Governments and Societies of Men, and so the Ecclesiastical, do in process of long time gather an irregularity, and wear away much of their primitive institution. And therefore the true wisdom of all Ages



hath been to review at fit periods those errours,  
defects or excesses, that have insensibly crept on into  
the Publick Administration; to brush the dust off the  
Wheels, and oyl them again, or if it be found advisable  
to chuse a set of new ones. (239)

The requirement for Reformation is a continuous one by its very nature: imperative on Society, Church and Magistrate (239), and - in the last resort - the People in active resistance (240). This principle is evidently derived from the eschatology of this period; which described history as a process in which (to date at least) the corruptions of Antichrist had 'crept on' in the institutions of the world. Thus Marvell agrees, here, with that principle of 'reformation' which had inspired the Puritans of the Civil War. Here that principle has its concomitant political aspect, that Marvell allows revolution - reformation by 'the People': but only in the very last resort, when the proper guardians of institutions have failed to reform themselves. In cases where they do not effect their own reformation, such incidents as the Civil War are regrettable but inevitable; such is the implication of Marvell's statements in the RT. Not only is reformation the salient factor in Marvell's political thought, but it also determines his attitude to the major political event of his time - the Civil War.

Having established Marvell's adherence to this principle, it is necessary here to turn to some features of Marvell's activity during the period of Civil War itself; in order to show that he shared other views equally characteristic of mainstream Puritanism at that time.

During the Interregnum, Marvell supported the notion of a 'Protestant Alliance' in Europe: an alliance intended to ally the Protestant nations in the attempt to extirpate Antichrist. It was a major aim of English chiliasm, and a plank in Cromwell's foreign policy. As part of the diplomatic effort to achieve such an alliance between England and Protestant Sweden,<sup>70</sup> Marvell wrote three poems which were presented to Queen Christina of Sweden.<sup>71</sup> In one of these, A Letter to Dr. Ingelo,

Marvell commended the common mission of these two nations: which was to reform the Catholic countries. 'Deque Palatino monte fugare lupam' ("and to drive the She-Wolf down from her Palatine Hill" in Rome). This image of the She-Wolf is derived from a combination of the wolf in John x. 10 (the Catholic Church) and the representation on the Palatine of the wolf who suckled Romulus and Remus:<sup>72</sup> Marvell's image refers to the 'wolfish' or rapacious Whore of the Revelation, and identifies her with the symbol of Rome. In orthodox eschatological manner, he is using the traditional image of Popery. In this poem, as in his general support for the mission, he reveals his proponent of chiliastic 'zeal'.

The motive for the Protestant Alliance was, as I indicated above, an aspect of the "last-ditch" militancy of Protestant feeling in England. From his promulgation of this idea, and his proponent in Smirke of a 'Holy War' abroad, it is clear that Marvell shared this neurotic attitude. (That attitude is confirmed most vigorously by The Growth of Popery, as we shall see.)

This fact seems to illuminate an event in Marvell's life which occurred in 1641, when he was residing in a house at Clerkenwell in London. On 17th February he signed the Parliamentary Protestation, which stated that:

I....do promise, vow, and protest, to maintain and defend....the true, reformed Protestant Religion.... according to the Duty of my Allegiance to his Majesty's Royal Person, Honour, and Estate; as also the Power and Privilege of Parliament, the lawful Rights and Liberties of the Subjects....<sup>73</sup>

In this Protestation it is evident that Parliament considered that a constitutional monarchy was inseparable from a maintenance of the 'true religion' in England: Protestant fears of the bishops', and hence of the king's, leaning towards Popery helped to confirm this traditional Protestant view. (As we saw, Marvell drew the same community of interest between 'true religion' and proper government in the RT and



General Councils, where he stated that the bishops perverted the one and incapacitated the other.) Whether or not Marvell was sympathetic towards Parliamentaryism in 1641 is not evident from this document, since the Protestation maintains the 'Duty of my Allegiance' to the King: and any constitutional monarchist could have signed the document with good conscience. (The anti-monarchical element had not yet penetrated the elite of Parliamentarians.) What the Protestation does demonstrate is Marvell's conviction of Protestant principles of militancy in the defence of true religion; and also that he believed, not only in the 1670s but in the 1640s too, that constitutional government and true religion had an intimate relationship.<sup>74</sup>

These occurrences of the middle decades of the century are consistent with Marvell's attitudes in Smirke, General Councils and the RT. And his political attitudes are all integral to mainstream Puritan chiliasm, as forged in the 1640s. Just as Marvell shared the chiliasm of his time, he also adhered to its political implications. At this time chiliasm dominated political thought, on the basis that Providence was the arbiter of history. This was the mode whereby Marvell too evaluated the history of his own time.

Several disquisitions upon the providential nature of history feature in the RT. There Marvell rebukes Parker for the latter's assumption that the providential conception of history requires any human championship: saying that Parker seems to write 'in order forsooth to prove Gods providence, as if that could not be, or were not sufficiently evidenced' (154).<sup>75</sup> He is offended that Parker should presume himself capable of justifying the ways of God to man (and, as I noted, such 'presumption' was characteristic of clerics in his view.<sup>76</sup> Cf. Appendix I).

Parker's assertion that bishops and king together (in that order) perform God's will in history echoes the iure divino claims of Laudians. In contrast, Marvell describes his own vision of the Fifth Kingdom, and the proper manner in which God will realize that millennial aim:

Indeed although Christ did not assume an earthly and visible Kingdome, yet he by the Gospel gave Law to Princes and subjects....and he knew very well that without dethroning the Princes of the World at present, yet by the constant preaching of that benevolous and amiable Doctrine....all opposition would be worn out, and all Princes should make place for a Christian Empire. (236)

Parker had stated that clerical imposition was the true implementing of God's plan to raise the Fifth Kingdom. This Marvell does not allow: God's method is quite other. First, the Kingdom of Christ will be a 'Christian Empire' - that Empire which, for Foxe, was pre-figured by the Protestant Christian Emperor on earth. The 'Princes of the World' of which Marvell speaks here are that Emperor's enemies: the 'kings of the earth', which Revelation had said would ally with the Whore until the Last Day (xvii. 2f.). The radicals - Fifth Monarchists and their ilk - thought to attain the Fifth Kingdom by 'dethroning' these 'Princes of the World'. Against their view, and equally against that of Parker, Marvell expresses the belief of moderate chiliasm; Christ wears out 'all opposition', without the assistance of either camp. In this gradualist version of eschatology, it is as if the 'kings of the earth' give way to the Kingdom as day succeeds night. Marvell regards the eschatological process as indeed inevitable, but also as proceeding at its own pace.

This passage is, in fact, characteristic of mainstream chiliasm. Marvell here asserts the very premise of eschatology, that the true religion would inevitably triumph by its own virtue;<sup>77</sup> the 'preaching' of it was for him - as for other chiliasts - the road to its universal dissemination, and hence to the millennium itself. Similarly, his description of the 'wearing out' of the kings of the earth finds



an analogue in the words of a chiliastic divine, that the Coming would occur when 'he [Christ] hath worn them [kings] all out'.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Marvell's insistence upon the self-determining character of the eschaton allies him with those divines of the middle decades of the century, who rebuked precipitate religio-political actions in just this manner.<sup>79</sup>

For mainstream eschatology emphasized those biblical texts which stated that the time of the Coming was not 'revealed' to men:<sup>80</sup> deriving from these texts the moral that men must be 'patient' for Christ's Coming, remaining 'vigilant' in the meanwhile.<sup>81</sup> Any attempt to precipitate that Coming was presumptuous, for the 'timing' was in God's hands. So, here, Marvell's statements echo that view. His version of an inexorable eschaton, independent of human effort, allies him with moderate chiliasts; and is the source of his antagonism towards those sectarians who would seek to anticipate that process.

Enjoining this chiliastic 'patience' upon Parker, Marvell states that the extirpation of Popery - which Parker claims to promote - is indeed an inevitable event: but 'God only in his own time, and by the inscrutable methods of his Providence is able to effect that Alteration' (15). That is, both the timing and the means by which Antichrist will be overturned are 'unrevealed'. Confirming, hereby, his own eschatological orthodoxy, Marvell then draws the moral of 'patience': that the limits of revelation proscribe human activism in the cause of the eschaton. Alluding to the Revelation, he says of the reformation of Antichrist,

he [God] hath signified in part by what means he intended to accomplish it, and to range so considerable a Church, and once so exemplary, into Primitive Unity and Christian Order. In the meantime such projects [as Parker's] are fit for pregnant Scholars that have nothing else to do....but I never saw that they came into Use or Possibility. (15)

Marvell's confidence rests in the inexorable nature of Providence; he has little use for men who presume to take God's work upon themselves in an attempt to hurry Him along.

This theme of confident 'patience' is the salient feature of his remarks on the Civil War in the RT.

the War broke out, and then to be sure Hell's broke loose. Whether it were a War of Religion, or of Liberty, is not worth the labour to enquire....I think the Cause was too good to have been fought for. Men ought to have trusted God; they ought and might have trusted the King with that whole matter. "The Arms of the Church are Prayers and Tears", the arms of the Subjects are Patience and Petitions ....For men may spare their pains where Nature is at work, and the world will not go the faster for our driving. Even as his present Majesties happy Restauration did it self, so all things else happen in their best and proper time, without any need of our officiousness. (135)

[my italics]

Disregarding flourishes like 'his present Majesties happy Restauration', the main thought Marvell seems to be emphasizing here is that the providential nature of history is not of human making. 'All things.... happen in their best and proper time, without any need of our officiousness.' This is an orthodox chiliast's statement of God's jurisdiction over Time. God knows what He is doing, and for Marvell drastic activism of the kind that had distinguished politics before the Restoration is a vain attempt to interfere. Elsewhere he says that the Restoration (like all other events) was effected by 'the Providence of God.' (43)

When he speaks of the manner in which 'Men ought to have trusted God' in the matters provoking the Civil War, Marvell appends that 'they ought and might have trusted the King.' This appendix may have been only a sop to Charles II: but Marvell is careful to make it merely an appendix. The first, and main, point is that 'Men ought to have trusted God;' the 'officiousness' of men is out of place. This passage is a statement of belief in providential history; it stresses the eschatological trope of "patience" that is central to Marvell's philosophy.



Further, this passage shows how - for Marvell and for others - the concept of providential history mollified bewildering vicissitudes in contemporary events. For Marvell's statements here justify both the king and the 'Good Old Cause' of Parliament. If history is providentially directed, then both Charles and Cromwell were "overseen" by God: their actions must have been part of the providential plan. Perhaps this is what Marvell really means when he says that 'Men....might have trusted the King': that Charles, like other prominent men of the period, was willy-nilly God's agent, and therefore whatever his actions they must have had a providential result. Thus the godly Cause was 'too good to have been fought for', because being 'good', one way or another God's plan would achieve its destined objectives. This passage does not necessarily require that we see the later Marvell as a monarchist, but rather that we see the principle dominating his historico-political views. That principle is a providential one.

At first sight the political concomitants of Marvell's view may seem fatalistic. Belief in providential history may seem to provide a warrant to support any government, simply on the basis that its existence was de facto proof of its favour in the eyes of God. Far from it. In a sense, providential belief, while seeming to abrogate all human responsibilities, carried a great deal of responsibility for the individual. He had to see beyond faction, to the complexities of providence. Aware that he might have misread the purposes of God, he had to take great care in his actions. For Marvell, as a Puritan chiliast, there was another consideration: to be active in the furtherance of God's purposes, according to his interpretation of them. These two considerations - activism and quiescence - placed the individual in a dilemma. Just how active for God's purposes, and how passive to His hand in history, could one be? Could one be both? Such questions vexed the Parliamentarians during the Civil War itself: the problem was

both recognised and discussed.<sup>82</sup> This dilemma appears in much of Marvell's poetry, and later in the thesis I shall be considering its presence in certain poems.

For the moment, it is sufficient to note Marvell's apparent solution to it (for his present purposes at least) in the RT. In the passage I quoted he suggested that 'the Arms of the Subjects are Patience and Petitions'; this sounds like part of a gradualist political philosophy. Such a philosophy places trust in the process of time, which is a trust ancillary to providential belief. 'Patience and Petitions' involve a submission to the given order while suggesting a legal enterprise to change that order. This is certainly an amalgam of passivity and activism, but its boundaries must have shifted now and then in accordance with changing circumstances. To issue a book like the RT was to remain within the boundaries of legal action up to a point; but to issue The Growth of Popery was to become 'illegal' in the eyes of Charles II's government. Despite his belief in activism as moderated by quietism, Marvell's convictions were such that at times he endangered both his small income<sup>83</sup> and his freedom to promulgate them. Marvell's political 'temperament' was a delicate thing.

In the RT he advises that 'The Power of the Magistrate does most certainly issue from the Divine Authority' (since all authority is providentially ordered), and hence that men's obedience to that authority is required by God Himself.<sup>(232-3)</sup> Moreover, as Marvell has already noted in the RT, it is not the business of Christ to 'dethrone' princes: much less is it that of his servants. Similarly, the opening proposition of General Councils was that 'our Saviour Himself, not pretending to an earthly kingdom, took....care therefore to instruct His followers in the due subjection to governors' (91). Confirming the distinction between temporal kingdoms and Christ's dominion, this view was characteristic of mainstream eschatology. Thus one of the Parliamentary



Grandeess had, in the 1640s, warned revolutionaries that 'It was not the business of Jesus Christ, when he came into the world, to erect kingdoms of the world, and magistracy or monarchy.'<sup>84</sup> While endorsing the need for obedience to the magistrate, this view also had an obverse side: that, equally, the magistrate should not interfere with individuals' religious rights (General Councils, 74, 92). In this proscription of the magistrate's authority, Marvell again echoes a view typical of orthodox eschatology: that 'Jesus Christ....hath [not] given any power to the civil magistrate to restrain men professing their consciences before God'.<sup>85</sup> Such were the delimits of secular power.

Further, Marvell concludes that 'Subjects are bound both as Men and as Christians to obey the Magistrate actively in all things where their Duty to God intercedes not.' (232-3). The question of the nature of one's 'Duty to God' in the providential history of one's own times was one which required a good deal of thought. As Marvell put it in a letter, ''Tis Pride that makes a Rebel. And nothing but the overweening of our selves and our own things that raises us against divine Providence.' (Letters, 312).

In fact Marvell's "quietism" is a reflection of his individualism. His religious beliefs were those proper to an individual relationship with God; and his political beliefs, similarly, turned on the notion not of revolution but of reformation in the individual.

Reformation is most easily and with least disturbance to be effected by the Society it self, no single men being forbidden by any Magistrate to amend their own manners, and much more all Societies having the liberty to bring themselves within compass. (239)

Marvell's point is that legislation and agitation are both matters of the letter rather than the spirit of reform; that without a change in men's hearts no other changes are possible.

Men's hearts are the targets of Marvell's controversial writings: the attempt to win them over is his form of activism. He was well aware that beliefs and convictions are only as strong as those who (like himself) are prepared to defend them. He wrote to a friend that 'in this World a good Cause signifys little, unless it be as well defended. A Man may starve at the Feast of Good Conscience.' (Letters, 324). This conviction of the necessity to implement one's beliefs was something that Marvell had stated much earlier, in the Horatian Ode: where he opined that 'the antient Rights....do hold or break/ As men are strong or weak.' This is not a fault of those principles themselves, but of 'this World.' Thus this activism, as much as Marvell's quietism, is based upon his principles, however pragmatic it may appear. The form in which Marvell chose to defend those principles was obviously readjustable according to the political vicissitudes of the time.

At any rate, a belief in providential history could shore up his sense of England's destiny, whatever governmental forms that destiny might assume. When Marvell speaks of 'trusting God' in political and religious matters, it seems to me that this thought is a consolatory one. Once Marvell, like others, had thought that a particular man - perhaps Cromwell - might be trusted as God's agent, but the quietism of the RT in 1672 seems somewhat to outbalance its activism: agency is more likely to be a matter of human 'officiousness' in disguise, as far as the later Marvell is concerned. Perhaps he is in agreement with the similarly disillusioned Prynne, who says:

For my part, I have seen so much experience in the World, that I dare trust none with my own or the Kingdom's safety but God alone.

We have seen such mutabilities and perfidiousnesse in men of all sorts since our troubles that we cannot trust neither the King nor Prince, City nor Countrey, this Generall nor that Generall; this Army, nor those that went before it, [and] yet ourselves who are jealous of one another, treacherous one to another, distrustful of all.<sup>86</sup>



'I dare trust none....but God alone', says Prynne: 'Men ought to have trusted God', said Marvell. It is probable that Marvell's similar disillusionment with human agency is motivated by the same disappointments. Belief in divine arbitration was always a premise of eschatological politics; but in the 1640s and '50s human agency still seemed capable of assisting consciously in the divine plan. But for many men, after 1660 and the turbulent character of the Interregnum, human agency now seemed questionable, at least on that conscious level. God would always employ human agents, but 'officiousness' was not the sort of agency required. This was Marvell's conclusion in later years.

In the 1640s and '50s, as I have said, human agency seemed a great deal more effective. This is the view of Cromwell propounded in Marvell's First Anniversary: a view so favourably received that the poem was issued under government sponsorship for propaganda purposes in 1655.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps the main factor in this promotion was Marvell's portrait of Cromwell in the poem as a providential agent, and his counterblast to the insurgence of the radical sectarians. Their version of eschatology was a thorn in the side of the Protectorate, whereas Marvell's vision of the eschaton in this poem placed Cromwell's government in a 'godly' light. It is this eschatological bias in the politics of the poem that I wish here to underline; other motifs, supporting this bias, will be treated at the relevant points in later chapters.

It has been generally recognised that one part of the poem - lines 100 to c. 140 - is explicitly 'millenarian'. Usually it is treated as a digression, and its so-called 'millenarianism' as something of an aberration. Thus The First Anniversary has never been understood in its basic premise: its details have been misinterpreted and its context has remained unrecognized. The poem is in fact an explicit

statement of chiliastic politics. As such, it is central not only to Marvell's view of contemporary politics but also to his poetry as a whole.

It has long been noted that Time and its various aspects are ubiquitous in the poem.<sup>88</sup> This temporal motif is in fact a context for Marvell's proposition that Cromwell is the chosen 'Captain' of God in the Latter Days: who reforms and reconstructs the State at home, and prosecutes the struggle against Antichrist abroad.

For Marvell's purpose here - the justification of Cromwell's regime - the most important function of the Protector is his reformation of Church and State. In this time of regained peace, reformation and reconstruction involve the composition of factions within the nation. Therefore, what was at this time said of peace - that it 'is a harmony and an agreement of different things'<sup>89</sup> - is precisely the manner in which Marvell describes Cromwell's activity as the 'Architect' of a new State.

The Commonwealth then first together came,  
And each one enter'd in the willing Frame;  
All other Matter yields, and may be rul'd;  
But who the Minds of stubborn Men can build?  
No Quarry bears a Stone so hardly wrought,  
Nor with such labour from its Center brought;  
None to be sunk in the Foundation bends,  
Each in the House the highest Place contends,  
And each the Hand that lays him will direct,  
And some fall back upon the Architect;  
Yet all compos'd by his attractive Song,  
Into the Animated City throng.

The Common-wealth does through their Centers all  
Draw the Circumf'rence of the publique Wall;  
The crossest Spirits here do take their part,  
Fast'ning the Contignation which they thwart;  
And they, whose Nature leads them to divide,  
Uphold, this one, and that the other Side;  
But the most Equal still sustain the Height,  
And they as Pillars keep the Work upright;  
While the resistance of opposed Minds,  
The Fabrick as with Arches stronger binds,  
Which on the Basis of a Senate free,  
Knit by the Roofs Protecting weight agree.



Here Cromwell's harmonizing art (figured by Amphion, 73) creates, out of faction and residual antagonisms, the firm architecture of a new State: himself as Protector, 'the Roofs Protecting weight'.

Marvell's vision of the proper structure of a new State finds an analogue - perhaps its source - in Milton's analysis of the fit 'architecture' of a Church. Here, in Areopagitica (1644), Milton is discussing the way in which the Temple of God should be envisaged after the Anglican dis-establishment. For him, as for Marvell and others, the present question concerns the potential reformed structures available to England now that her corrupt institutions have been swept away. His occasion is the defence of those who seek after the ways of God, and the necessity for their comprehension within a new, free Church:

Yet these are the men cried out against for schismatics and sectaries, 'as if, while the temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men, who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world: neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay, rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure. Let us therefore be more considerate builders, more wise in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected.<sup>90</sup>

For Milton, as for Marvell above, 'wise....architecture' arises out of the harmonization of tensions - whereby oppositions themselves provide the principles of construction. Milton's is a prescription for the reformed Church; Marvell's for the reformed State. At this time, as I have indicated, religion and politics were intermingled; thus Church and State, having fallen together, required also identical modes of reconstruction. Hence Parliament recognized, both during and after the Civil War, that its responsibilities appertained equally to religious

and political reformation; and that, moreover, the 'reformations' involved were reciprocal in kind. State and Church were both constructed on, and menaced by, chiliastic ideas. Therefore it is not surprising that Milton's definition of Church unity should correspond to Marvell's description of the reformed State's unifying architecture.

For Marvell here Cromwell represents constructive reformation, since he builds 'The Commonwealth/s/....willing Frame'. Marvell emphasizes the willingness of the elements in this structure, because true reformation utilizes the will of men themselves; thus even 'The crossest Spirits' perform their part. The same constructive spontaneity distinguishes Milton's requirement of 'homogeneal, and proportional' architecture:

this is the golden rule in theology as well as arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold, and neutral, and inwardly divided minds.<sup>91</sup>

This, the prevalence of 'divided minds' in a period of religious-political upheaval, is exactly the problem to which Marvell addresses himself with reference to Cromwell's "building": 'All other Matter yields, and may be rul'd/ But who the Minds of stubborn Men can build?' These are, then, the basic building-blocks of reformation. Similarly, in the RT Marvell averred that 'Reformation is most easily and with least disturbance to be effected by....single men', each individual reforming himself. This was indeed the readiest and happiest form of reformation, but - as Marvell then suggested - should this not be possible, responsibility for reformation was the task of the magistrate alone. Accordingly, in The First Anniversary, where men themselves are 'stubborn' and intractable to the reforming structure, it is Cromwell alone 'who.... can build' out of them; Cromwell as Protector being the 'magistrate' in this case. Therefore the extended metaphor of political architecture is used to "prove" Marvell's proposition, a few lines earlier, that 'Such was that wondrous Order and Consent,/ When Cromwell tun'd the ruling Instrument' (67-8).



Cromwell's ability to implement political reformation is contrasted to the less efficient activity of his predecessors:

While tedious Statesmen many years did hack,  
Framing a Liberty that still went back;  
Whose num'rous Gorge could swallow in an hour  
That Island, which the Sea cannot devour.

(69-72)

Cromwell's swift action is contrasted to the dilatory ineffectiveness of 'tedious Statesmen'. This contrast in the effective use of time is fundamental to the poem; throughout Cromwell is distinguished by celerity, while others dally. This point is central, because in the light of the imminent End time is at a premium. Without such qualities as those possessed by Cromwell, reformation cannot forward the eschaton, preparing the world to receive Christ's new Order. This argument is, in fact, the narrative dynamic of the poem.

Marvell's characterization of Cromwell is the identification of a statesman in 'tune' with the urgent tempo of the Latter Days.

'Tis he the force of scatter'd Time contracts,  
And in one Year the work of Ages acts:  
While heavy Monarchs make a wide Return,  
Longer, and more malignant than Saturn:  
And though they all Platonique years should reign,  
In the same Posture would be found again.

(13-18)

The 'slowness' of such monarchs in fact causes time to grind to a halt:

Thus (Image-like) an useless time they tell,  
And with vain Scepter, strike the hourly Bell;  
Nor more contribute to the state of Things,  
Then wooden Heads unto the Viols strings.

(41-4; my italics)

By this means - the arresting of time's properly progressive nature - they preserve 'From the deserved Fate their guilty lives' (40). In other words, by delaying the retributive justice of God at the Last Day, these 'kings of the earth' extend their own lives: after all, the Last Day was to be to them a desolation (Rev. xviii. 9).

It is necessary to analyse the ramifications of this contrast, in terms of current political reformation. It is evident what Marvell

means by stating that, in contrast to Cromwell, statesmen had occupied themselves by 'Framing a Liberty that still went back': that is, a 'Liberty' which in effect returned to the previous, unsatisfactory, state of political affairs. But the pith of Marvell's expression is one characteristic of his thought. A similar formulation, for instance, appears in Tom May's Death (1650): there, while still opposed to the Parliamentary regime, Marvell had said that current times were such as 'When the Wheel of Empire, whirleth back' (67). In both poems, the 'return' of the wheel of State - its backward movement - represents a reflex whereby the State constantly reverts to its corruption. In contrast, when reformation is at work, it is necessary 'to brush the dust off the Wheels, and oyl them again, or if it be found advisable to chuse a set of new ones' (RT, 239). The aim is to make these 'Wheels' of State move readily forward, to arrest the tendency constantly to 'back'-slide. Thus, in 1642 a Parliamentary divine, speaking of reformation, had said exactly this: that 'a worke done in season... is a worke upon its wheels,....that goes on to purpose.'<sup>92</sup> For him as for Marvell Reformation is forward movement, driving time itself forward to the eschaton. (Thus, in a condign image, Marvell describes Time itself as a 'Wheel' [Hastings, 12/].) But the return of the wheel frustrates the reformatory process: 'heavy Monarchs make a wide Return,/ And....In the same Posture would be found again.'

Since, in the Latter Days, time must be driven forward if the glory of the Kingdom is to be realized, Cromwell is its champion:

Cromwell alone with greater Vigour runs,  
(Sun-like) the Stages of succeeding Suns:

....

While indefatigable Cromwell hyes,  
And cuts his way....

(7-8, 45-6)

This characterization of Cromwell's hasting 'Vigour' frames the passage reviling 'heavy Monarchs'. His activity, 'contracting' Time, is that activism proper to the Latter Days. So the Saints were enjoined by a



major "activist" text, 2 Peter iii. 12: which told them that they should be 'Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.'

Thus Cromwell's political reformation is described as a control exercised over 'time'. Having 'tune[d] this lower to that higher Sphere' (48), Cromwell has in fact altered the ("musical") time of earth to correspond to that of Heaven. 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day', says 2 Peter iii. 8, explaining His timing of history.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Cromwell 'in one Year the work of Ages acts' (and 'All the Year was Cromwell's day', as Marvell put it in another poem; making a conceit out of the fact that a 'day' in Revelation was an elastic temporal unit.<sup>94</sup>)

The same "timing" characterizes the "music" whereby Cromwell constructed the reformed state:

So when Amphion did the Lute command....  
No Note he struck, but a new Story lay'd,  
And the great Work ascended while he play'd.  
The listning Structures he with Wonder ey'd,  
And still new Stopps to various Time apply'd....  
Such was that wondrous Order and Consent,  
When Cromwell tun'd the ruling Instrument.

(49-68)

The building of the new State is the knowing direction of Time's movement, that 'still new Stopps to various Time apply'd.'

This control is possible, not only because Cromwell has 'tun'd' earthly to divine Time; but also because he himself is an 'Instrument' of God's providence.

What since he did, an higher Force him push'd  
Still from behind, and it before him rush'd,  
Though undiscern'd among the tumult blind,  
Who think those high Decrees by Man design'd.

(239-42)

Cromwell is, Marvell insists, not a free agent but the instrument of the 'higher Force' of Providence. He hurries in time because it 'push'd' him, and itself 'rush'd' before him in anticipation of events; that is, Providence like its instrument hastes towards its goal, and

has an irresistible forward movement. Marvell does what the Saints should, by recognizing Providence behind its contemporary guises: what other men do not bother to do, 'blind' to divine agency. He asserts here a thought adumbrated also in General Councils, that 'worthy speculation of the great order....of God's wise providence, through the whole contexture of these exterior, seeming accidents' (139); obeying the imperative of the chiliast.<sup>95</sup> Cromwell is not, then, a self-interested and arbitrary force, but a divinely-appointed actor in the eschaton.

Having confirmed Cromwell's status, Marvell relates this divine sanction back to Cromwell's reforming architecture.

'Twas Heaven would not that his Pow'r should cease,  
But walk still middle betwixt War and Peace;  
Choosing each Stone, and poysing every weight,  
Trying the Measures of the Bredth and Height;  
Here pulling down, and there erecting New,  
Founding a firm State by Proportions true.

(243-8)

Heaven, then, directed Cromwell's political manoeuvres: England's reformation (the 'pulling down, and erecting New') was providentially directed. To characterize Cromwell's Protectorate in this manner, and to confer upon him divine affirmation, was to sanction his power in terms acceptable to all current parties: in, that is, eschatological terms. Indeed, such a characterization of Cromwell is Marvell's aim in this poem.

His portrayal of the Protector as God's 'Captain' (321) in these Latter Days requires not only that he be seen as reformer of the State, but of the Church also. Therefore Cromwell is contrasted with those rulers who

neither build the Temple in their dayes,  
Nor Matter for succeeding Founders raise;  
Nor sacred Prophecies consult within,  
Much less themselves to perfect them begin;

(33-6)



The burden of this comparison is that Cromwell does indeed 'build the Temple in [his] dayes'; he is labouring to construct that Kingdom of God in England - the triumph of the Church - which <sup>was</sup> so much desired by the Saints.<sup>96</sup> To effect this construction of the reformed Church/State, Cromwell begins - as the Saints were instructed - by consulting 'sacred Prophecies'; the prophetic Scriptures whose predictions the Saints had been enjoined to implement. By his active zeal, therefore, Cromwell begins 'to perfect them', to fulfil the Word by building the 'Temple' of God in England. This is not Solomon's Temple, but that Kingdom of which the Temple at Jerusalem was a type. In this manner Marvell enrols the revelatory prophecies (which indicated God's will in history) to sanction Cromwell's regime.

This essential difference between Cromwell and 'heavy' princes - a difference in 'godliness' - is elaborated later in the poem, when Marvell asserts Cromwell's analogous reforming role on the international scene also. Cromwell, he says, is like a 'Star' of divine influence upon the world: 'And in his sev'ral Aspects, like a Star,/ Here shines in Peace, and thither shoots a War' (101-2). He is at once a portent and an agent, manifesting the divine will in history:

by his Beams observing Princes steer,  
And wisely court the Influence they fear;  
O would they rather by his Pattern won  
Kiss the approaching, nor yet angry Son;  
And in their numbred Footsteps humbly tread  
The path where holy Oracles do lead;  
How might they under such a Captain raise  
The great Designes kept for the latter Dayes!

(103-110)

Here Marvell desires that, instead of fearing God's agent, the 'kings of the earth' would follow 'his Pattern' and enact the 'Designes' of God: that they would be not merely passive to his 'Influence', but active in his mode. The poet's advice to these unregenerate kings is drawn from Psalm ii. 2-12:

The kings of the earth set themselves....against the Lord....  
 Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed....Kiss  
 the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,  
 when his wrath is kindled.

The Son of God is 'nor yet angry' because He has not yet come in His  
 role as the Judge; but that Coming is imminent, for Marvell adds that  
 He is 'approaching'.<sup>97</sup> The 'kings of the earth' will only appease  
 Him if, like Cromwell, they learn to haste - matching the forward lurch  
 of time. Like him, they/<sup>should</sup>'sacred Prophecies consult', and 'tread/  
 The path where holy Oracles do lead'. Implied in this passage is a  
 threat to those who choose to ignore that these are 'the latter  
 Dayes'. Its source, the Psalm, threatens their destruction; and,  
 similarly, a Parliamentarian divine had cited this text as God's  
 promise of retribution upon His Antichristian enemies in high places.<sup>98</sup>  
 Against these Marvell elevates Cromwell as God's 'Captain' in the Holy  
 War, enacting the 'great Designes' of history in Europe, just as he  
 executed the 'great Work' (56) of England's reformation.

According to Psalm ii, Isaiah, and Revelation xvii. 2, 'the kings  
 of the earth' are in league with the Scarlet Whore of Popery, against  
 the godly. They were understood, in England, as the Catholic powers  
 of Europe, where the Antichristian faith was dominant as a result of  
 their efforts. It was a major tenet of Puritan activism that the  
 Saints were commanded to cleanse Europe (as they had purged England) of  
 this unholy cabal. One of many such imprecations was delivered to  
 Parliament, by a divine who emphasized that in the world the Kingdom  
 of Christ is obstructed by

Popery....the high and spreading power of the kingdom of  
 Antichrist is a mighty impediment to the enlargement of the  
 kingdom of Christ. The way then to set up Christs Kingdom,  
 is to pull downe Antichrists: there is a promise, that  
 Christs shall stand for ever, but Antichrists shall have a  
 fall;....[therefore] cast Antichrist out of his saddle....  
 that Christ may better get up into his stirrup, to ride  
 about conquering his enemies.<sup>99</sup>



The dominance of Antichrist's Whore in Europe, the obstacles thereby placed in the way of the Coming, and the consequent effort to extirpate Popery, are all stages in Marvell's argument in The First Anniversary.

First, having revealed that European monarchs are 'the kings of the earth' in their unrepentant state, Marvell intimates their association with the Whore, their paramour in Revelation xvii.

But mad with Reason, so miscall'd, of State  
They know [the sacred Oracles] not, and what they know not, hate.  
Hence still they sing Hosanna to the Whore,  
And her whom they should Massacre adore:

(111-114)

Time remains arrested at the point - 'still' - where 'the kings of the earth' still worship the Whore: they have not taken proper cognisance of that 'sacred Oracle', Revelation xvii. 16, which prophesied that the kings would turn upon the Whore - 'Massacre' her - as the Last Day approached. Similarly, ignoring the Pauline prophecy of the Conversion of Jews and heathens, these princes 'Indians whom they should convert, subdue; Nor teach, but traffique with, or burn the Jew' (115-6). That Conversion and 'Ingathering of the Nations' is a prerequisite of the Last Day, and by ignoring its import these kings delay that Day. Thus, in every way, the attitudes of most monarchs retard the eschaton, and Cromwell fights the Holy War alone; in Europe, as in England, he is the sole agent of Reformation.

Therefore at this point Marvell's condemnation of the 'Regal Sloth' of the 'kings of the earth' takes wing; assuming a personal tone, he expresses his sense of his own mission in the eschaton.

Unhappy Princes, ignorantly bred,  
By Malice some, by Errour more misled;  
If gracious Heaven to my Life give length,  
Leisure to Time, and to my Weakness Strength,  
Then shall I once with graver Accents shake  
Your Regal Sloth, and your long Slumbers wake:  
Like the shrill Huntsman that prevents the East,  
Winding his Horn to Kings that chase the Beast.

(117-24)

In the last line the congruity of revenge is conveyed by a pun on 'Horn': the Beast has ten horns, and the avenger tunes his hunting-horn to match them. The joke, as so often in Marvell, has a serious burden; the horns of the Beast were understood as the kings who served Antichrist - 'the kings of the earth', whom Marvell has already reviled (cf. Chapter VI). This interpolated passage relates his own mission as a poet to that of Cromwell as divine agent: 'Then shall I once with graver Accents' pursue the work of God. Both Prince and poet are implicated in the eschaton, pursuing their respective forms of activism in response to similar responsibilities.

Having stated his own sanction, as the poet who celebrates God's agent, Marvell thereby returns to Cromwell himself. The Beast may have been driven from the temples of England, but in Europe he still sits in 'every Throne', and Cromwell's mission has become a European one. Upon that mission Marvell's poetic activism must attend:

Till then my Muse shall hollow far behind  
 Angelique Cromwell who outwings the wind;  
 And in dark Nights, and in cold Dayes alone  
 Pursues the Monster thorough every Throne:  
 Which shrinking to her Roman Den impure,  
 Gnashes her Goary teeth; nor there secure.

(125-30)

Here Cromwell becomes the 'shrill Huntsman' anticipated by the poet, whose prey is the Monster of Popery: the Beast-Whore, who is here (as always) characterized as a devourer, with 'Goary teeth' (cf. Chapter V.2). Cromwell, 'Angelique' in his reforming role, will cause her retreat to the last refuge of Popery, Rome itself; 'her Roman Den impure' being the heart of impiety in this world. If, as Marvell claims here, Cromwell should meet with such success, then the Protector would be the forerunner of Christ Himself. For the extirpation of Antichrist allows Christ's Coming. So Marvell's claim for Cromwell here is no less than that Cromwell will precipitate the 'reformation' of the world itself.



No doubt Marvell did not consider this too extravagant a claim for the Prince of the Elect Nation. The English too had laboured under Antichristian religion, until recently: and English 'Statesmen' had proved to be instruments of the Whore, 'Whose num'rous Gorge could swallow in an hour/ [This] Island' (71-2). By characterizing such men as devourers, who are capable of ingesting an England 'which the Sea [itself] cannot devour', Marvell was using an image which was universally applied to the agents of Antichrist.<sup>100</sup> With them he contrasts Cromwell; just as, later, Cromwell provides a similar contrast to their European counterparts. For Cromwell's international role is simply an extension of his domestic achievement; he obeys the Saints' rule, which was to see the European struggle as an extension of their own, and England as the champion of reformation in Europe.

However, even in his enthusiastic statement of Cromwell's eschatological destiny, Marvell does not forget his expressed horror of presumption in such matters. He completes his portrait of the Protector as divine agent in the proper manner, by relating his principate to scriptural prophecy. But in order to avoid a presumptuous interpretation of the 'unrevealed' things, his statement of Cromwell's relationship to prophecy is carefully worded. In another poem which is relevant here, Marvell's portrayal of the warrior Saint - the 'resolved Soul' - had recommended 'a Soul that knows not to presume'; accordingly, the Resolved Soul had rejected a proffered temptation that he could 'know each hidden Cause;/ And see the future Time' (69-70). As we have seen, the 'times', and especially the timing of the Last Day, can be known only to God.<sup>101</sup> Thus Marvell here avoids any assertion of the 'time', or of a specific relationship between Cromwell's chosen role and the Last Day; he cannot assert, with reverence, that the Last Day and the Cromwellian regime will necessarily coincide - only that they might. At the same time, he contrives to indicate

that to him at least it seems as if the End may be fated to arrive by the especial agency of the Protector.

Hence oft I think, if in some happy Hour  
 High Grace should meet in one with highest Pow'r,  
 And then a seasonable People still  
 Should bend to his, as he to Heaven's will,  
 What we might hope, what wonderful Effect  
 From such a wish'd Conjuncture might reflect.  
 Sure, the mysterious Work, where none withstand,  
 Would forthwith finish under such a Hand:  
 Fore-shortned Time its useless Course would stay,  
 And soon precipitate the latest Day.  
 But a thick Cloud about that Morning lyes,  
 And intercepts the Beams of Mortal eyes,  
 That 'tis the most which we determine can,  
 If these the Times, then this must be the Man.

(131-44)

This delicate balance between anticipation and hesitation provides a climax within the poem. All the 'ifs' and 'wishes' of this passage indicate a poet who would not violate the secrecy of God's 'mysterious Work'; the same who, twenty years later, commended Milton for the same discretion.<sup>102</sup> 'tis the most which we determine can,/ If these the Times, then this must be the Man'; even the eulogist has responsibilities towards the eschaton.

This passage is, like the earlier expression of the poet's vocation, personal in feeling. But in a sense it is more personal than that moment. 'Hence oft I think': this is the poet's idealism speaking. Perhaps Cromwell is the man he looks for, 'one with highest Pow'r', and yet possessing the 'high Grace' of God. The 'seasonable People' refers to Marvell's sense of England's special destiny, a sense he shared with the majority of Englishmen. And in this vision of that destiny the sheer optimism provided by chiasm is evident: 'What we might hope, what wonderful Effect'. If Cromwell is the forerunner of Christ, then the greatly desired End is imminent.

Sure, the mysterious Work, where none withstand,  
 Would forthwith finish under such a Hand:  
 Fore-shortned Time its useless Course would stay,  
 And soon precipitate the latest Day.



Here the poet's hope fastens upon Cromwell, that he might complete the work of God and thereby accelerate the Coming. Everything lies - as the poem has already manifested - in the "timing". Chiliasts believed that all activism must coincide with the time decreed for it by God Himself; all reformation and extirpation was useless unless it fulfilled prophecy at the moment of ripeness.<sup>103</sup> Such a coincidence of divine and human times has been achieved by Cromwell, as the poem has already informed us. 'All things happen in their best and proper time', according to Marvell in the RT; so, here, 'the Man' and 'the Times' must be in conjunction. On another level, the 'seasonable' nation denotes also a "timely" nation, in tune with the Latter-Day crisis. So here Marvell reflects the view that, if the End is to be seen within the near future, all things must join in 'some happy Hour', which is also the destined hour.

Once such a 'Conjuncture' does occur, Time will cease altogether. 'Fore-shortned Time its useless Course would stay,/ And soon precipitate the latest Day'. This couplet is the climax of the poem's temporal motif. The forces which obstructed the Kingdom arrested Time or even "turned it back", while Cromwell forwarded it; here Marvell voices the possibility that under Cromwell it may move forward at such a rate as to 'precipitate' the 'latest Day'. Paradoxically, the total cessation of Time - at the appropriate point - is the best turn this motif may take, given the desires of chiliasm.\*

The very terms in which Marvell envisions the End provide a conceit which may also express his reverent discretion. According to Scripture, Christ's Coming would be 'in Clouds': 'they shall see the Son of Man

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\* It is appropriate to mention here To His Coy Mistress, where the poet's consciousness of 'the last Age' (18) provides a new twist on the traditional memento mori of the carpe diem poem: both Death and the universal End apply temporal pressure to the lovers. Thus the final lines of the poem, with their play on "speeding up" and "prolonging" Time, have resonances peculiar to an age of chiliasm.

coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Matthew xxiv. 30).<sup>104</sup> This detail of 'clouds' became a byword in seventeenth-century descriptions of the Coming, and came to have a universal value.<sup>105</sup> So, here, Marvell states that 'a thick Cloud about that Morning lyes,/ And intercepts the Beams of Mortal eyes'. In this fashion the clouds that signify the Second Coming themselves become the source of its mystery: concealing its nature and its timing from 'Mortal eyes'. It is "unrevealed", in the same metaphor as Marvell had used to describe the mass of men as 'blind', and the understanding of Providence as 'worthy speculation'. It is all a matter of seeing and not-seeing, and in that optical motif Marvell recalls Revelation: which had stated that at the Coming in clouds 'every eye shall see him' (i. 7). That clarity of seeing is a metaphor for the full revelation which will be manifested at the End - and Marvell is making it clear that he cannot anticipate that revelation.

However carefully Marvell has expressed his hopes, he has nevertheless ensured that his readers catch his political meaning. It was an almost universal belief amongst Englishmen that these were indeed the Latter Days. Therefore, when Marvell discreetly averred that 'If these the Times, then this must be the Man', he rested assured that his readers thought these to be 'the Times', and in confirming that timing could also confirm that Cromwell was indeed 'the Man'. Logically, then, it follows that his is the 'Hand' that 'finishes' the great Design. Marvell has not allowed reverence to deprive him of political capital.

Having established Cromwell's eschatological role, Marvell also summarizes the obstacles in his path.

If these the Times, then this must be the Man.  
And well he therefore does, and well has guest,  
Who in his Age has always forward prest:  
And knowing not where Heavens choice may light,  
Girds yet his Sword, and ready stands to fight;  
But Men alas, as if they nothing car'd,  
Look on, all unconcern'd, or unprepar'd;



And Stars still fall, and still the Dragons Tail  
 Swinges the Volumes of its horrid Flail.  
 For the great Justice that did first suspend  
 The World by Sin, does by the same extend.  
 Hence that blest Day still counterpoysed wastes,  
 The Ill delaying, what th'Elected hastes;  
 Hence landing Nature to new Seas is tost,  
 And good Designes still with their Authors lost.

(144-58)

Cromwell's - and thus the eschaton's - greatest enemy is sheer indifference. What Marvell diagnoses here is the negligence of the majority of men, who fail to meet the imperative need for activism in the face of the imminent eschaton: thereby hindering its realization. Whereas - according to scriptural doctrine - they should maintain a state of constant readiness,<sup>106</sup> that they 'ready stand to fight': they are in fact 'all unconcern'd, or unprepar'd'. Thus Antichrist's power is maintained by apathy, prolonging the sinful state of the world. 'Stars still fall, and still the Dragons Tail' persecutes men. This, the Red Dragon of Revelation xii, is an aspect of Antichrist: 'a great red dragon....[whose] tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth' (3-4). Here, Marvell confirms that his dominion stands: and, until that dominion is destroyed, Christ cannot come - 'that blest Day' is prevented.

The point of the language here - that the world is 'suspended' and the Last Day 'still counterpoysed' - is that by men's apathy Time is made to stand still. Even as the Elect attempt to drive Time forward to its consummation, so their enemies retard it: 'The Ill delaying, what th'Elected hastes'. And by this tug-of-war time is 'still counterpoysed': with a pun on 'still'. The poet's voice itself expresses here the frustration of a baulked chiasm; the optimism of his Latter-Day vision, in the previous passage, giving way to a despair - not of the eschaton, but of men themselves. This rebuke is not merely in the service of Cromwell - 'th'Elected' - but of what he presents: the necessity for inspired activism or 'zeal'.

Having located the supine enemies of God's "great Design", Marvell turns to those whose activism is misdirected. These are the sectarian radicals, who have misread the scriptures; such as the Fifth Monarchists, who 'the Scriptures....deface' by their belief that violence will create the Kingdom. 'Whose frantique Army should they want for Men/Might muster Heresies, so one were ten' (299-300). By their opposition to the true 'Captain', Cromwell, they have become 'The Shame and Plague both of the Land and Age' (294). Already Marvell has noted England's precarious state, in connection with a near-fatal accident that had recently befallen the Protector; expressing his sense that without this statesman England would be submerged in chaos. As it was, portents of disaster had darkened the land (175-214). Cromwell's life was threatened not by combat or conspiracy - he has overcome those - but by the national sin: 'Thee proof beyond all other Force or Skill,/ Our Sins endanger, and shall one day kill' (173-4). The sins of heresy and its mistaken activism were not, it seems, wholly expunged by the Civil War: they still raise their heads against the champion of reformation.

Of this sin the Fifth Monarchists are Marvell's chosen example. Despite Cromwell's outstanding achievement, in them 'such a Chammish issue still does rage'; and it is in this sense of national sin that they are 'The Shame and Plague....of the Land' (293-4). They wait upon Cromwell's ruin:

Who watch'd thy halting, and thy Fall deride,  
 Rejoycing when thy Foot had slipt aside;  
 That their new King might the fifth Scepter shake....  
 What thy misfortune, they the Spirit call,  
 And their Religion only is to Fall.  
 Oh Mahomet! now couldst thou rise again,  
 Thy Falling-sickness should have made thee Reign,  
 While Feake and Simpson would in many a Tome,  
 Have writ the Comments of thy sacred Foame:  
 For soon thou mightst have past among their Rant....  
 As thou must needs have own'd them of thy band  
 For prophecies fit to be Alcorand.

(295-310)



In his diatribe against the Fifth Monarchists, Marvell also glances at other radical sects, by means of paronomasia: 'Quake' for the Quakers (298), and 'Rant' for the Ranters. The divisions in Puritanism at this time are well evidenced in the contempt of Marvell - a moderate, like Cromwell himself - for these extremist sects. Here the "right sort" of chiasm (that expressed a few lines earlier) measures and condemns the perversions that it suffers at the hands of the radicals.

The major condemnation consists in Marvell's claim that these are of 'Mahomet's' kind; hereby identifying them with Antichrist in his Muslim aspect. The Fifth Monarchists' fundamentalism is derided as 'Comments' on Mohammed's 'Foame' - the implication being that this sort of commentary is all that such Fifth Monarchists as 'Feake and Simpson' can attain.<sup>107</sup> Marvell thus portrays their beliefs as both ridiculously terrestrial and heretical. Of course, Mohammed's 'Falling-sickness' is both epilepsy (the "divine madness") and a propensity to 'Fall' or sin (cf. 299). Epilepsy was often regarded at this time as possession by spirits:<sup>108</sup> here, it represents in particular the evil spirits of Antichristianism, producing 'fits' of heresy. Similarly, in Smirke, Marvell chose this mode to revile his opponent's 'popish' attitudes:

indeed [he] hath many times in the day such fits take him,  
wherein he is lifted up in the aire, that six men cannot  
hold him down; teares, raves, and foams at the mouth, casts  
up all kind of trash, sometimes speakes Greeke and Latine,  
that no man but would swear he is bewitched. (32)

From such a characterization of the sect's heresy Marvell moves to what looks like diatribe, but is in fact a fervent statement of specific condemnation.

The Fifth Monarchists are not only 'Sorcerers....Possest', but a specific tribulation upon the nation: for Marvell characterizes them as the Locusts from the Bottomless Pit in Revelation ix. (2, 3, 11):

Accursed Locusts, whom your King does spit  
 Out of the Center of th'unbottom'd Pit;  
 Wand'rers, Adult'rers, Lyers, Munser's rest,  
 Sorcerers, Atheists, Jesuites, Possest;  
 You who the Scriptures and the Laws deface  
 With the same liberty as Points and Lace;  
 O Race most hypocritically strict!  
 Bent to reduce us to the ancient Pict;  
 Well may you act the Adam and the Eve;  
 Ay, and the Serpent too that did deceive.

(311-20)

Guilty of treating the Scriptures with 'liberty', this sect represents the agents of Antichrist corrupting doctrine. They may claim that their King is the 'Fifth King' (cf. 296) - the Fifth Kingdom being that of the millennium - but the King assigned to them by Marvell is Satan, he who in Revelation inhabits the Pit. As well as inverting their 'Monarchy', Marvell inverts the significance of the term 'Fifth'. They are representatives, not of the Fifth Kingdom, but of the Fifth Trumpet of Wrath - the Locusts of the Pit.

And the fifth angel sounded....And he opened the  
 bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit....  
 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth,  
 and unto them was given power [to torment mankind]....and  
 they had a king over them, who is the angel of the bottomless  
 pit, whose name [is] Apollyon. (Revelation ix. 1-3, 11)

By so identifying the Fifth Monarchists, Marvell has reversed their professed chiliastic function: from servants of Christ to agents of Antichrist, from creators of the Fifth Kingdom to the destroyers unleashed by the Fifth Trumpet.

This submerged process also reinforces Marvell's characterization of them as Mahommedans, for Joseph Mede had explained the Fifth Trumpet's 'smoke' as Mahommedanism. According to him, it was so called because, like that religion, it obscured the true Christian doctrine: just as, here, the Fifth Monarchists 'the Scriptures....deface'.

Moreover, the Locusts of the Apocalypse were traditionally interpreted as heretics, those who oppressed the people of God in the Latter Days.<sup>109</sup> Just so, the Fifth Monarchists are here described as 'hypocritically strict', 'Bent to reduce us'; they are an avatar of the



Latter-Day 'Serpent' which misleads ('deceive[s]') the faithful by masquerading as the true Lord. Here their deception is specifically that of the Locusts, who 'mainteine false doctrine'.<sup>110</sup> Thus it becomes apparent that Marvell's invective in this passage has a tight logical structure. Further, it is - as the Fifth Monarchists in his account are not - impeccably based upon the scriptures.

Similarly, the catalogue which introduces this condemnation imitates a scriptural model: the invective of 2 Timothy iii. 2-5, where the sins of the Latter Days are enumerated.

For [then] men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient.... unthankful, unholy....trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors....Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it.

In the same fashion Marvell characterizes the Latter-Day sectarians as 'Wand'rers, Adult'rers, Lyers, Munser's rest,/ <sup>111</sup> Sorcerers, Atheists, Jesuites, Possest', imitating Timothy's catalogue of condemnation; which is also directed at heretics, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it'. Marvell's list covers the whole range of Antichristianism: sinners, deceivers, the extremists of Munster, witches, atheists, Papists, and the 'Possest'. This inclusive condemnation Marvell's audience would have understood in all its implications.

It was, moreover, topical: and would have had a significant political attraction for the Government which licensed the poem. For in 1654 - the year of its composition - the government suspected that the major radicals (Fifth Monarchists and Levellers) might combine with the Royalists in a subversive conspiracy.<sup>112</sup>

In this passage Marvell has firmly placed the radicals in the "correct" eschatological perspective: it is because they are heretics, misinterpreting scripture, that they are revolutionaries - thus 'defacing' both 'Scriptures' and 'Laws'. Just as this proper form of chiliasm condemns them, so it exalts Cromwell as the chosen lieutenant

of God in His 'Designes'. So when Marvell asserts that 'an higher Force' moved Cromwell to 'what he did', and that ' 'Twas Heaven would not that his Pow'r should cease', Marvell is making a claim for Cromwell's political sanction. Because Cromwell is God's eschatological agent, his Protectorate is politically just; 'godliness' is legitimacy, in the Latter Days anyway. In The First Anniversary - as for men of this time in general - chiliasm and politics form a single entity. The justification of Cromwell is necessarily, here, the assertion of God's will in history.

At this date it was possible for Marvell to see in a great contemporary an agent of the imminent Kingdom: the 'Angel of our Commonweal' (401), who drives Time forward to its consummation. In 1654 Marvell could locate, in Cromwell's activism, the purposes of God in the current phase of providential history.

#### 4. Providence and the Puritan Monarchist

Thus The First Anniversary is an instance of Marvell's eschatological belief as it acted upon his view of contemporary history. The same eschatological principles animate both this poem of the 1650s and the prose tracts of the 1670s, differing only in their topical objects. From first to last Marvell was a chiliast, and this belief required certain political principles of him.

The chiliast's effort is always (as in The First Anniversary) to discover in current events that providence which is generally 'undiscern'd by the tumult blind,/ Who think those high Decrees by Man design'd' (241-2). When providential history is recognized as the principle of Marvell's political views, the question of how his political allegiances developed is clarified. For those allegiances would have traced the effects of that principle as Marvell reacted to the vagaries of the times.



À propos Marvell's political loyalties, the first thing to recognize is that he was a constitutional monarchist: a 'Parliament's man' in that traditional sense. It has been correctly noted by one commentator that Marvell was never a republican.<sup>113</sup> Even in his career as a member of the Country party, during the Restoration period, Marvell never in any of his works suggested a republican idea. His problem, as a constitutional monarchist, was to experience the reigns of two kings who were flagrantly unconstitutional in their actions and intentions: Charles I dispensed with Parliaments no more obviously than his son. But Marvell was equally fated to see a statesman - Cromwell - who, although not a king, was better fitted for the proper form of English government. It is due to the characters of these three 'Magistrates' that Marvell's allegiance looks, at first sight, so complex. As we have seen, there is a unity and consistency in Marvell's thought throughout his life, and that very consistency is the source of his variations in allegiance.

His fullest statement of belief in the English mode of constitutional government appears in The Growth of Popery [GP] of 1677. Over several pages Marvell details the proper liberty, and limitations, of each estate: king, people, and Parliament. England has a unique political system:

the kings of England rule not upon the same terms with those of our neighbour nations, who, having by force or by address usurped that due share which their people had in the government, are now for some ages in the possession of an arbitrary power (which yet no prescription can make legal) and exercise it over their persons and estates in a most tyrannical manner. (248)

It is against such absolutist tendencies in Charles II's government that Marvell writes his tract: seeing the model for this "illegal" exercise of power in the "Popish" tyranny of Louis XIV in France.

here the subjects retain their proportion in the Legislature; the very meanest commoner of England is represented in Parliament, and is a party to those laws by which the Prince is sworn to govern himself and his people....[the King's] very Prerogative is no more than what the Law has determined....Nothing is left to the King's will, but all is subjected to his authority: by which means it follows that he can do no wrong, nor can he recieve wrong; and a King of England keeping to these measures, may without arrogance, be said to remain the onely intelligent Ruler over a rational People. (248-9)

This is almost a textbook statement of constitutional monarchism.<sup>114</sup>

As Marvell put it in the RT, the magistrate operates within a 'Providential Constitution' (250).

In defence of this constitution he wrote against 'Arbitrary Power' in all his major tracts; and in GP as in the others, arbitrary government and religious Antichristianism are seen as associated evils, assailing both the civil and the ecclesiastical liberties of the Elect Nation. Thus, in GP, Marvell states his complaint against the establishments of both elements, that

There has now for divers years a design been carried on to change the lawful Government of England into an absolute Tyranny, and to convert the established Protestant Religion into downright Popery: in both which, nothing can be more destructive or contrary to the interest and happiness, to the constitution and being of the king and kingdom. (248)

This, the premise reflected in the title of the tract, is - as I have indicated - precisely the constitutional position to which the early Parliamentarians adhered. They too saw a vital reciprocity between the integrity of the English Constitution and the purity of English Protestantism. Marvell is a representative of such views.

Let us, then, trace the problems of political allegiance for a Puritan constitutional monarchist in the 1640s and 50s, the period in which Marvell's loyalties have provoked doubt and controversy. (Not that his later views have been much better understood.) As the poems on Lovelace, Villiers, Hastings and May all indicate, Marvell was a Royalist in that crucial period from 1648 to 1650. In Hastings he



reviles the 'Democratick Stars' (25); and in May he derogates the 'Republican' image of the Parliamentarians, as propagandized by May himself.<sup>115</sup> For him, as for others - even the Parliamentarians themselves - a king had a sacred authority: and mainstream chiliasm would have supported this view.<sup>116</sup> As far as early Parliamentary leaders were concerned, the King had merely been "misled"; only later would they become convinced of his guilt. So in the 1640s Marvell was a Royalist, in a manner only finely distinguished from orthodox Parliamentary principles.

Although a Royalist in political terms, Marvell was in religion a Puritan chiliast hostile to Laudian episcopacy. With the latter Charles' cause was (as both sides recognized) inextricably involved. For each individual attached to the Constitutional-Protestant amalgam, this combination on the Royalist side posed a dilemma: for Charles as the anointed lieutenant of God, but against him as the tool of episcopal power. Of this dilemma Marvell too must (given his beliefs) have fallen foul. Perhaps it is this difficult choice that he recalls in Upon Appleton House, when he describes William Fairfax's problem:

What should he do? He would respect  
Religion, but not Right neglect:  
For first Religion taught him Right,  
And dazled not but clear'd his sight. (XXIX)

In view of Marvell's Royalist poems, it is evident that he chose Royalism, the civil 'Right'. Just so, in Tom May, he recalls the 'ancient Rights' of monarchy (69).

Just as Marvell's choice issued in Royalism, so for some others the same dilemma produced allegiance to Parliament. One such Parliamentarian, the Army's commander Thomas Fairfax, was a case in point. Hence, when Marvell became in the early 1650s tutor to Fairfax's daughter, he was not - as some have assumed - evincing Parliamentary sympathies of a partisan kind. Not only had Fairfax already resigned from his position, but like several other Parliamentarian leaders he

was a constitutional monarchist whose brief did not include regicide or anything like it.<sup>117</sup> On the day of Charles' execution he wrote a poem expressing grief and shame at such an act;<sup>118</sup> he had refused to attend the trial of the king or to sign the warrant for his execution. The Army had by then moved far beyond the principles which he held. Fairfax, then, was close to Marvell in his central tenets.

But personal contact with Fairfax would have mollified Marvell's attitude towards the original objectives of the Parliamentarians.

The young poet who wrote

Much rather thou I know expectst to tell  
 ....how slow Death farre from the sight of day  
 The long-deceived Fairfax bore away.<sup>119</sup>

would have altered his opinions somewhat. And contact with Fairfax would have disposed him to give Cromwell the benefit of the doubt. Certainly he would have had no qualms about applying for a bureaucratic post in Cromwell's government: as he himself later said of his Latin Secretaryship, it was not a political position, and required no political actions of him.<sup>120</sup> But when he finally met the great soldier, Cromwell obviously won Marvell over to him. In the days when Marvell had written disparagingly of Fairfax, he had derogated Cromwell also, by a wishful vision of how 'heavy Cromwell gnasht the earth and fell'.<sup>121</sup> More immediate acquaintance with Cromwell turned Marvell, already wiser by the acquaintance of Fairfax, into Cromwell's unofficial laureate. As we have seen, by 1654 Cromwell seemed to him to embody the principle of chiliastic reformation in Church and State.

Moreover, Marvell then saw in Cromwell's Protectorate precisely that combination of liberty and restraint which he characterized as proper to English constitutionalism.

'Tis not a Freedome, that where all command;  
 Nor Tyranny, where One does them withstand:  
 But who of both the Bounders knows to lay  
 Him as their Father must the State obey.

(First Anniversary, 279-82)



This constitutionally-based 'Father' is Cromwell in his role as Lord Protector. Many contemporaries recognized in his title a king under another name; and some of his opponents decried his ambition in having ousted a king merely to usurp his place.<sup>122</sup> He was in fact offered the crown, but refused it - probably to avoid such calumnies.<sup>123</sup> But to Marvell in 1654 monarchy was precisely the form which he approved for Cromwell: the poet's constitutional-monarchist description of the Protectorate, above, was seconded in 1657 by his explicit recommendation of the crown to Cromwell: for in Blake he averred that 'The best of Lands should have the best of Kings' (40).<sup>124</sup> For Marvell monarchy was proper to England; and Cromwell represented a man superbly qualified for godly kingship, despite his lack of dynastic right. It is not surprising, then, that at Cromwell's death Marvell should have been a supporter of Richard Cromwell's succession to the Protectorate:<sup>125</sup> a "dynastic" idea opposed by republicans, but which Marvell would (logically) have approved for monarchist reasons. Constitutional monarchism was a feature of the Independents' beliefs - and both Marvell and Cromwell were Independents.

At all times Marvell pursued the via media. Having opposed the extremism of Presbyterian churchmen (in Lovelace)<sup>126</sup>, he denounced the radical sects in The First Anniversary and The Character of Holland. In the same manner he reviled Charles II's bishops and ministers as instruments of secular and spiritual tyranny. Neither 'Democracy' nor 'Tyranny' sorted with his views. He stated quite clearly what he wanted: 'True Worship and True Government' (GP, 289) - Constitutionalism and Protestantism.

Under the Restoration regime, this position required more "radical" proponent than it might otherwise have done. Just as he had seen in Cromwell the proper pattern of reformed government, so he was fated never to see a king who corresponded with this pattern. Marvell's

opposition to the Restoration establishment was not a matter of residual republicanism, carried over from the Interregnum (as some have suggested). It was the necessary stance of a Puritan constitutionalist in the face of a monarch who, with his ministers, violated Marvell's cherished principles. Marvell's views were constant: it was governments which changed, swiftly and extremely, between 1640 and 1670.

It was no accident that Marvell became, posthumously, a famous example of political integrity and constancy. His coherent and lifelong principles, based upon the concept of providential history, are marked in all his writings. For his political and religious beliefs were reciprocal in kind, welded together - as they were for his contemporaries - by eschatology. That philosophy was not only the Prime Mover in politics during his formative experience of the Second Civil War and the Interregnum, but also the dominant factor in his own view of that period. And as a philosophy of History, eschatology could take account of the enormous changes in England at Marvell's time. For the doctrine of providence allowed for alteration, even thrived upon it. It presented events as elements of God's progressive plan, whether those events seemed good or evil in themselves.

Hence, as we shall see, when Marvell described the sinful nature of the Civil War in Appleton House, and viewed its devastation, he saw these misfortunes as a prelude to the Coming which he welcomed. When, on closer contact with Cromwell, he saw in him not a brigand but a leader, he recognized Cromwell as the agent of God in the realization of the Kingdom. When the Restoration quelled this hope, Marvell decided that the abortive end of the Protectorate - since God must have



willed it - was a sign that the 'time' was not yet. More than that, it was a sign that men had been 'officious'. Eventually, in God's own time, the moment would come: in the meantime, he believed, the necessity was to wait for it patiently. Providential belief was structured to take account of the vicissitudes of history, and in terms of this belief Marvell was able to accept the course of events. His 'Trimming' was an aspect of faith.

On the other hand, providential belief did not require a personal passivity. By its nature chiliasm was expectant. In the First Anniversary, Marvell makes it clear that passivity is the best weapon in Antichrist's armoury.

well he therefore does, and well has guest,  
Who....  
Girds yet his sword, and ready stands to fight;  
(145-148)

This is the dynamic aspect of chiliasm. All things must be done in the light of the Last Day; and all governments - civil and ecclesiastical - must be measured in its terms. This, the yardstick applied by all chiliasts in the 1640s, was similarly crucial for Marvell in all his political writings - whether prose or verse. In the light of the philosophy of providential history the logic and consistency of his views, and the uniform texture of his career, become apparent.

## Appendix I

### Against Presumption: 'On Mr. Milton's "Paradise Lost"'

As I indicated in the previous chapter, Marvell attributed ecclesiastical errors to the sin of presumption (Howe, 167-8). In his eyes, therefore, 'presumption' was a cardinal evil: and his remarks upon the effects of this sin - especially in a religious context - confirm this view in many of his works.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in his commendatory poem upon Milton's eschatological epic, Paradise Lost, Marvell dramatizes his fear of presumption within the context of his major preoccupation.<sup>2</sup>

When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold,  
In slender Book his vast Design unfold,  
Messiah Crown'd, Gods Reconcil'd Decree,  
Rebelling Angels, the Forbidden Tree,  
Heaven, Hell, Earth, Chaos, All; the Argument  
Held me a while misdoubting his Intent,  
That he would ruine (for I saw him strong)  
The sacred Truths to Fable and old Song.  
(1-8)

In Marvell's view, it is possible to be too 'bold' in the matter of religion: and Milton is 'blind, yet bold'. Milton's blindness here carries an implication of man's spiritual blindness; which is confirmed later by Marvell's references to the sightless 'Sampson' and his destructive end, and to human 'Understanding blind' (9-10, 14). This is not a slur on Milton, but an observation which recognizes that Milton may share in common imperfections. God, after all, 'hath left [certain things] impervious to human understanding' (Howe, 168). Moreover, Marvell here shares his anxiety with his subject, Milton: for the latter had expressed his own fears of presumption in the course of Paradise Lost itself.<sup>3</sup>

The possibility of religious hubris was especially important in the case of Milton's epic, because his 'boldness' consists in the sheer ambition of his project; which is to unfold the 'vast Design' of universal history (2-5). That is, the vastness of his poetic design - theme and structure - corresponds to that of his subject, the great 'Design' of God in history. The universal range of this topic is reflected in Marvell's catalogue of the Miltonic theme (3-5).

Again, Marvell's formulation of this topic - ambition - heralds Howe, which was written four years later. There he stated that all men had tasted of the Forbidden Tree, in the



sense that they were too curious after knowledge which God had not vouchsafed them (167-8); thus the original sin of presumption was continuously recapitulated. So, here, his reference to the Fall is couched in terms of the 'Forbidden Tree', not only to echo Milton, but also precisely to evoke the first instance of presumption within his description of Milton's concerns. This implication is extended in the subsequent reference to the hubris of the 'Rebelling Angels'. In this manner Milton's very topics are made to reflect the sin of which he himself may be guilty.

The eschatological context of his theme is similarly established. Marvell describes Milton's historical canvas backwards: beginning with 'Messiah Crown'd', the Last Day at which Christ will become the Fifth King; and 'Gods Reconcil'd Decree', the redemptive promise which will be fulfilled only on that Day. These references, preceding those to the Angels and the Fall, emphasize the teleological significance of Milton's subject. This placing also reflects the danger of presumption, for it emphasizes that Milton deals with some events proper only to the prophet. Only his own authorization as a prophet could justify his treatment of the Last Things in this work. For Marvell had confirmed the view, adumbrated in 2 Peter i. 21, that God had given no modern 'revelation' to prophets; prophets are not self-made (RT, 250). Thus, in treating the Last Things as he does, Milton is in effect presuming his own sanction as a modern prophet. In fact, in Paradise Lost Milton had stated that 'all the prophets in their age the times/ Of great Messiah shall sing' (XII.243-4); and this assertion is precisely the sort of sanction that Marvell is not assured of here.

Logically, not only presumption but the related sin of sacrilege worry Marvell: that Milton might 'ruine... The sacred Truths' for the sake merely of poetic 'Song'. Then, as Marvell's fears of sacrilege begin to recede, he becomes anxious rather on the topic of Milton's ability to 'explain' divine truth.

Yet as I read, soon growing less severe,  
I lik'd his Project, the success did fear;  
Through that wide Field how he his way should find  
O're which lame Faith leads Understanding blind;  
Lest he perplext the things he would explain,  
And what was easie he should render vain.

(11-16)



The image of the 'Field' of religious truth again fore-shadows Howe's passage on human presumption. There Marvell notes that 'the theological ground is so far under the curse, that no field runs out more in thorns and thistles' (168); through that same field Milton must pick his way. Moreover, in addition to man's normal disabilities - 'lame Faith' and 'Understanding blind' - the field of spiritual truth is further encumbered by weeds of 'those peevish questions which have overgrown Christianity', as a result of clerical presumption in the matter of doctrine. In this poem Marvell fears that Milton may similarly 'perplex' the simplicity of 'original' doctrine.

The poem's analogue in Howe similarly sheds light on the structure of Marvell's argument in the following lines. In his tract he explained that doctrinal presumption had the effect of 'intangling men's minds'; here he fears a similar issue from Milton's work, that poor imitators will misunderstand his work. In that case they 'Might hence presume' to trivialise sacred history (21-2). Thus, even though Milton were not himself guilty of hubris, others might be misled by his example into that very sin.

At this point, however, Marvell absolves his fellow-poet, and - characteristically - asks for absolution himself.

Pardon me, mighty Poet, nor despise  
My causeless, yet not impious, surmise.  
But I am now convinc'd...  
Thou hast not miss'd one thought that could be fit,  
And all that was improper dost omit...  
That Majesty which through thy Work doth Reign  
Draws the Devout, deterring the Profane.  
And things divine thou treatst of in such state  
As them preserves, and Thee inviolate.

(23-34)

Here Marvell releases Milton from the charge of sacrilege, and confirms the latter's ability to recognize the literary decorum proper to his theme. Instead of 'ruining' sacred truth (7), Milton 'preserves' it. (34). Indeed, throughout the poem formulations of doubt (like 'ruin') are later answered by the asseveration of their opposites.

The most important of these "answers" within the poem concerns the matter of Milton's prophetic sanction, which arose at the poem's exordium. This point is vital to Marvell's justification of Milton's poem, because it refers to Milton's ability to adumbrate his eschatological theme. Marvell affirms Milton's prophetic role in these lines:



Thou sing'st with so much gravity and ease;  
 And above humane flight dost soar aloft,  
 With Plume so strong, so equal, and so soft.  
 The Bird named from that Paradise you sing  
 So never Flags, but alwaies keeps on Wing.  
 Where couldst thou Words of such a compass find?  
 Whence furnish such a vast expense of Mind?  
 Just Heaven Thee, like Tiresias, to requite,  
 Rewards with Prophesie thy loss of Sight.

(35-44)

First, Marvell allows that Milton has overcome the human disabilities of 'Understanding'; for he has risen 'above humane flight'. Echoing Milton's own invocation of his holy Muse (PL. I.13-14) - and thereby underwriting its success - Marvell likens him to a Bird of Paradise<sup>4</sup>; and, as in the case of Milton's invocation too, that 'Bird' is also the Holy Spirit. Only the inspiration of the Holy Spirit itself could confer the 'prophetic strain' of poetry.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, having asked 'Whence' Milton received his inspiration, Marvell avers that it was the gift of 'Prophesie' from 'Heaven' itself. That origin is true of the poet's 'Words' too, since true prophecy had the status of the 'Word' of God. (Thus John himself, in Revelation, simply provided 'record of the word of God', i.2 .) In this manner Marvell ratifies Milton's standing as a prophetic poet: his right to treat his chosen theme.

This affirmative answer to the question posed in the initial lines involves also various other ratifications. First, in the exordium Marvell had postulated Milton's possible "presumption" by his reflections of Milton's own subjects. Similarly, here, he endorses Milton's inspiration by echoing the latter's own characterization of his Muse. The same echoing process features in Marvell's evocation of the prophet Tiresias: far from being 'blind' in the manner of the angry 'Sampson' - as Marvell had feared earlier - Milton is blind in the mode of Tiresias, possessing rather the more profound "sight" of the vatum.

Finally, Marvell provides another, implicit echo of Paradise Lost. In that poem Milton had claimed to 'justify the ways of God' (I.26). So, here, Marvell "justifies" Milton's claim by diagnosing 'Just Heaven('s)' sanction for Milton's project. Hereby Heaven acknowledges - as it were - its own justification. Moreover, since God's justice was to

be manifested fully only at the Day of Judgement,<sup>6</sup> it is pertinent that Marvell should recognize here especially 'Heaven' in its 'Just' aspect; an aspect which is relevant to Milton's eschatological theme. And this allows a witty turn: that in its 'just requital' of Milton, Heaven is manifesting precisely that Justice which is Milton's topic. Only by such a detailed account of Milton's prophetic authority can Marvell acquit him of presumption in the face of God's 'vast Design'.



## CHAPTER IV

### A REVELATION FOR THE RESTORATION

In this chapter I intend to discuss Marvell's anti-catholicism, and its effects upon his life and works, in more detail. The chapter begins with an analysis of a relatively early poem, Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome (1646): in which Marvell adopts the persona of the Protestant poet encountering his Papist counterpart. This poem provides an illuminating (and rarely discussed) example of anticatholic attitudes from the early part of Marvell's writing career. This is followed, in the second section, by the culmination of Marvell's anticatholic expressions, in The Growth of Popery, his last prose work. The third section then considers Marvell's involvement in anticatholic political activity after the Restoration, and the literary works connected with this activity.

#### i. The Protestant Poet contra the Papist Poetaster

In some of his lyrics Marvell evinces a capacity for outrageousness - a mischief-making - which is at once one of his most attractive characteristics, and a trap for the unwary commentator. In some cases, as we shall see, his outrageousness has been mistaken for grave reflection (difficult as that may seem), and some of his most serious allusions have remained undiscovered under their witty formulations. As I shall be indicating later, outrageous moments in Marvell's lyrics are functional and revealing.

With Fleckno certain effects of a lack of alertness to Marvell's procedures have obscured the poem almost entirely. It seems to suffer from a critical neglect, most commentators taking it to be a poem of no significance either in literary terms, or as an example of Marvell's convictions.<sup>1</sup> Legouis, who does accord a brief discussion to the poem, took it at the lowest level of incidental satire.<sup>2</sup>

In fact Fleckno is an anticatholic satire, utilising Marvell's encounter with the papist priest Richard Flecknoe as an example of the clash of the Protestant poet with a man who is his opposite (as Marvell sees it) in every way.



In this poem, then, Marvell is dramatizing - scurrilously certainly - the contrast between the true and the false religions, as represented respectively by himself and Flecknoe. In the course of their encounter a contrast is also drawn between true and false poetry; the poem suggests that there is a direct correlation between the disciplines of religion and poetic creation: the true faith and true poetry belonging to a single realm. So the incident here dramatized does not in fact limit Fleckno to the status of an incidental poem; in a "low" manner it treats a "high" subject; a subject, moreover, central to Marvell's poetic relationship with the reformed doctrines of eschatology.

Marvell was never more alacritous; in satiric wit than when presented with an anticlerical - especially an anti-catholic - occasion: a fact evident not only in his prose but, as we shall see, in the lyrics and later satires also. The distaste which most critics display for his satirical utterances, especially in the case of the late satires, is most probably due to their cherished images of Marvell: a conclusion confirmed by numerous critical statements. However, it is natural that a poet with beliefs as trenchant as Marvell's should have exploited his ability for satire; especially satire of the then accepted mode, which had little concern for "dignity" in the modern conception. Accordingly, Fleckno may not be elegant, but it is effective - as satire is always intended to be. It is also, in view of Marvell's preoccupations, illuminating as the "generalization" of an incident.

The relevant incident was Marvell's visit, while staying in Rome, to Richard Flecknoe: an English Catholic priest who laboured under the delusion that he could write poetry. His ineptitude in verse was notorious, and later immortalized by Dryden's MacFlecknoe. Neither his poetry nor his priesthood recommended him to Marvell; and it is specifically Flecknoe's Catholicism that would have irritated Marvell most of all - not just a priest, but a Papist priest, and an 'English' one at that - as the title reminds us. An Englishman who could yet work for the advancement of Antichrist was to Marvell a monstrosity, and it is as a monstrosity that Marvell portrays him. The whole satire insists upon the combination of bad poet, bad priest, false religionist.

Marvell opens his poem by establishing the groundrules of



the encounter. 'Oblig'd by frequent visits of this man  
 .... /I sought his Lodging'. Marvell's reluctance in this  
 courtesy immediately establishes his low opinion of Flecknoe,  
 and introduces the persona he assumes for the poem - that of  
 the Protestant persecuted by the Papist.

Oblig'd by frequent visits of this man,  
 Whom as Priest, Poet, and Musician,  
 I for some branch of Melchizedek took,  
 (Though he derives himself from my Lord Brooke)  
 I sought his Lodging; which is at the Sign  
 Of the sad Pelican; Subject divine  
 For Poetry: There three Stair-cases high,  
 Which signifies his triple property,  
 I found at last a Chamber, as 'twas said,  
 But seem'd a Coffin set on the Stairs head.  
 (1-10)

Because of Flecknoe's pretensions to the 'triple property' of  
 poet, priest, and musician, Marvell sarcastically likens him  
 to Melchizedek, who was understood to have combined these  
 functions.<sup>3</sup> Melchizedek was also a noted Old Testament type  
 of Christ: so Flecknoe's pretensions are lofty indeed. From  
 this ironic comparison proceeds the reference to the 'sad  
 Pelican', another Christological image for the Passion that  
 redeems by blood:<sup>4</sup> and which is echoed in lines 127-8 of the  
 poem. The Pelican is therefore a 'Subject divine/ For  
 poetry.' In this fashion Flecknoe's nature as both priest and  
 poet is envisaged as a reciprocal one: his poetry and his  
 religion are identified.

At the same time they are satirized. Flecknoe's pretensions  
 are reflected in, and ironically measured by, the allusion to  
 Melchizedek; similarly, Flecknoe's insistence upon his  
 familial connection with Lord Brooke is described as his own  
 view of himself, in contrast to Marvell's suggestion of  
 'Melchizedek'. In other words, whereas the wordly Flecknoe  
 would claim a provenance that might be to his material  
 advantage - Brooke standing high both socially and as a poet -  
 Marvell, his mind on higher things, would prefer to find a  
 scriptural parallel. The clash here intimates Flecknoe's  
 wordly nature, as opposed to Marvell's more reverent turn of  
 mind. Marvell does not allow the contrast to rest there. The  
 'sad Pelican', which ought to <sup>be</sup> a 'Subject divine/ For Poetry' is  
 not Flecknoe's theme: but the sign of the Inn at which he  
 lodges. Thus his sole connection with the Christological 'sad  
 Pelican' is absolutely terrene, a sign not of redemption but of



food, liquor, and rooms.

A similar implication is used in the later poem, Tom May's Death, where Tom May - another 'prophane' poetaster - imagines that his journey into Elysium is merely another trip to the pub.

And with an Eye uncertain, gazing wide,  
 Could not determine in what place he was,  
 For whence in Stevens ally Trees or Grass?  
 Nor where the Popes head, nor where the Mitre lay,  
 Signs by which still he found and lost his way.  
 (4-8)

Here, by the use of Innsigns denoting Popery ('Pope's head' and 'Mitre') Marvell's innuendo suggests that May was really a Papist:<sup>5</sup> finding, like the rest of those "deluded" by Popery, that while it purported to be the 'way' to Heaven (here, Elysium), it was in fact the way whereby a soul is 'lost' to perdition. Accordingly, in May the poetaster finds himself expelled from Elysium by Ben Jonson, a personification of "true" poetry. By means of another Inn-sign, Flecknoe is similarly derogated: the implication of the sign being that, incapable of the 'Subject divine' in his verse, he simply sleeps and eats under it. The concomitant implication - that Flecknoe professes both religion and verse merely to scrape a living from them - is amplified throughout the poem.

Moreover, a later satire on transubstantiation in the poem (60f.) may be foreshadowed here, since one use of the Pelican symbol referred to this doctrine.<sup>6</sup> Marvell, as a Protestant, satirizes the transubstantiation motif here by making the 'Pelican' denote the food and drink available under its sign: the Host, for Flecknoe, really is the material sustenance that the Papists claimed - but in a manner that derogates both them and Flecknoe. And here the Protestant alternative to Popery is represented not only by Marvell's "pious" formulations, but also by the recollection of 'Lord Brooke', who - pace Flecknoe the Papist - was a noted Calvinist as well as a respected poet.

So the succession of oppositions and ironies here provides the tensions in the language that are characteristic of Marvell. In this poem modelled on the problematic, the sacred Christological significance of the Pelican provides an element in Narrative 1; its "Papist" significance and its reference to an 'Inn' contributes to Narrative 2. Here the implicit contrasts



set up by the 'Pelican' motif amplify the opposition of true religious reverence and its poetic exponent (Brooke) against Popery and the profane poetaster (Flecknoe). Religion and poetry are ranged on one side, against irreligion and poor verse on the other. In this manner the poem's problematic is organized.

I describe it as "poor" verse advisedly, since the purpose of Marvell's insistence upon Flecknoe's poverty - that aspect of the poem which Legouis finds so distasteful - is due to the way in which poverty may here symbolize the poor verse, mean spirit, and reductively materialist character of Flecknoe himself. There is a continuous opposition, in this poem, between Flecknoe's "means" (both spiritual and literary) and his pretensions.

Thus, having described the tiny 'Cell' in which Flecknoe lived, Marvell suggests that Flecknoe's inability to afford a bed has at least given his room the appearance of an ante-chamber.

Yet of his State no man could have complain'd;  
There being no Bed where he entertain'd;  
And though within one Cell so narrow pent,  
He'd Stanza's for a whole Appartement.  
(15-18)

Beyond the pun on 'Stanzas' - as both verse and the storeys of a building - is an ambiguity intimating both the poverty of Flecknoe's verse and the 'State' of his pretensions. That is, he is at least sufficiently prolific in verse to puff himself into some pomp ('State') thereby. Similarly, his real situation - his true level as poet and man - is indicated by the meanness of his lodging. This opposition between Flecknoe's resources (of whatever kind) and his pretensions is the basic framework of the poem, within which the comic incidents of the encounter provide enactments of the opposition.

The religious aspect of this opposition is evinced here also. Flecknoe's room is 'three Stair-cases high, /Which signifies his triple property.' On one level, his 'triple property' is that triple function of poet, priest, and musician - in which Marvell had likened Flecknoe to Melchizedek. On another level, Flecknoe's 'triple property' refers also to the Pope's three-tiered crown, the symbol of Popery; and it may also include a



dig at the Trinitarian doctrine of the 'three persons', satirized later in the poem (l.100). Moreover, the 'Chamber' gained by means of these 'three stairs' is, it seems to Marvell, a 'Coffin' rather than a room. This notion - like the stairways - 'signifies' something: that by the guidance of Popery (the 'stairs') one reaches not heaven but a 'Coffin' - the spiritual "death" which was the consequence of all Antichristian delusions. Marvell, a Protestant, is being lured by a true 'Sign' in false form (the misappropriated Pelican) via Popery (the stairs and the 'triple' Flecknoe) to the 'Coffin' (Flecknoe's room) of spiritual death. This "allegory" is, of course, a satirical burlesque: but it is no less carefully rendered than if it were highly serious. Moreover, it is underpinned by Marvell's emphasis upon symbolism here: the "type" of Melchizedek, the 'Sign' represented by the Pelican, the stair that 'signifies'. The whole of the first stanza is an outrageous comic allegory: whereby Marvell portrays himself as the innocent Protestant lured into the Popish den. The scene is Rome itself, the heart of Popery, and Flecknoe is cast as the false religionist - in the various roles proper to that function.

So Marvell proceeds to characterize their meeting as his 'martyrdom' at the hands of Flecknoe.

Straight without further information,  
 In hideous verse, he, and a dismal tone,  
 Begins to exorcise; as if I were  
 Possest; and sure the Devil brought me there.  
 But I, who now imagin'd my self brought  
 To my last Tryal, in a serious thought  
 Calm'd the disorders of my youthful Breast,  
 And to my Martyrdom prepared Rest.  
 Only this frail Ambition did remain,  
 The last distemper of the sober Brain,  
 That there had been some present to assure  
 The future Ages how I did indure:  
 And how I, silent, turn'd my burning Ear  
 Towards the Verse; and when that could not hear,  
 Held him the other; and unchanged yet,  
 Ask'd still for more, and pray'd him to repeat:  
 Till the Tyrant, weary to persecute,  
 Left off, and try'd t'allure me with his Lute.  
 (19-36)

Here Marvell imagines himself the martyred victim of the Papist Flecknoe, a 'Tyrant... to persecute'. The whole recital is conducted like an inquisition, from the 'information' to the consequent 'Tryal', torture, and 'burning' of the true religionist. Recalling the allegory of the first stanza, Marvell



"recognizes" that 'sure the Devil brought me there'. Thus Flecknoe's 'hideous verse' is seen as an instrument of torture, 'burning' the ears like the flames of the fire: the mock-allegory once again identifying his false poetry with his false religion. Hereby the Protestant poet, Marvell, is 'martyred'; indeed, Flecknoe's rant 'exorcises' him, as if the spirit of true religion were an anathema. Therefore Marvell regrets only that no one is present to record his patient martyrdom for 'future Ages': a humorous recollection of the Book of Martyrs to the true religion, compiled by Foxe.

In addition to this reference to a seminal work of English eschatology, Marvell recalls also the reformer Milton: echoing in

Only this frail Ambition did remain,  
The last distemper of the sober Brain

Milton's Lycidas:

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
(70-71) 7

In that poem, and especially in these lines, Milton discovers the role of the true poet who is also an adherent of true religion;<sup>8</sup> an appropriate recollection for Marvell as the mock-martyr to Papist verse. The characterization, here, of Marvell as Protestant victim of Flecknoe's versified "persecution" continues the problematic's opposition of true religion/poetry to false religion/doggerel. Marvell's martyred sensibilities are those both of the poetic 'Ear' and the Protestant.

At this point he implies that Flecknoe varies the torture, proving that he is no better as musician than as poet (37-44). The cacophony that he produces on the lute evokes a sympathetic response from his 'hungry Guts (which)... In Echo to the trembling Strings repin'd'. Marvell recognizes in this music-making a hint that he is expected to feed the musician:

I, that perceiv'd now what his Musick ment,  
Ask'd civilly if he had eat this Lent.  
He answered yes; with such, and such an one,  
For he has this of gen'rous, that alone  
He never feeds; save only when he tryes  
With gristly Tongue to dart the passing Flyes.  
I ask'd if he eat flesh. And he, that was  
So hungry that though ready to say Mass  
Would break his fast before, said he was Sick,  
And th'Ordinance was only Politick.  
Nor was I longer to invite him Scant:  
Happy at once to make him Protestant,



and Silent.

(45-57)

Marvell now sees why Flecknoe should have been so anxious to meet him. Amidst the cascade of jokes about Flecknoe's habit of scrounging from all and sundry, is a series of ironic assessments of Flecknoe's religious observance. Not only would he profane the Mass in order to eat, but his Lent is a flexible phenomenon. Naturally Flecknoe's hypocrisy does not disturb Marvell, who has no brief for Papist forms of observance: 'Happy at once to make him Protestant', by the neglect of Lent. Marvell implies that, having survived Flecknoe's Papist "persecution", he has managed to "convert" the latter to Protestantism (of a kind); moreover, the fact that he has achieved this mock-conversion for the price of a meal is a measure of Flecknoe's principles.

He has already given Flecknoe a jokingly "demonic" aspect, by the implications of the previous passage. For the 'hideous verse' that the poetaster spews forth is likened to 'exorcism' because it is such stuff for which only demons might provide fit audience. To Marvell it appears to be, then, such torment as the damned would suffer in Hell, 'the Devil brought me there'. Similarly, Flecknoe's musicianship, far from evoking the music of the spheres, sets his stomach howling - an unfortunately terrene effect. Thus even the "spiritual art" of music cannot affect Flecknoe other than physically; his hunger therefore reflects his spiritual deprivation.

Such caricatures are amplified by Marvell's description of Flecknoe's peculiar constitution, in which body and soul appeared to have exchanged their proper characteristics.

Nothing now Dinner stay'd  
But till he had himself a Body made.  
I mean till he were drest: for else so thin  
He stands, as if he only fed had been  
With consecrated Wafers: and the Host  
Hath sure more flesh and blood than he c'an boast.  
(57-62)

Flecknoe's starved appearance (insisting upon his generally "deprived" character) provides Marvell with an opportunity for more anticatholic satire. Flecknoe's appearance would indicate a diet consisting solely of 'consecrated Wafers' - a peculiar form of piety: but then the obstinately earthly priest might



(the implication runs) view the Host purely in the light of potential sustenance. 'the Host/ Hath sure more flesh and blood than he can boast'; a satire on the doctrine of transubstantiation. If the Host in that doctrine is 'flesh' (the body of Christ), it suits Flecknoe: since he has already confessed to Marvell that he 'eat flesh'. Just as, here, the thin wafer has 'more flesh... than he', so Flecknoe's scrawny body outdoes his soul in "spirituality" - it is so thin as to be the only ethereal thing in this earthly creature's constitution.

This Basso Relievo of a Man,  
 Who as a Camel tall, yet easily can  
 The Needles Eye thread without any stich,  
 (His only impossible is to be rich)  
 Lest his too subtle Body, growing rare,  
 Should leave his Soul to wander in the Air,  
 He therefore circumscribes himself in rimes;  
 And swaddled in's own papers seaven times,  
 Wears a close Jacket of poetick Buff,  
 With which he doth his third Dimension stuff.  
 (63-72)

Flecknoe's half-existing body is his sole claim to "spirit": whereas in other men the Soul is the element which is freed from the Body (especially by death), in Flecknoe the Body is ethereal, the Soul substantial ("gross", or worldly). 'Lest his too subtle Body, growing rare,/ Should leave his Soul to wander in the Air.' This characterization of Flecknoe as lacking in spirit - of his Body as the only Soul which he can boast - is built upon his thinness and hunger; the symbols of his spiritual deprivation. By this means Marvell makes the insubstantiality of Flecknoe's frame a symbol of the priest who is only "body" - a twist in logic which displays the ingenuity of the conceit whereby Flecknoe's physical slightness reflects his spiritual grossness. Everything about Flecknoe is pure bathos.

This bathos extends also to the biblical text that Marvell recalls here, in a manner which patronizes the poetaster. Matthew xix. 24 confirms that 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'. Marvell's adaptation of the text suggests that this 'Camel' (Flecknoe) can thread the eye of a needle, not because he is pure spirit, but because he is thin: once again, Flecknoe is able to make a spiritual problem a merely material one. Moreover, he can 'thread the Eye' because he is



not rich - 'His only impossible is to be rich'. In other words, Flecknoe fails to be excluded from Heaven merely on a technicality: he threads a loophole, as it were. Marvell's citing of the text, as well as insulting Flecknoe's appearance, hereby indicates Flecknoe's lack of all the cardinal Christian virtues except poverty. Once again, an image of Flecknoe's deprived state relates also to his spiritual bankruptcy.

His poetry suffers a similarly bathetic fate: wrapped round him as a substitute for clothing, it serves a material purpose, even if it cannot touch the spirit (69f.). A similarly ironic note is struck by his clerical garments:

Thus armed underneath, he over all  
Does make a primitive Sotana fall;  
And above that yet casts an antick Cloak,  
Worn at the first Counsel of Antioch;  
Which by the Jews long hid, and Disesteem'd,  
He heard of by Tradition, and redeem'd.  
But were he not in this black habit deckt,  
This half-transparent Man would soon reflect  
Each colour that he past by; and be seen,  
As the Chamelion, yellow, blew, or green.  
(73-82)

Several Papist "superstitions" are mocked here. That Flecknoe follows 'Tradition' intimates the difference between ecclesiastically prescribed doctrine, designated thereby, and the purely scriptural authority owned by Marvell and other Protestants. The Roman Catholic religion was understood to be thoroughly vitiated by 'Tradition', as expounded by such 'General Councils' as that of Antioch, recalled here. Flecknoe's spiritual heritage is, therefore, mere superstition. And even this superstition is portrayed as "material": a 'Sotana' is his earthbound form even of false doctrine. (Here the Papist addiction to relics suffers some incidental flak, as the talismanic form of superstition that was repudiated by reformed Protestantism.) Flecknoe is not merely an adherent of false religion, but a recalcitrantly materialist adherent at that.

Just as his poetry is merely a 'dress', an affectation whereby he 'circumscribes himself in rimes', so too his priesthood is purely a matter of clerical dress. (Dress, of course, often carries such symbolism.) Just as Flecknoe 'clothes' himself in poems, so he "bodies out" his spiritual vacuity by his clerical garb. Thus once more false poetry



and false religion are seen as related modes of hypocrisy. And this hypocritical cast is crystallized in the image of the 'Chamelion', which takes on the colour of its surroundings.

Marvell would make use of the same anticlerical satire - of 'dress' as hypocrisy - in his prose work of a much later period, Smirke. There he derides the pomposity of Francis Turner, and his efforts at wit:

he might well have forborn his young wit.... yet to work he fell, not omitting first to sum himself up in the whole wardrobe of his [clerical] function; as well because his wit consisting wholly in his dresse, he would (and 'twas his concernment to) have it all about him: as to the end that being huff'd up in all his ecclesiastical fluster, he might appear more formidable, and in the pride of his heart and habit out-boniface an Humble Moderator. So that there was more to do in equipping of Mr. Smirke then there is about Doriman, and the Divine in Mode might have vyed with Sir Fopling Flutter. The vestry and the tiring-roome were both exhausted...

(11-12)

Here Marvell's identification of Turner with Sir Fopling Flutter, the dull wit from The Man of Mode, reflects his judgement of Turner's facility in witty discourse. In Marvell's world-view a Turner and a Flecknoe were much the same: both were false clerics and false writers.

The consistency of Marvell's views is reflected in the similar texture of his satiric images, whether in the early verse or in the late prose: as we saw also in the case of the First Anniversary. Another example of this consistency occurs later in Fleckno, when the poetaster's unfortunate prodigality in verse is sarcastically likened to the Pelican's generosity: 'So the Pelican at his door hung/ Picks out the tender bosome to its young' (127-8). The same ironic usage of this image - to refer to an unwanted eloquence - is made by Marvell to rebuke Parker in RT:

Ad insigne Pelicani. A very Emblematical sign where you digg'd and pick'd your very Heart-Blood and Brains out to nourish your young tentamina.

(260)

Parker, Turner, and Flecknoe all belong to that camp most abominated by Marvell; and the manner in which he addresses their kind remains uniform from first to last.

The characterization of Flecknoe as both vacuous and hypocritical marks a rough half-way point in the poem, and a change of emphasis in the narrative. Having apprised his



reader of Flecknoe's character in all its inadequacies, Marvell's poem now relies upon a series of comic incidents providing occasions for religious satire. The first such incident is introduced by a swiftly allusive joke. Marvell remarks of Flecknoe's room that its 'compactness did allow/ No empty place for complementing doubt,' a curious wording for the idea that it could not accomodate more than two people at once. In fact the wording reflects another anticatholic point, that the extrascriptural doctrines mentioned a few lines before leave no room for religious 'doubts' - those, that is, which refer to the 'unrevealed' truths: here, as in General Councils, Catholicism is portrayed as presumptuous. Moreover, the crowding caused in the room imitates the restriction upon believers' consciences that (as Marvell noted in his prose tract) ensues from such doctrinal prescriptions.<sup>9</sup> Thus, when towards the close of the poem Marvell designates his encounter with Flecknoe as a 'Captivity' (168), he is recalling a religious 'Captivity' too (reiterated in Flecknoe's 'Cell') - that which Popery exercises upon the conscience.<sup>10</sup>

There follows a comic incident in which another visitor to Flecknoe meets Marvell as the latter descends the stairs, and they find that there is no room for either to pass. It transpires (from a reference to the stranger's familiarity with the Vatican in l.92) that this is yet another Papist - Protestant encounter. This comic version of the conflict between the two Churches provides occasion for several anticatholic jokes; and, inevitably, the Protestant Marvell comes off best - verbally at any rate - in the encounter.

His gathring fury still made sign to draw;  
But himself there clos'd in a Scabbard saw  
As narrow as his Sword's; and I, that was  
Delightful, said there can no Body pass  
Except by penetration hither, where  
Two make a crowd, nor can three Persons here  
Consist but in one substance.

(95-101)

The stranger is something of a blockhead - as the rest of the poem confirms. At any rate, Marvell seizes the opportunity to base two jokes on the law of 'penetration': his observation, 'where/ Two make a crowd, followed by a speculation on 'three', may (as one critic has suggested<sup>11</sup>) recall the formulation, 'When two or three are gathered together in Thy name'. In fact this could only indicate an ironic judgement of a



situation of trivial conflict, where two religions also are at loggerheads. Similarly, 'nor can three Persons here/ Consist but in one substance' is a parody of trinitarian conceptions of God: a conception to which, in this particular form, many Protestants were hostile. Finally, Marvell's play on ideas of composition and conflict attacks the oecumenical idea: remarking that 'the place doth us invite/ By its own narrowness, Sir, to unite' (103-104). Doubtless this conciliation takes a form appropriate to Marvell's notion of how the Protestant-Papist conflict would end: for it is the Papist who yields way here, and 'ask'd me pardon' (105f.); doubtless there is also, here, an incidental glance at the Papist belief in the efficacy of papal 'pardons'.

The irony of this burlesque extends also to Flecknoe, who admires Marvell's ingenuity: 'the Priest said I too had some wit' (102). It appears, then, that Flecknoe either approves Marvell's anticatholic squibs, or has failed to understand them. Both alternatives are equally censorious of Flecknoe himself. At any rate, his 'propitiatory' effort at their 'attonement' results in a double treat for his stomach, since he now has two hosts for dinner (107-110). 'Let it suffice that we could eat in peace;/ And that both Poems did and Quarrels cease/ During the Table' (111-113); but Christian conciliation cannot be maintained here. It transpires that the stranger is an admirer of Flecknoe's verses; to which it is relevant not only that he has demonstrated that he is a fool, but also that as a Papist he is one of the deluded. His delusion by false religion is, naturally, matched by his delusion that Flecknoe is a true poet: the relationship between false poetry and false religion being condign throughout the poem. Since the stranger is a false religionist, he turns out to be a false reader as well:

how I loath'd to see my Neighbour glean  
Those papers...  
Yet he first kist them, and after takes pains  
To read; and then, because he understood  
Not one Word, thought and swore that they were good.  
But all his praises could not now appease  
The provok't Author, whom it did displease  
To hear his Verses, by so just a curse  
That were ill made condemn'd to be read worse:  
And how (impossible) he made yet more  
Absurdities in them then were before.  
For he his untun'd voice did fall or raise  
As a deaf Man upon a Viol playes,...



Thereat the Poet swell'd, with anger full,  
 And roar'd out, like Perillus in's own Bull;  
Sir you read false. That any one but you  
 Should know the contrary.

(132-154)

The relationship between adherence to a false religion and a similar susceptibility to false poetry is here developed in several ways. The stranger's religious attitude to Flecknoe's poems ('he first kist them') is comparable to the similar gesture made to the princes of the Catholic Church, whose rings it was customary to kiss. Equally, for Marvell (as we have seen) as for other Protestants, 'Papist' doctrine involved the perversion and misrepresentation of the Scriptures. So, here, the Papist reader 'understood/ Not one Word' of the poems: the relationship between a density in literary and a density in scriptural interpretation is indicated by the ambiguity in 'Word', capitalized to recall the scriptural 'Word'. Just as the Papist is prone to misinterpret - or simply to fail to understand - Scripture, so here he is similarly blinkered in literary matters. This implication is developed later, when the reader is told 'That any one but you/ Should know the contrary.' Those prone to religious delusions are prone to mistake also false poetry for true. The stranger is said to 'read false' in this sense; but, when Marvell echoes Flecknoe's charge in line 156, it means something rather different - that because Flecknoe's is false poetry, his admirer 'reads false' also in the sense that the poems he reads are themselves 'false'.

The equation between false poetry and false religion is further emphasized by the comparison of Flecknoe to 'Perillus in's own Bull'. Perillus was the victim of his own art: having contrived a fatal machine - the Brazen Bull - he was the first to prove its effectiveness. Similarly, Flecknoe's bad verse has suffered the 'just curse' of inept recitation - the point being that he has laid the basis of his own annoyance. The allusion used to indicate this parallel allows Marvell a pun on 'Bull', as "papal bull". Such a bull could be used for condemnation; just as, on one level, Flecknoe is cursing his admirer. Similarly, as bulls were written for proclamation, Flecknoe's poems are themselves 'bulls' calling down their own punishment; a manner of conveying that bad poetry creates bad readers, which allows another parallel between literary and religious forms of 'falseness'.



Similarly, Flecknoe's 'bull' of denunciation has a religious effect upon his votary.

Thereat the waxen youth relented straight;  
But saw with sad despair that 'twas too late.

(137-8)

The religious process of repentance and despair is here ascribed to the relationship between the "poet" and his reader: the parallel is drawn between the false reader and the papist, with the additional burlesque of Flecknoe's contumely as an image of the minatory popish priest. The emphasis of "Popery" on works, indulgences, rewards and punishment is reflected not only in Flecknoe's denunciatory 'Buzz' but also in his "poetic" retribution upon the unfortunate votary:

For the disdainful Poet was retir'd  
Home, his most furious Satyr to have fir'd  
Against the Rebel; who, at this struck dead,  
Wept bitterly as disinherited.

(159-162)

Flecknoe's retributive attitude reflects that of a doctrine which stressed religion as a system of rewards and punishments - that which was antipathetic to protestant emphasis upon faith. This religious satire is the aim of the inflated language here: where the believer is 'struck dead' and 'disinherited'.

This "persecuting" aspect of Popery has already been exercised upon Marvell, a Protestant, earlier in the poem: and to emphasize the parallelism between his treatment by Flecknoe and that of Flecknoe's admirer, the persecution of Marvell is amplified immediately before the "false reading" incident. Marvell had hoped, by buying Flecknoe a dinner, 'to make him Protestant,/ And Silent' (56-57): and thereby related Flecknoe's poetastry - that which was to be silenced - to his religion. Flecknoe, however, proves himself "unconverted", as soon as the dinner is ended:

But now, Alas, my first Tormentor came,  
Who satisfy'd with eating, but not tame  
Turns to recite ...

he more strict my sentence doth renew;  
(117-122)

So Marvell's "persecution" is revived, and Flecknoe remains his 'Tormentor' or demon. The conception of Flecknoe's verse as a Papist torture is further developed here:

Yet that which was a greater cruelty  
Then Nero's Poem he calls charity:  
And so the Pelican at his door hung  
Picks out the tender bosome to its young.

(125-128)



Flecknoe's misplaced generosity - the disgorging of his poems-- is compared to the Pelican's 'charity': the christological image in its compassionate sense. Yet, since Flecknoe's recitation is in fact 'cruelty' - the persecution already emphasized - his activities provide an ironic inversion of the Pelican's meaning. Here, as throughout the poem, Flecknoe is portrayed in terms of irreligion.

The 'Papist' features of irreligion and persecution are further developed by Marvell's allusion to Nero. Nero was, of course, a notorious poetaster who was known to have forced his auditory: and thus provides an example of poetastry combined with cruelty, that exactly reflects Marvell's characterisation of Flecknoe. To this combination is added a religious implication. Nero was a prominent persecutor of the Christians, and this aspect of his notoriety is suitably recalled with reference to Flecknoe's 'cruelty'. The Roman Catholic Church was viewed as merely the modern form of the Roman Empire in its Antichristian aspect (GP, 254); its modern persecutions being, therefore, a counterpart to the persecution of true religion under the Emperors. Here the reference to Nero similarly establishes this connection.

Flecknoe's form of persecution is a "versified" Popery; accordingly, Marvell's metaphors for the former's poems carry certain religious implications.

Of all his Poems there he stands ungirt  
Save only two foul copies for his shirt:  
Yet these he promises as soon as clean.  
But how I loath'd to see my Neighbour glean  
Those papers, which he pilled from within  
Like white fleaks rising from a leaper's skin!  
More odious then those raggs which the French youth  
At ordinaries after dinner show'th,  
When they compare their Chaucers and Poulains  
(129-137)

This is Marvell's most virulent satire upon Flecknoe's verse, and - appropriately - it carries the worst religious charge against Flecknoe. The implications of the pun on 'foul copies' are carried to an extreme in the comparison of the poetaster's verse with the symptoms of syphilis as displayed by the 'French youth' (venereal diseases were popularly described as the "French disease"). It may seem, at first sight, that this reference to syphilis is a gratuitous image for poetastry: but it is in fact a format for a specific religious idea. In the traditional imagery of eschatology, antichristianism - and especially Popery - was an 'idolatry' and therefore



a 'spiritual fornication'. Thus Papists were guilty of 'spiritual fornication' with the Scarlet 'Whore': their religious error was always so described by the adherents of eschatological belief, and the religious imagery of 'fornication' was both insistent and highly developed. Thus, when Marvell compares Flecknoe's poems to the symptoms of venereal disease, he is indicating that Flecknoe is guilty of 'fornication' in this spiritual sense - in that Flecknoe is a Papist. The image of disease - seconded by that of 'leprosy', a famous form of divine punishment for sin<sup>12</sup> - amplifies the evocation of a character vitiated by irreligion. Even the recollection of the 'French youth' subserves both the venereal and the Papist charges, for at this time the French were the most powerful Catholic nation in Europe. Here, as throughout the poem, Flecknoe's religion and his verse are compounded in the same "falsity".

With the quarrel that ensues, Marvell's encounter with Flecknoe reaches its close.

I, finding my self free,  
As one scap't strangely from captivity,  
Have made the Chance be painted, and go now  
To hang it in Saint Peter's for a Vow.  
(167-170)

Marvell's comparison of his experience to 'captivity' draws a parallel between his 'captivity' in the hands of Flecknoe and that captivity which Rome (pagan and papist) had imposed upon the representatives of the true religion<sup>13</sup>. It is, of course, a deliberate irony that Marvell should provide a memorial of the occasion for 'Saint Peter's', the pre-eminent Papist church; and his reference to that place is the culmination of the poem's anticatholic satire.

Moreover, Marvell here imagines himself giving thanks at a Papist shrine for his 'deliverance' from the Papist Flecknoe, a somewhat ironic procedure. Furthermore, such Papist tokenism - here represented by a picture - was repudiated by Protestantism, and provoked Puritan iconoclasm. Marvell's offering, then, is intended to denigrate both Popery and its tokenism: for a trivial and ridiculous occasion he offers similarly ridiculous thanks. The falsity of tokenism is here Marvell's very mode of "retribution" upon the false religion represented by this occasion. And the 'picture' sufficiently summarizes that 'idolatry' recalled earlier in the poem.

This Final Image also culminates the idea of "conversion"



which has appeared at several points in the narrative. Marvell's "conversion" to Papist procedures here - giving thanks for the confirmation of a 'Vow' - is strictly ironic, since the 'Vow' was steadfastly to withstand his 'Tormentor's' persecutions: that is, he indicates his gratitude (in Papist manner) for his triumphant resistance of a Papist 'Tryal'. There may be, here, a sarcastic reflection upon the ineptitude of the tempter, Flecknoe, and even of his religion too.

From first to last, Flecknoe is a satire on false religion and its expression, false poetry. In the meeting of the Protestant poet with the Papist poetaster the consistent opposition of "true" and "false", on both literary and religious levels, provides the problematic of the poem. Marvell's encounter with Flecknoe was, for him, not so much an occasion for personal abuse as for a sustained piece of anticatholic satire. Despite its so-called "occasional" nature, Flecknoe is related to Marvell's consistent preoccupations, and much that appears merely incidental in the satire is effectively a reflex of those preoccupations.

ii. Prose against Popery: 'The Growth of Popery!'

Three decades after Marvell wrote Flecknoe, he published his fullest, most explicit assault upon 'Popery' and its related phenomenon, 'Arbitrary Government': in An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government [GP] (1677), his last major tract. This, his final statement of reforming eschatological views, is a partisan (certainly) but compelling account of the course of contemporary events: and its urgency reflects the force of Marvell's views as <sup>he</sup> meditated upon England's peril. The tract displays a truly chiliastic feeling of impending disaster, and a recession of that hope of imminent renewal that had usually accompanied the premonition of ruin in the 1640s. As Marvell complained in a letter of the period, 'never had a poor Nation so many complicated, mortal, incurable Diseases'. (323).

GP is, like two other tracts, an expression of those reforming eschatological principles forged in the 1640s and 1650s, a fact that its title reflects. Not only is the



combination of 'Popery' and 'Arbitrary Government' characteristic of Marvell's views (as we have seen), but the title also recalls the similar effort of Milton: his tract Of True Religion ... and what best means may be used Against the Growth of Popery, written four years earlier. The two reformers saw the same danger - the increase of 'Popery' - in contemporary events. Milton also saw the same admixture of religious and political menace, averring that 'Popery is a double thing to deal with, and claims a twofold power, ecclesiastical and political, both usurped, and the one supporting the other'<sup>14</sup>. It is not surprising, in view of the eschatology that they shared, that these two poets and friends should have taken a similar view of England's character in the Restoration. Indeed, this anticatholic tract is the final statement of Marvell's lifelong principles, in the face of what appeared to be the worst threat they had yet encountered.

The Restoration period had seen, amongst the majority, an increase in fears of "Popery": a recognition of its currency in high places, its connection with the influence of France, and its relationship with 'arbitrary power'.<sup>15</sup> The Great Fire of London was commonly rumoured to have been started by Papists, and Marvell had been one of the M.P.'s appointed to investigate its causes.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in a letter of June 1672 Marvell noted the recent occurrence of several fires and the consequent recrudescence of rumours about Papist incendiarism (327-8). He also records the 'Pope-burnings' (usually associated with Guy Fawkes' Night) current in London: his remark that 'I am afraid they burne Popes to night' (356) has been misinterpreted in the past,<sup>17</sup> because of its deprecatorily amused tone. Similarly, in 1675 Marvell had been appointed as a commissioner for recusancy in Yorkshire,<sup>18</sup> his home county. In several ways, then, Marvell was involved with the topical features of Popery, as well as with the more general concerns of his anticatholic bias.

The dangers apprehended from Popery are said, by Milton, to be disturbing the 'greatest part of the nation';<sup>19</sup> similarly, a piece by Bishop Croft claimed that there was widespread subversive activity by Papists.<sup>20</sup> This attitude of urgency is the background to Marvell's statements in GP, and no doubt this common hysteria provided the tract's extensive audience.



The tract bases itself upon the premise, adumbrated earlier in Marvell's works, that the relationship between English constitutionalism and Protestant religion was a vital one. Here he argues that both the religion and the government of England are being gradually subverted by a plot - prosecuted by high-placed Papist 'conspirators' - to establish Popery and absolutism in England. According to Marvell, the patron of this plot is Louis XIV, and it is 'the French Interest' that works for England's corruption; Popery and absolutism being the distinctive badges of Louis' own regime. This thesis is impressively documented and highly persuasive. Moreover, it was certainly the case that Charles II was involved in intrigue with Louis, and also that Charles favoured Roman Catholicism: attempting repeatedly to ease the legal disabilities of recusants in England.<sup>21</sup> And in 1677 the "secret" Treaty of Dover, whereby Charles engaged himself to Louis in several respects, had become relatively common knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Such events are the matter of Marvell's tract, and in the course of GP the Papist 'conspiracy' is detailed in relation to the conflict between Charles and the Commons, the suppression of Parliament by prorogation and other "absolutist" measures, the mismanagement of the Second Dutch War, and legislative attempts to "Catholicize" both the Church and the monarchy.

As I indicated earlier, GP begins with a statement that constitutional monarchy is the true form of English government. This, and the proper religion of England, are the stakes here; and this combination is that characteristic of traditional principles - upheld by Parliament in the 1640s, when it was first asserted that Parliament was the guardian of English Protestantism, and that only an absolutist government could enforce the reversion of England to Popery.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, Marvell diagnoses the "conspiracy" as a two-pronged attack on the special character of England: which is a 'chosen' nation both politically and in faith.

And as we are thus happy in the constitution of our State, so we are yet more blessed in that of our Church; being free from that Romish yoke, which so great a part of Christendom do yet draw and labour under.

(250)

But, he announces, there is a Papist conspiracy 'to subvert the government and religion, to kill the body and damn the soul of our nation' (261). Just as 'Popery' and 'absolutism' have a



symbiotic relationship, they strike at the equally interwoven benefits of England: 'True Worship and True Government' (289). The opposition of true government/faith to false religion/absolutism is here the equivalent of the confrontation, in Fleckno, of true poetry and religion with false Popery and poetastory.

Thus the kingpin of GP is a concerted philippic against Popery itself. Marvell sufficiently delineates his audience on the title-page: where GP is recommended 'to the Reading of all English Protestants'. The 'Romish yoke' is characterized for their benefit, in an inclusive denunciation of Popery:

That Popery is such a thing that cannot, but for want of a word to express it, be called a Religion: nor is it to be mentioned with that civility which is otherwise decent to be used, in speaking of the differences of humane opinion about Divine matters. Were it either Judaism, or plain Turkery, or honest Paganism, there is yet a certain bona fides in the most extravagant belief, ... but this is a compound of all the three, an extract of whatsoever is most ridiculous and impious in them, incorporated with more peculiar absurdities of its own, in which those were deficient; and all this deliberately contrived, knowingly carried on, by the bold imposture of priests under the name of Christianity.  
(250-251)

As we have already seen, the principle of toleration was for Marvell based upon the idea that men should be allowed a latitude of belief in unrevealed matters. Here he explicitly excepts Popery from the right to toleration; for Popery masquerades as Christianity. This textbook statement of Popery as Antichristianism properly emphasizes the eschatological view that Popery was a pretence - an 'imposture... knowingly carried on' - whereby Antichrist occupied the true Church and corrupted it. A similar exception of Popery from the right to toleration was made by Milton, for similar reasons - which comprise also the political resonances of Popery.<sup>24</sup> For him the Pope's is a 'Babylonish yoke',<sup>25</sup> whereas for Marvell it is a 'Romish yoke': Rome and Babylon being one and same in the Revelation.

In his detailed allegations of this Popish perversion of the true religion, Marvell reasserts the traditional charges levelled against Popery by such reformers as Foxe. Popish clerics had concealed the Word from the faithful by refusing to allow vernacular translation: thereby hoodwinking the faithful, who could not confirm the falsity of Popish doctrine



by reference to the Scriptures; after which, there was nothing to prevent them fabricating whatever they wished (251-2). This proscription of the Scriptures was the major Reformation charge against the Roman church, vernacular translations of the Bible such as the Geneva translation being the vanguard of Reformation propaganda; it was, as we have seen, a major platform of Protestantism that the Scriptures were both necessary to salvation, and must be accessible to all.

At this point, Marvell expands upon the elaborations of doctrine that the Papists could venture upon by this means. His main charge is, naturally, that of Antichristian 'idolatry'; he attacks totemism, and the pre-eminent cult of the Virgin Mary, repudiated by Protestantism; ritualism; and 'Exorcismes' (252). He revives also other traditional reformist charges, against - for instance - clerical mediation and transubstantiation (252).<sup>26</sup> As one would expect in such a reformer's account of 'Popery', Marvell argues to the conclusion that Popery subverts all proper order - whether in spiritual matters or in the state.

out of an equitable consideration...of so faithful a slavery [from their adherents], [the Roman clergy] have discharged the people from all other services and dependence, infranchised them from all duty to God or Man; insomuch that... were the scholars so apt as their teachers, they would have been long since an end of all either true Piety, or common Honesty. (252-3)

This Antichristian 'conspiracy' of 'Hypocrisy, Licentiousnesse and Knavery' (252-3), which misled the Church for centuries, is of course headed by the Pope - Antichrist - himself.

He, as clerk of the spiritual market, hath set a rate upon all crimes: the more flagitious they are and abominable, the better commodities... So that it seems as if the commands of God had been invented meerly to erect an office for the Pope; the worse Christians men are, the better customers; and thus Rome does by the same policy people its church, as the Pagan Rome did the city, by opening a sanctuary to all malefactors. (253-4)

This parallel, as habitations of the ungodly, between pagan and papal Rome was - as I indicated earlier - a common one in eschatological thought. Similarly, Marvell here reinforces the point that the Pope breaks the fundamental relationship between God and man (253); just as, in secular terms, Popery releases subjects and princes from their social and political contracts. It is 'a power so pernicious, and doctrine so



destructive to all government' (257). This double-headed subversion of both spiritual and political contracts was similarly emphasized in Milton's account of the dangers of Popery, a few years before.<sup>27</sup> For both reformers, then, Popery is subversive in two realms; and for Milton, as for Marvell in General Councils, the 'ecclesiastical is ever pretended to political'.<sup>28</sup> Both reformers agree that Popery disrupts all contracts;<sup>29</sup> both warn of current Popish plots in England, and their challenge to 'magistrates... and the public safety'.<sup>30</sup>

Accordingly, just as Milton in his analogous tract had evoked England's former 'bondage' under Popery and her deliverance at the Reformation,<sup>31</sup> so Marvell here insists upon England's especial character, and contrasts her Elect "freedom" with the current enslavement of Europe under Popery (258). Also like Milton, he recalls the great struggle of Reformation, using the Marian persecutions of Protestants as a minatory example of Popery's viciousness in England (258); the Papist conspiracies against Elizabeth, the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot; and, finally, the Popish subversion at the root of the Civil War and the execution of Charles I (258-9). All these are the most cherished allegations against Popish political activities in England. The Marian persecution fuelled Foxe's influential hagiographies. Similarly, the Armada year was generally invoked (as here) as the triumph of English Protestantism over the Antichristian Philip II;<sup>32</sup> and an equivalent bogey-making enshrined the 'Gunpowder Treason' as a frightening example of papist subversion in England-- in the Seventeenth Century Guy Fawkes' Night had an emotive anticatholic significance.<sup>33</sup> Marvell's conclusion - that the recent history of England provides 'a succession of the popish treasons' (259) - is not only a view characteristic in contemporary eschatological thought, but also the basis for his topical assertion of a papist conspiracy in government. His assertion of the erosion of the virtues of the Elect Nation, by a conspiracy from within (259-60), thus indicates that the current crisis is the most dangerous manifestation yet seen of the constant Popish attempt to subvert England.

Having firmly established himself as the defender of traditional English government and religion (260-261), Marvell asserts that some of Charles II's own ministers are implicated in a project to create a 'French slavery' and



revive 'the Roman idolatry' (261), on the model of Louis' absolutist and Papist regime. As Marvell concludes from his survey of recent events, the conspirators have 'sold all to [Louis] for those two pearls of price, the True Worship and the True Government' (289). In the meanwhile they have alienated England from her co-religionists and natural allies, the Swedes and the Dutch; and have made English foreign policy an agent of Louis' territorial acquisitions in Europe - thus extending the power of Antichrist, of course. (The implication of this point could not have been lost on Marvell's readers: that the Elect Nation, by aiding Antichrist, would consign herself to perdition.) As the final, emotive suggestion in this catalogue of chiliast nightmares, Marvell avers that the conspirators have even caused English influence to second Louis' attempt to impose 'Popery' upon Holland.(286-7). The cumulative effect of Marvell's analysis (he is careful to avoid too explicit an 'enthusiasm') is such that it is not surprising that his readership contributed to the later hysteria of the 'Popish Plot'.

Here Louis is, in fact, the prime representative both of tyranny and Popery:

the Master of Absolute Dominion, the presumptive Monarch of Christendom, the declared champion of Popery, and the hereditary, natural, inveterate enemy of our King and Nation.

(263)

While Louis represents himself to other Catholic powers as the Popish champion (285), his motives are really territorial and materialist (286); his combination of worldliness and hypocrisy is, as I have indicated, that generally attributed to Popery and Antichristianism. And Marvell implies also that the Catholic European powers are in league against England (285).

In particular, Louis represents an attempt to establish a new Antichristian Empire - a 'universal monarchy' that would contradict the Protestant enterprise for an Imperium Christianum. Thus Marvell compares Louis to Philip II of Spain, 'in [whose] hands perished the Spanish design of the universal monarchy, and that chiefly by the conjunction of the English and Dutch against him' (386): implying that once again Holland and England should combine against Antichrist, for a victory on the model of the 'eighty-eight'. In this way Reformation history, and its most impressive Protestant victory, are



imported into Marvell's account of the current crisis. The recollection of the Armada's defeat here implies that the Elect Nation may once again triumph, if she is returned to her proper course.

A similar topical impact is gained from another revival of Reformation history, when Marvell insists upon the "persecuting" character of Popery.

nor is there any, whether prince or nation, that dissents from his [the Pope's] usurpations, but are maked out under the notion of hereticks to ruine and destruction whensoever he shall give the signal. That word of heresy mis-applied hath served him for so many ages to justify all the executions, assassinations, wars, massacres, and devastations, whereby his faith hath been propagated; of which our times also have not wanted examples, and more is to be expected for the future. For by how much any thing is more false and unreasonable, it requires more cruelty to establish it: and to introduce that which is absurd, there must be somewhat done that is barbarous... nothing of any sect... can be more recommended by all these qualities but the Papacy.  
(254-5)

It was axiomatic, as we have seen, that Popery was a cruel and persecuting faith; here, the contextual account of Popish infamy underpins Marvell's portrait of Louis as the persecutor of Dutch Protestantism (285); thus characterizing the French King as the current avatar of Antichristianism in its temporal aspect. Thus, here as throughout the tract, the Reformation version of history is used to diagnose current events in England and Europe.

It is evident that the salient point in this diagnosis is Marvell's philippic against Popery, and his identification of it as the Antichristian Church.

the Pope avowing Christianity by profession, doth in doctrine and practise renounce it: and presuming to be the only Catholick, does persecute those to the death who dare worship the Author of their Religion [Christ] instead of his pretended Vicegerent.

(255)

This assertion of the 'pretended' character of Papal authority is the crux of Antichristianism, and Marvell's audience would have recognized it as such. Again, Marvell's constant assertion, in his tracts, that the Papist clergy were really avid for temporal power is now given a new twist. The Pope himself is an instrument of Papist secular ambitions:

what wretched doings, what bribery, what ambition there are... till among the crew of bandying Cardinals the Holy Ghost have declared for a Pope of the French or Spanish faction? It is a succession like that of the



Egyptian Ox (the living idol of that country) who dying or being made away by the priests, there was a solemn and general mourning for want of a Deity; until in their conclave they had found out another beast with the very same marks as the former, whom then they themselves adored... Nor was that election a grosser reproach to human reason, than this is also to Christianity.

(256)

The sarcasm of these remarks was justified, given the decisive influence of France in particular upon papal elections at this time.<sup>34</sup> But beyond this topical irony is a general reflection upon papist 'idolatry'- here compared to the 'Ox'-'idol'; and Marvell's choice of a 'beast' idol for the comparison carries a typical eschatological implication. For the Pope, as Anti-christ, was also the Beast; moreover, the Beast bestowed upon his adherents, distinguishing 'marks' (those on their foreheads) - which Marvell here accords to the Beast himself. Only those marked by the Beast are the votaries of Antichrist, as Revelation records:<sup>35</sup> so, here, to ensure a continuous Antichristian succession, the papal election must ensure that the new Pope bears 'the very same marks as the former'. Understood in its eschatological imagery, this passage is ingeniously to the point; many such occasions in Marvell's prose are underrated precisely because of a lack of alertness to Marvell's eschatological premises.

Equally, Marvell's portrait of the Roman Catholic Church is liberally sprinkled with such shrewd jokes as this:

Surely it is the greatest miracle of the Romish Church that it should still continue, and that in all this time the gates of Heaven should not prevail against it.  
(256-7)

This epigrammatic summation of his history of Popery parodies Matthew xvi. 18:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In Marvell's parody the claim of the Papacy to the authority of Peter is overturned by the witty inversion of 'the gates of hell': since Popery is a false Church, it is the 'gates of Heaven' that cannot prevail until it is overthrown. This relatively simple example of Marvell's "eschatological" wit can be contrasted with the covert formulations which he utilises towards the end of the tract. Here Marvell, seeming



to disclaim his intentions, characteristically urges them thereby:

the relator [viz. Marvell himself]... only gives evidence to the fact, and leaves the malefactors to those who have the power of inquiry... But if any one delight in the chase, he is an ill woodman that knows not the size of the beast by the proportion of his excrement.

(413)

Here Marvell invites his readers to identify the "conspirators" from the clues he has given (naturally, he had been careful not to name names). Since these conspirators are, according to his argument, agents of Antichristian Popery, they are suitably compared to a 'beast' - in fact, the Beast. (A similar image of the Beast pursued by the hunter appeared in his First Anniversary, two decades earlier.) Here the specificity of 'excrement' - spoor - gives the image a satirical edge, providing a scurrilous characterization of these conspirators.

As Marvell has indicated in the tract, the conspirators' success to date has depended not only upon the patronage of Louis (the external agent of Antichrist), but also upon the ancillary aid of the domestic fifth column of Antichrist - bishops and Popish recusants. In GP, as in the other tracts, episcopacy is identified as the domestic face of 'Popery'. Having noted the conspirators' appointment of recusants to military commands (293), Marvell remarks that many books asserting 'the absoluteness of the English monarchy against all law' have appeared, most of which were written by divines (308). This is, for Marvell, a typical instance not only of clerical infamy, but also of that temporal ambition of the clergy that he had exposed in General Councils: so, here, he reasserts that

it seldom happens... that the statesmen are more fortunate in meddling with religion, than the churchmen in government, but each mars them with tampering out of their provinces.

(339)

The bishops whom he particularly condemns as 'meddlers' in the conspirators' service are those with Popish leanings, who masquerade as Protestants to secure office (293), and thereby undermine the Anglican Church from within. The particular topical menace to which he addresses himself is that of two proposed Bills which were likely to "Catholicize" England from



the top (353): these were 'An Act for Securing the Protestant Religion by educating the children of the royal family, and providing for the continuance of a Protestant clergy', and 'An Act for the more effectual conviction and prosecution of Popish Recusants' (338). Since Marvell regards these Bills as attempts to extend Popish influence while seeming to suppress it, he remarks tartly of the second that 'the Body of the Bill was contrary to the title' (339): and both were examples of the fact that 'Protestancy... [had gone] out of fashion' (338). The first of these Bills was directed at the probability of a Catholic heir to the throne - James, Charles' brother, being a Catholic. In effect its provisions seemed to "legalize" a Papist King and also to afford unprecedented power to the episcopal establishment; and Marvell quotes the Bill in full in order to highlight these facts. As a confirmation of his great anxiety about this recrudescence of Popery, Marvell's longest extant speech to the Commons was delivered against this Bill.<sup>36</sup> The Bill was a Scylla and Charybdis of horrors: 'whether this Bill will prevent Popery or not, this will secure the provisions of the Bishops'.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, Marvell is careful to emphasize the danger of the Catholic succession itself, quoting at length the Commons' objections to James' marriage in 1673 to another Papist, Mary of Modena (295-7). Doubtless Marvell had chosen this indirect manner of asserting the dangers of a Catholic succession because in relation to James, as to his brother, a wise man would not expose himself to charges of treason. Similarly, although Marvell's analysis implies the profound involvement of Charles II in the "conspiracy", he is careful to avoid any explicit statement of this; and to indicate why, he himself tells us the penalties that would ensue if he did attack the King (261): that is one way of confirming Charles' guilt.<sup>38</sup>

The resistance to Charles and the conspirators has proceeded mainly from Parliament, although it was hamstrung by its own corruption (330-331). But the Commons retains an incorruptible core of members: 'a sparkle of soul, that hath hitherto preserved this gross body from putrefaction, some gentlemen that are constant, invariable, indeed Englishmen' (324). This inviolable element in the House is another, and revealing, instance of GP's equation of 'True Worship and True Government'.



For, here, Marvell is supporting the reformist view that only Parliament (an integral part of 'True Government') can guarantee the survival of 'True Religion' or 'Worship'; and these 'invariable' members are, like the "saving remnant" that preserved true religion during the ascendancy of Antichrist, the "saving remnant" that guarantees true government. So Marvell reiterates the vital relationship between constitution and Pro<sup>tes</sup>tantism.

It is the abuse of this fundamentally chiliastic and reformist relationship that has produced the same problems throughout the ages: the present crisis being but one instance of this abuse (which in all its aspects is fundamentally an extension of the Antichristian principle of corruption and usurpation).

the Christians did [not long] endure under the gentlest of all institutions [primitive Christianity], though with far more certainty expecting the return of their Divine Legislator [at the Second Coming]... nor hath there any advantage accrued unto mankind from that most perfect and practical model of humane society except the [mere] speculation of a better way to future happiness, concerning which the very guides disagree, and of those few that follow, it will suffer no man to pass without paying at their turnpikes. All which had proceeded from no other reason, but that men, instead of squaring their governments by the rule of Christianity, have shaped Christianity by the measures of their government, have reduced that straight line by the crooked, and bungling divine and humane things together, have been always hacking and hewing one another, to frame an irregular figure of political congruity.

(281)

Here Marvell places the current religio-political crisis in the context of the continuous erosion of Christian principles since their very 'institution': as throughout GP, the all-pervasive diagnoses of eschatological thought enlighten a current hiccup in the historical process. The 'primitive' principle that emerges from Marvell's analysis is, here, that the constant 'bungling [of] divine and humane matters together' has at once confused politics and religion, and negated the proper function of Christianity as the model whereby all government should be framed - as it was, of course, in the First Anniversary. The relationship between government and religion is, then, the wrong way around: and law is used 'not so much in order to the power of religion as over it' (281). (Exactly the same point was made, significantly, by another reformer in the 1640s.<sup>39</sup>) As Marvell's stream of argument in GP shows, he is in the 1670s applying still the 1640s reformist principle that - in



the last analysis - 'True Government' and 'True Worship' are the same thing: for Protestant Christianity is 'that most perfect and practical model of humane society', in all its aspects. This is why the conspirators' actions have a two-pronged effect: their "illegal" and "unconstitutional" suspension of the penalties against recusants is an attack both on political constitutionalism and religious order; it at once gives Popery currency and provides a precedent for other unconstitutional actions. (281).

Moreover, given the chiliastic basis of these religio-political principles, it is relevant to note here that Marvell associates their corruption with a general failure to respond appropriately to the 'certainty' of the Second Coming: implying that, had Christians from the first trusted in 'the return of their Divine Legislator' they might not have attempted their own legislation so disastrously. (It should be recalled - as Marvell intends here - that the 'Divine Legislator' will found the perfect polity in the Kingdom.) Thus his allusion to the Second Coming supports two of Marvell's points here: first, his advocacy of toleration (281), because 'the very guides disagree' until the full revelation at the Last Day; and, second, that<sup>as</sup> until that Day the perfect relationship between religion and politics cannot be achieved, ~~such~~ alterations to the current order as the conspirators propose can only worsen matters (281). Politically, as in religion, the same principles apply and only the Coming will 'perfect' (281) the religio-political order.

Thus, when Marvell states the "rationality" of the twin principles of government and religion, he is asserting not a secular ideal, as some might infer from the assertion of 'reason': but a chiliastic tenet. Thus, when we encounter the word 'reasonable' - one of the most ubiquitous in GP - it carries the appropriate implications. Marvell calls the English constitution the only 'reasonable' government, we recall; he said that Popery was 'unreasonable' (255); and its prescriptions mere 'Phansy' (252), than which there is 'no... more rational way to frustrate' true religion (251); its dogma is 'monstrous to reason' (251), and papal elections are a 'reproach to human reason' (256). Similarly, he observes that antisciptural imposition is due to mere 'phansie' (281): continuing this contrast of the 'reasonable' 'True Worship...



and Government' with the mere 'phansie' of their false counterparts. That is, this 'phansie' is that of the 'lying wonders' - the illusions - generated by Antichristianism. Thus 'True Government' receives the same 'rational' sanction: the King of the Elect Nation is 'the onely intelligent Ruler over a rational People' (249). This chiliastic reasonableness is, then, a product of 'squaring... governments by the rule of Christianity' (281). In this manner GP provides the culminating statement of Marvell's views both on religion and on politics - that their relationship is such that 'True Worship' (true religion) is the key to proper government; and that 'Popery' is the inveterate enemy of both.

### iii. Political Activity against Popery

The Growth of Popery is the culmination of a career which had straddled a succession of bewildering political changes: and in that tract the sense of weary disillusionment vies with a vigorous defence of the values of the 1640s. Marvell was certainly distressed by the character of the 1670s, but he became if anything more trenchant than ever: the popular critical image of an exhausted talent - despoiled by the character of the Restoration - is wide of the mark. In this section, therefore, I wish to provide a brief survey of the motives impelling, and the links between, Marvell's satires and his political activities at this period; all of which are directly involved with his consistent eschatological tenets.

Marvell's attitude to the 1670s is succinctly expressed in Smirke: this decade is a time

when the sickly nation had been so long indisposed and knew not the remedy, but (having taken so many things that rather did it harm than good) only longed for some moderation.

(10)

As we saw in Chapter III, the reformer William Prynne felt the same way about the political vicissitudes of recent times. But stability, for Marvell, could only be maintained by 'true' principles in religion and government: and that meant, for the sake of such a notional stability, that he needed vigorously to oppose the current regime's tendencies to Popery and absolutism. Marvell was in a cleft stick: requiring stability, and therefore encouraging unrest; cleaving to traditional principles, and therefore undertaking radical action in their defence.

Furthermore, he had a depressing sense that the struggle

might be futile in any case:

the King was never since his coming in, nay, all Things considered, no King since the Conquest, so absolutely powerful at Home, as he is at present. Nor any Parliament, or Places, so certainly and constantly supplied with Men of the same Temper. In such a Conjunction... what probability is there of my doing any Thing to the Purpose?

(Letters, 315)

This atmosphere of frustration is that communicated in GP also, and gives urgency to Marvell's appeal there:

For the debate of this day it is as great and as weighty as ever was any in England: it concerns our very being, it includes our religion, liberty and property... this time is our season.

(383)

This appeal against the 'French Interest' is a part of Marvell's acute sense of the danger to the Elect Nation; and it is in the light of these anxieties that his political activity during the Restoration should be seen.

One of his most consistent topics in this period was the appeal to Charles II to 'reform': this was what Marvell had to hope for, given his monarchist principles, no matter how unlikely a contingency it was. Thus the peroration of GP (413-4), and the last section of his satire Last Instructions to a Painter, both urge Charles to reform himself and to throw off his evil ministers. Both a politic absolution of the King himself, and an urgent desire for proper monarchy, animate such passages. Only once did Marvell explicitly condemn Charles II, in his 'Mock Speech'<sup>40</sup>; but this had a constructive political motive, which was to encourage Parliament's new-found resistance to Charles' demands.<sup>41</sup>

One of <sup>his</sup> supposed "evil ministers" was Clarendon: in Last Instructions a divine inspiration is said to cause Charles to dismiss him (906, 937f.). Marvell's opposition to Clarendon had much to do with the mismanagement of the Dutch War,<sup>42</sup> but it referred also to the fact that Clarendon appeared to be a supporter of episcopal power and an opponent of toleration<sup>43</sup> (these being indissoluble quantities in Marvell's view anyway). In a satire which is probably authentic,<sup>44</sup> Marvell used a pertinent apocalyptic image for Clarendon's malignity.

When Clarindon had discern'd beforehand,  
(As the Cause can eas'ly foretel the Effect)  
At once three Deluges threatning our Land;



'Twas the season he thought to turn Architect.  
(Clarendon's House-Warming, i)

'Deluges' were (on the model of the Flood and the Deluge of the Last Day) considered to be God's judgements upon error; here those in question are war, plague, and fire - those recent disasters in England which were indeed regarded as God's punishments for the erring nation.<sup>45</sup> Of these Clarendon is the 'Cause': the source of England's error. Participant in this notion, no doubt, is Clarendon's pro-episcopal attitude: episcopacy being, in Marvell's view, a perennial fount of error.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly reformist principles inspire Marvell's more favourable attitudes to statesmen of the period. As an opponent of the 'Court' party (the "conspirators" of GP and the 'black' ministers of evil in Last Instructions [107-110]) Marvell was associated with 'Country' opposition - the constitutional and anti-French platforms of which were substantially his own as well. The major figures in this group, Shaftesbury and Buckingham, were two of the 'Four Lords' whose commitment to the Tower was denounced by Marvell in GP (321-2).<sup>47</sup> Shaftesbury was a Presbyterian who favoured toleration<sup>48</sup> - so in religious terms he was close to Marvell's stance; especially since he had liaised between his co-religionists and the established church,<sup>49</sup> a conciliation of which Marvell would have approved. In GP he intimates darkly that, things being as they are, Shaftesbury may yet become 'a martyr for the English liberties and the Protestant religion' (409). Thus it<sup>is</sup> not surprising to find that politically, too, Shaftesbury had manifested the same problems of allegiance that distinguished Marvell's career; having begun as a Royalist supporting Charles I, and later moving to a Parliamentary position.<sup>50</sup> After a period as a minister after the Restoration, he became leader of the opposition on constitutional matters.<sup>51</sup> The sources of Marvell's approval of him are therefore evident.

With Buckingham Marvell's connexions were closer, since the former had married Marvell's pupil, Maria Fairfax, daughter of the Parliamentary general.<sup>52</sup> Despite his scandalous private life, he was sufficiently distinguished politically to evoke Marvell's opinion that he was the defender of 'the due liberties of the English Nation' (GP, 299). In the Civil War Buckingham had fought on the Royalist side, his father having



been the favourite both of James I and Charles I.<sup>53</sup> So, on all counts, it is unsurprising that he and Marvell should have been allied. Other considerations recommended Wharton, the third of the 'Four Lords': who had been close to Cromwell, a Parliamentarian, and a supporter of Nonconformity.<sup>54</sup>

The framework of affiliations and oppositions which I have outlined here is reflected in the Last Instructions, a satire accepted as authentically Marvell's.<sup>55</sup> There the Country party is characterized as the champion of 'true' principles (287-90), the conspirators are reviled (325-8) as enemies of Parliament; and there is a glance also at one of their episcopal collaborators (811-16). This brief excursion into Marvell's typical anticlericalism is complemented by the virulent anticlerical satire of Scaevola Scoto-Britannicus and The Loyall Scot.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, The Loyall Scot re-uses a passage from Last Instructions, in which Douglas - the Scot in question - displays the spirit of English heroism against a background of political folly (649-696). Just as, in Loyall Scot, Douglas is contrasted with the venality and contumely of episcopacy: so, in Last Instructions, he and Monk represent traditional English virtues betrayed by the government. 'Of former Glories the reproachful thought,/ With present shame compar'd, his mind distraught! (521-2). Monk's shame and grief symbolize the straits to which the nation has been reduced by its ministers (themselves implicitly contrasted with Monk, restorer of the crown to Charles II [515]).

Monk's frustration reflects Marvell's own, and Marvell's was sufficient to impel him to a strange affiliation: which, however strange, was yet the reflex of his anticatholic anxieties. The historian, K.H.D. Haley, discovered that Marvell was involved in a secret movement set up by William of Orange within England.<sup>57</sup> The evidence indicates that by 1674 Marvell was a member of the group organized by William's agent, Pierre du Moulin, to disseminate propaganda against the "growth of Popery" and the French Interest.<sup>58</sup> (William and Holland naturally had most to gain by weaning England from the French service.<sup>59</sup>) It is even possible that Marvell's pamphlets were financed or promoted by this organisation.<sup>60</sup> Haley suggests that Marvell's involvement may have begun as early as 1673, and that he may have aided the Dutch in the destruction of England's alliance with France in 1673-4.<sup>61</sup>

Marvell's reasons for this espionage are far from difficult



to understand. The aims of William were essentially his own, in so far as both Marvell and the Commons were anxious to break the French Interest and to forge an alliance with the Dutch, their co-religionists: this much GP tells us. And Marvell's opposition to Popery was complemented by the organization's concentration upon that danger. Many anti-Popery pamphlets were reprinted in England under its aegis; and the community of eschatological interest is well instanced by, for example, that entitled The Burning of the Whore of Babylon (1673).<sup>62</sup> It is evident that Marvell became involved with the Dutch as a result of his anticatholic convictions, and of what he saw as Popery's secular menace from France.

This motive must have been - indeed, I have shown that it was - very strong, since it forced Marvell into a tergiversation in his attitude to the Dutch. His poems In Legationem and The Character of Holland manifest an antipathy for the Dutch. Thus far Marvell reflects a general English attitude: which had been, since the early years of the century, positively schizophrenic. For, although the Dutch were fellow Protestants, they also gave sanctuary to extremist sects - something decried by the moderate Marvell in The Character of Holland. In economic terms Holland and England were at loggerheads: two mercantile nations with competing ambitions for commercial empire. This tension is apparent throughout the Seventeenth Century, and the Restoration government in particular pressed the trade rivalry.<sup>63</sup> But by 1676 the Commons, and many other groups, were urging a Dutch alliance - supported by Marvell in GP - against the French Interest. Furthermore, in 1673 Moulin, William's agent, had published in England a pamphlet expounding the vital connexion between the French Interest and the danger of Popery,<sup>64</sup> precisely Marvell's thesis in GP.

With these facts we may connect the occasioning circumstance for GP itself. It has been suggested that GP was evoked by the marriage of William of Orange to Mary Stuart (daughter of James) in November 1677;<sup>65</sup> GP was written in the following month. This marriage in effect promoted the interests of the Court party (or 'conspirators'), especially since it seemed to give reassurance to those fearing French proclivities in the government.<sup>66</sup> William being France's natural enemy. It also seemed to presage a war with France.<sup>67</sup> In GP Marvell makes a



carefully veiled reference to the 'popish' motives for the marriage, implying that Louis himself had prompted it as a red herring.<sup>68</sup>

This immediate occasion for GP was diagnosed by D.M. Schmitter, who considers that in this relation Marvell's motive was almost entirely political and possibly disingenuous; and, further, that Marvell distrusted William too.<sup>69</sup> In these respects he is mistaken. Obviously the occasion of the marriage is linked to Marvell's pro-Dutch activities (not mentioned by Schmitter): and the motive is largely anticatholic - as GP manifests, and the nature of Marvell's Dutch connexion confirms.

Moreover, Schmitter overlooks Marvell's explicit reference to William in GP itself. This is carefully placed, for maximum impact, in the tract's closing pages. There Marvell notes the current maltreatment of England's natural Protestant ally - William - in the service of the French Interest; Marvell repines 'The abandoning his Majestie's own nephew for so many years, in compliance with his and our nation's enemies' (411). Such a reminder was particularly telling, since William was commonly regarded in England as a champion of Protestantism.<sup>70</sup>

Marvell's contact with Holland was doubtless the basis of his entry into the Dutch organization. We know that he had visited Holland in the 1640s, and probably enlarged his connexions there through his friend John Pell.<sup>71</sup> Many English Protestants were resident in Holland, and may have supplied other connexions; Marvell having refreshed them by a visit in 1662, the purposes of which remained mysterious but may have involved secret diplomatic aims.<sup>72</sup> In addition, it is notable that Buckingham too was implicated in the Dutch organization by an intelligence report of 1671 which mentions Marvell;<sup>73</sup> and John Ayloffe, a friend of Marvell with similar views, was also a member of the organization.<sup>74</sup> These facts indicate that Marvell would not have considered his Dutch connexion treasonous. Indeed, several prominent men felt quite happy to utilize foreign aid against domestic enemies;<sup>75</sup> and the salient motive for such "international" loyalties in this period was militant Protestantism.<sup>76</sup> Protestantism still retained its international character, the reflex of chiliastic universalism.<sup>77</sup> Of this Marvell is an exemplar: in league with the Protestant champion in Europe, for the preservation of England against Popery.



been

Finally, one of Marvell's poems may have<sup>78</sup> stimulated by the Dutch connexion. This is Bludius et Corona,<sup>78</sup> which appears in an English version also, as part of the extended anti-episcopal diatribe in The Loyall Scot. The subject of the poem is one Thomas Blood, who had attempted to steal the Crown jewels in revenge for what he considered an injustice perpetrated by the government. Marvell himself provided a gleeful account of the audacious Blood in a letter of 1671:

One Blud, outlawed for a Plot to take Dublin castle, and who seized on the Duke of Ormond here last Year, and might have killed him, a most bold, and yet sober, Fellow, some Months ago seized the Crown and Sceptre in the Tower, took them away, and, if he had killed the Keeper, might have carryed them clear off. He, being taken, astonished the King and Court, with the Generosity, and Wisdom, of his Answers. He, and all his Accomplices, for his sake, are discharged by the King, to the Wonder of all.

(326)

This anecdote forms the narrative of the poem. Marvell had good reason to remark Blood's activities - and his escape - because Blood too was a member of the Dutch organization; indeed, Blood's name was linked with those of Marvell and Buckingham in the report already mentioned.<sup>79</sup>

Given the anti-Popery, anticlerical cast of Marvell's views, and of the organization, it is appropriate that Marvell's poetic epigram on Blood is an anticlerical parable: it is deftly related to Marvell's concerns.

Bludius, ut ruris damnum repararet aviti,  
Addicit fisco dum Diadema suo:  
Egregium Sacro facinus velavit Amictu:  
(Larva solet Reges fallere nulla magis).  
Excidit ast ausis tactus pietate prophana,  
Custodem ut servet, maluit ipse capi.  
Si modo Saevitiam texisset Pontificalem,  
Veste Sacerdotis, rapta corona foret.

(Bludius et Corona)

When daring Blood to have his rents regain'd  
Upon the English Diadem distractin'd,  
Hee Chose the Cassock Circingle and Gown,  
The fittest Mask for one that Robs a Crown.  
But his Lay pittty underneath prevailed  
And while hee spared the keepers life hee fail'd.  
With the priests vestments had hee but put on  
A Bishops Cruelty, the Crown had gone.

(The Loyall Scot, 178-85)

The English version, occurring within the anti-episcopal section of Loyall Scot, confirms the anticlerical purpose of the epigram. In Loyall Scot the bishops are condemned, scurrilously and



comprehensively, as the muddiers of the national waters. Similarly, in this epigram Marvell contrasts Blood's 'Lay pittty' with the typical 'Bishops Cruelty'; and he echoes the political point of Loyall Scot, in 'Larva solet Reges fallere nulla magis.' Literally, this means that episcopal dress is 'A Mask than which none more habitually cheats Kings'. This remark points up the parabolic nature of Bludius et Corona: episcopal costume is a 'Mask' for hypocrisy, veiling clerical attempts to usurp the powers of the magistrate - to 'cheat Kings', or, in terms of the parable, 'steal' their crowns, the emblems of their authority. This statement recalls Marvell's attribution of Charles I's ruin to the bishops, in RT.

Similarly, we have seen him use elsewhere the same image of 'dress' for clerical hypocrisy; and that thought is amplified also in Loyall Scot:

In faith Erronious and in life Prophane  
 These Hypocrites their faith and Linnen stain...  
 Their Companyes the worst that ever playd  
 And their Religion all but Masquerade.  
 The Conscious Prelate therefore did not Err,  
 When for a Church he built a Theatre.  
 A Congruous Dress they to themselves Adapt,  
 Like Smutty Storyes in Pure Linnen Wrapt.  
 Doe but their Pyebald Lordships once uncase  
 Of Rochets Tippetts Copes, and wheres their Grace?  
 A Hungry Chaplain and a Starved Rat  
 Eating their brethren Bishop Turn and Cat  
 But an Apocriphall Archbishop Bell  
 Like Snake that Swallowes toad doth Dragon swell.  
 (156-77)

This passage, treating clerical hypocrisy as "dress", immediately precedes the English lines on Blood in Loyall Scot: amplifying the epigram's suggestion. They are quite representative of the scurrilous and virulent anti-episcopal diatribe that extends from lines 86 to 235: all comprising the same allegations that Marvell includes in his prose works of this period. We may note here a characteristic implication from eschatology. First, the "sham" or hypocrisy of the bishops should be recognised as that typical of Antichristianism; and this implication is extended when, in the last couplet, Marvell puns on the 'Apocriphall' tale of Bel and the Dragon, in order to imply that 'Archbishops' - as representatives of Antichrist - "devour" men's souls, 'swelling the Dragon'. This is a typical example of eschatological imagery, the agents of false religion being understood as the mouth of the Dragon-Antichrist.<sup>80</sup>



Both Loyall Scot and Bludius reflect Marvell's eschatological premises in politics and religion, as does the Dutch connexion to which they are related; especially evident in his works of this period is the virulent anticatholic basis of those views, which had animated the early poem Fleckno too. Thus, once Marvell's consistent adherence to chiliastic views is recognized, it becomes clear that his whole oeuvre is integrated by these beliefs. His poetic and indeed his literary career in general cannot be divided into the fashionable "phases": rather, it is punctuated by the different expressions that political vicissitudes required of his consistent concern for Reformation on the eschatological model. Therefore his animadversions against Popery must be seen as a salient feature of his work in general.

## CHAPTER V

### A REVELATION FOR THE POET

In this chapter, having demonstrated the centrality of eschatology in Marvell's thought and his politics, I wish to develop this discussion by indicating the literary consequences of eschatology: the manner in which a poet's chiliasm may function in imagery and narrative. For this purpose I will be using Spenser and Milton - recognised chiliasts - as examples; in the light of whose works we may better understand Marvell's.

The first section of the chapter discusses perhaps the most important reason for ignorance, to this day, of Marvell's chiliasm as the major theme of his poems. The second section moves to Spenser and Milton and the manner in which they treat eschatological themes: providing a context for my discussion of Marvell's own poems, and especially for my analysis of Appleton House, which forms the third section.

#### 1. The Poet's Lost Audience

As I suggested in Chapter I, Marvell's fittest audience was himself; but, once his Miscellaneous Poems were published, he found a public audience - one which, for the most part, was incapable of appreciating his major theme. For three hundred years the major features of Marvell's thought - those which spring from eschatology - have remained dormant in discussion of his poetry. The vast critical effort of the last three decades has in the main merely obscured these fundamental elements. Part of the reason for this lack of recognition is his poetic mode, which is itself arcane: and his swiftly allusive manner of reference. But equally decisive has been the way in which his poetry has been transmitted to us.



The Miscellaneous Poems were published posthumously, in 1681.

Whether or not most of the lyric poetry was - as is generally assumed - written between 1640 and 1660, the eschatological theme which is their major concern was vital to English thought in these decades; and the chiliasm of the lyrics is most appropriate to that period's interests. As I have mentioned, after the Restoration, chiliasm - although still widespread - was discouraged by the "establishment". Thus the climate of opinion in 1681 was, at the centre at least, unfavourable to the salient concerns of Marvell's poetry.

Moreover, by the 1680s poetic taste had altered too. When the work of Cowley and the later Dryden was at the fore, Marvell's poetry would have seemed at least old-fashioned. Hence, from both the literary and the philosophical points of view, it is not surprising that contemporary opinion of the Miscellaneous Poems was not enthusiastic.<sup>1</sup>

It should also be remembered that/<sup>to</sup>those Restoration readers who knew of Marvell only as the controversial pamphleteer, these lyrics would have seemed trifles:<sup>2</sup> for Marvell's fame during the Restoration period rested upon his satires and tracts. So reaction to the lyrics was clouded by Marvell's reputation as a spokesman of the Opposition, and as a 'Patriot', representative of the free spirit of Englishmen.

All three of these decisive elements in contemporary response to the lyrics are directly related to the lapse of time between Marvell's formative years - the middle decades of the century - and the 1680s. Most of those whose opinions have come down to us were, not surprisingly, men of the Restoration establishment,<sup>3</sup> either by affiliation or in their views. This was precisely the public audience least fitted to understand - let alone appreciate - Marvell's eschatological theme. Marvell's proper audience was that of the 1640s and 50s, an orthodox chiliastic readership to which his premises and allusions would have been both familiar and sympathetic. This audience in fact saw very

little of his poetry, since Marvell refrained from publishing much of it himself. (The First Anniversary, one of the few that were published "in season", chimes with the chiasm of its time; that the then government appreciated it is a symptom of its fitness.) By the 1680s the potential universality of Marvell's address had disappeared; the only audience proper to the concerns of his poetry was by now the Nonconformist section of the nation - those least likely, under their current disabilities, to influence contemporary reaction, or to voice their views most effectively. In this manner the audience that could best have testified, to us, of Marvell's vital relationship to his times, was effectively "lost".

It is precisely because Marvell was so closely in tune with the middle decades that he was out of sympathy with Restoration mores; and for that reason later commentators have been deprived of contemporary testimony to Marvell's eschatological preoccupations in poetry. In this sense, Marvell's lyrics, once published, were and are "out of time". It is perhaps not inappropriate that "the times" should have been vital to the reception of a poet engaged with time in its dynamic aspect.

The fitness of Marvell's audience is in fact at least partly intimated by the contemporary reaction with which we are familiar. It should be remembered that with a poet, as with his neighbour, any man can be mistaken in his analysis of character and motive. Thus it is not surprising that several contemporaries, reacting to the tracts and satires, should have voiced a mistaken opinion, that Marvell was 'a man not well affected to the Church and Government of England'.<sup>4</sup> The point was, of course, that Marvell wanted a certain kind of 'Church or Government' which was not to their taste. It is, in fact, from the account of one such unsympathetic observer, that we can discover testimony to the quite contrary reaction of the audience closest to



Marvell's own cast: the Nonconformist heirs of Puritanism. The conservative Anthony à Wood describes their opinions with some distaste: to him they are the 'fanatick' party, with which Marvell was identified.

he was esteemed....a very celebrated wit among the fanatics, and the only one truly so, for many years after....This Andrew Marvell, who is supposed to have written other things.... died on the 18th August 1678....Afterwards his widow [Mary Palmer, almost certainly an impostor] published of his composition Miscellaneous Poems. Lond. 1681....which were then taken into the hands of many persons of his persuasion [^fanaticks^], and by them cried up as excellent. 5

To Wood, of course, the Nonconformists' opinion was less than a recommendation; indeed, he probably mentions it precisely to derogate Marvell. But he has told us something significant - that the public audience best fitted to comprehend and admire Marvell's treatment of eschatological themes did indeed admire him. (They did not fail, either, to recognize his 'wit': which should be noted by those who imagine that religious conviction and wit were mutually exclusive.) Their response to his lyrics manifests how illuminating is the relationship between such a "timely" poet and his appropriate audience. The remnant of Puritan chiliasm acknowledged the chiliastic poet.

A recent discovery has confirmed the minority's recognition and approval of Marvell's real preoccupations. This discovery was an unpublished poem, possibly written by a Yorkshire connection of Marvell's, which pays tribute to the late poet.<sup>6</sup>

Tho' faith in Oracles be long since ceas'd  
And Truth in Miracles be much decreas'd  
Yet all true wonders did not vanish quite  
While Marvels tongue could speak or pen could write.  
Marvell whose Name was for his Nature fitt,  
Mirrour of Mirth, and Prodigie of Witt;  
On whom the wondring Age did stare and gaze  
As purblind People do when Comets blaze  
And their presaging influence do spread  
Upon the Crowned and Mitred Head,  
Perchance while he convers'd on earth with men  
Poetick fury might misguide his Pen  
Perhaps he might too daringly deride  
A Princes Folly or a Prelats Pride;  
Yet was his arm so far from pulling down  
A well-grad'd Mitre, or a right plac'd Crown

That Both when falling found from him support  
 Tho' neither were so kind as to thank him for't:  
 Yet he ne'er envied their auspicious Fate  
 Who gain'd the Style of Poet Laureate  
 His Muse to greater Honour did aspire  
 She sings her Part in the celestiall Quire  
 Looks down with pity on the scribbling crowd  
 Whose witt is silent whilst their spite is proud.

(1-24)

In the closing lines of this encomium Marvell is recognised as a serious poet with a sublime theme. 'His Muse to greater Honour did aspire/ She sings her Part in the celestiall Quire': here there may be a reminiscence of Marvell's lyric Music's Empire (13-16)<sup>7</sup>. In this fashion Marvell's lyric poetry is exalted above his satires, where 'Poetick fury might misguide his Pen.... [to] too daringly deride'. However, the encomiast approves Marvell as 'Mirrour of Mirth, and Prodigie of Witt', thereby indicating that the sublime and the witty could live together comfortably in Marvell's case.

At every point his unknown admirer intimates the nature of Marvell's 'celestiall' theme, by apocalyptic imagery. The opening reference to the cessation of oracles at Christ's birth establishes the context proper to those intimations: life after the First Advent being the time of 'expectation' for the Second Coming. (As we shall see in Chapter VII, Marvell himself had used this demarcation of time, as proper to the eschatological age, in one of his poems<sup>8</sup>; and the eulogist may be recalling that reference.) In this context Marvell is a Latter-Day 'wonder', a 'marvel/[1]' of a portentous kind:

On whom the wondring Age did stare and gaze  
 As purblind People do when Comets blaze  
 And their presaging influence do spread  
 Upon the Crowned and the Mitred Head.

Here the apocalyptic imagery used to designate the nature of Marvell's writings is directly related to his eschatological treatment of monarchy and episcopacy; his calls, that is, for reformation and his warnings of God's judgements. As a 'prophet' in this sense, Marvell manifested a 'presaging influence'.



Here the eulogist may be recalling Marvell's particularization of Cromwell's 'presaging influence' as a 'Star' whose 'Influence' princes feared, and his 'shower' portending Charles I's fate, in The First Anniversary (101-4, 233-8). He is also, doubtless, recalling The Mower to the Glowworms, with its 'Comets' announcing the 'Fall' of princes (5-6). As we shall see, numerous other Marvellian poems would also support the eulogist's choice of images here.

In addition to his pertinent evocation of eschatological features, the eulogist has recognized the true tenor of Marvell's religious-political views. For, while confirming that Marvell was a reformer who castigated 'Princes Folly or....Prelats Pride', the author also asserts that this opposition was the reflex of certain views relating to the proper functions of kings and clerics: 'Yet was his arm so far from pulling down/ A well-grac'd Mitre, or a right-plac'd Crown....'. There may be, as the poem's discoverer has suggested, a reference in the 'well-grad'd Mitre' to Bishop Croft:<sup>9</sup> the proponent of 'true religion' whom Marvell defended in Smirke. The point, however, is that the eulogist here has acknowledged that Marvell is a constitutional monarchist, and (as an Independent) not intrinsically opposed to the State Church. Moreover, by envisaging Marvell's heavenly 'assumption', the eulogist indicates that Marvell's works were written with a sort of sacred sanction: culminating that 'prophetic' characterization of Marvell earlier in the poem. (Marvell is, indeed, similarly elevated to prophetic status in another poem, by his friend John Ayloffe.<sup>10</sup>)

Finally, the eulogist's comprehensive references to the natures of the lyrics, satires, and prose works, indicate the manner in which Marvell's oeuvre - properly understood - was all of a piece. The division of his work into distinct phases and kinds by many commentators - and the faltering connections which others have attempted - have in fact proceeded from a fundamental lack of recognition of the eschatological

theme. Had such eulogies as this, the reactions of Marvell's appropriate audience, achieved a fuller dissemination, the modern misapprehensions of Marvell's works might have been avoided.

The admiration of Marvell's lyrics, limited in the 1680s to his vestigial audience, is testimony not only to his chiliastic bias in poetry but also to the reasons for his neglect and misunderstanding - as a poet, at least - in the succeeding centuries. It is often remarked that part of the satires' poor reception in later times was due to their inevitably "topical" nature. It has not been understood, however, that it is the topical vicissitudes of chiliasm in Marvell's own century that have distanced later readers from his true concerns in the lyrics. The ramifications of Marvell's lost audience have obfuscated the coherence of the canon, and his persistent engagement with the salient phenomenon of his times: eschatology.

## ii. The Poets and Providential History

Here I wish briefly to examine the effect of providential and eschatological belief upon a poet contemporary with Marvell. Before looking at this poet, however, I would like to give a sketch of how eschatology functioned in the poetry of one of their precursors, as an introduction to the habit of thought with which this chapter is concerned. This precursor, Spenser, and his successor in eschatology, Milton, reveal the workings of the eschatological theme, and clarify the use to which poets could put the imagery of Revelation. Discussion of their poems in this section is confined therefore to their eschatological concerns: and my remarks about them are necessarily brief, since their presence in this thesis is purely as a context for Marvell. Neither am I concerned to say anything new about these poets, merely to use them as a juxtaposition for Marvell.



It has long been recognised that Spenser has certain eschatological concerns in the Faerie Queene (FQ),<sup>11</sup> but I wish to sketch those concerns here for a contextual purpose. Spenser is useful in this relation because he lived in the critical period of the English Reformation - its establishment under Elizabeth. One of the interests of his FQ is to establish a claim for the divine authority of the Reformation in England, by describing it in the eschatological terms favoured by Reformation divines and propagandists.

Thus, in the First Book, the figure of St. George as a 'Red Cross Knight' is mainly theological in significance. He is the champion of the Reformed Church of 'Una' against a Red Dragon who has devastated her land. The said Dragon is drawn from Revelation xii; he is, like the Beast, a representative of Antichrist, and especially of the Catholic Church. He has all the hallmarks of the Revelation Dragon: the swingeing tail, for instance, and a propensity to 'devour' all and sundry. He comes, naturally, from Hell ('Tartary'):

An huge great Dragon horrible in sight,  
Bred in the loathly lakes of Tartary,  
With murderous rauine, and deuouring might  
Their kingdom spoild, and countrey wasted quight.

(I.vii.44)

Spenser is careful to emphasize the attributes of the Devourer:

Dead was it sure, as sure as death in deed,  
What euer thing does touch his rauinous pawes,  
Or that within his reach he euer drawes.  
But his most hideous head my tounge to tell  
Does tremble: for his deepe deuouring iawes  
Wide gaped, like the griesly mouth of hell,  
Through which into his darke abisse all rauin fell.

(I.xi.12)

This Dragon is at once an aspect of Antichrist and the 'mouth of hell' to which Antichrist consigns those souls he deceives. It is Red Cross' mission to defeat him and to restore Una, the true Church, to her throne.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Dragon has overcome Una and her family is an intimation that she - the Protestant Church - is the original

Church: and Catholicism a corruption. Thus Spenser indicates that Protestantism was not a revolutionary Church, but rather the re-establishment of the true Church: when Red Cross finally restores Una he is in fact effecting this re-establishment. This point of "originality" was very important if Protestantism were to be seen as a 'legitimate' faith, rather than as simply a new-fangled doctrine.

As Red Cross journeys to meet his foe, the agents of Antichrist do their utmost to seduce him from his purpose. As I have said, these agents had a three-fold nature: Antichrist himself, the Scarlet Whore, and the Beast/Dragon. (The Dragon and the Beasts of Revelation were treated as various aspects of the same monster.) Of these the Scarlet Whore is the foremost image of 'Temptation': in the Revelation she is the woman who offers 'the wine of the wrath of her fornication' (Rev. xiv. 8), seduces the authorities who govern men, and provides the sensuous perfidies of Babylon (Rev. xvii). In Spenser's First Book she appears as a temptress named 'Duessa', 'that scarlot whore' (I.viii.29), whose 'two-fold' nature is symbolic of the false Church, as Una's 'unity' is symbolic of the true Church: in short, Duessa represents the Whore of Catholicism.<sup>13</sup> Much of the narrative is concerned with her seduction of Red Cross, and its consequences. Since the false Church of Antichrist misleads virtuous souls by masquerading as the true Church, Duessa misleads Red Cross by disguising herself as Una, in order to discredit her. She then seduces Red Cross, thus enacting the spiritual seduction of the Whore. Only when she is 'discovered' can Red Cross be re-united with the true Church and vanquish the Dragon: just as England has "discovered" the nefarious nature of Catholicism, and expelled it. In this manner the narrative of the First Book imitates that of the Revelation, where only after the discovery of Antichrist and the destruction of his Beast can the true Church triumph.



In fact the narrative follows Revelation very closely in its main plot. Like the Woman of the Sun (the Church) in Revelation xii.14, Una wanders in a 'wilderness' (I.iii.3). Meanwhile Duessa, like the Whore, reveals herself as a temptress of men: one such case being that of her victim Fradubio. She is in league with Orgoglio, a 'man of sin' into whose power she delivers Red Cross. Orgoglio represents Antichrist, and it is as the Whore of Catholicism that Duessa delivers Red Cross into his spiritual bondage. Duessa is Orgoglio's 'leman', a fact which sustains the imagery of 'fornication' assimilated from Revelation. He gives her a Beast, that which the Scarlet Whore 'sits upon' in Revelation:

From that day forth Duessa was his deare....  
He gave her gold and purple pall to weare,  
And triple crowne set on her head full hye,  
And her endowd with royall maiestye.

Then for to make her dreaded more of men,  
And peoples harts with awfull terrour tye,  
A monstrous beast ybred in filthy fen  
He chose....  
For seuen great heads out of his body grew,  
An yron brest, and backe of scaly bras,  
And all embrewd in bloud....  
His tayle was stretched out in wondrous length....  
And vnderneath his filthy feet did tread  
The sacred things, and holy heasts foretaught.

(I.vii.16-18)

Orgoglio's 'triple crowne' is of course that of the Pope;<sup>14</sup> and the Beast is that the Whore sits upon. But in due course Duessa is discovered, and like the Whore in Revelation she is made 'desolate and naked' to reveal her spiritual ugliness (I.viii. 46-49; Rev. xvii.16). So Red Cross, freed of his Catholic delusions, can proceed to defeat the Dragon. In this manner the allegory of the English Reformation is completed; and the eschatological character of that Reformation is made explicit in Red Cross' vision of the New Jerusalem promised in the Revelation (I.x.57).

The Beast of Revelation appears again in Book Six, as the Blatant Beast. Calidore's enemy is identified by his Revelation hallmarks:

With open mouth, that seemed to containe  
 A full good pecke within the utmost brim,  
 All set with yron teeth in raunges twaine,  
 That terrifide his foes, and armed him,  
 Appearing like the mouth of Orcus griesly grim.

(VI.xii.26)

This version of the Beast is taken from Daniel vii.7, and properly emphasizes 'yron teeth': 'behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible . . . .it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces.' Calidore's defeat of this Beast is only a temporary one: Spenser tells us at the close of the Book that the Beast will ultimately escape his bonds and return to wreak havoc again. This would seem to refer to the binding of Satan in the pit for a thousand years (Rev. xx.3), after which he will be released again upon the world.

Of Spenser's allegory of eschatology, one more example will suffice to show the characteristic narratives and imagery of an eschatological theme. In the Fifth Book another virtuous knight, Sir Arthur, comes to the aid of a lady whose kingdom has been usurped. Belge has been driven out of her city and its lands by a monstrous creature called Geryoneo. His name is itself an allusion, since the Geryon in Dante's Inferno has been interpreted as a figure of Antichrist.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Spenser's Geryoneo is an Idolater with a tame Beast in tow.

this fell Tyrant....  
 twelue of them....did by times deuoure,  
 And to his Idols sacrifice their blood....  
 For soothly he was one of matchlesse might,  
 Of horrible aspect, and dreadfull mood.

(V.x.8)

Here can be seen the tradition I have mentioned, whereby each of the three Antichristian powers tends to assume properties of the others. Geryoneo, who is Antichrist, is a 'devourer' because that is the salient property of his Beast. Similarly, his Beast assumes the properties of the Scarlet Whore, and the Beast's face is as misleadingly seductive as hers:



An huge great Beast  
       ....of infinite great strength;  
 Horrible, hideous, and of hellish race....  
 For of a Mayd she had the outward face,  
 To hide the horroure, which did lurke behinde,  
 The better to beguile, whom she so fond did finde.

(V.xi.23)

This devourer, like Duessa, is an illusion of goodness disguising foulness: because the evils of Catholicism are masked by its Christian face. Accordingly, Geryoneo's method of usurpation is (again) a coup from within the ranks of the true powers in the land. Belge, convinced by the 'carefull diligence' he assumes in order to gain her confidence, voluntarily 'gaue him soueraigne powre....'

Which having got, he gan forth from that howre  
 To stirre vp strife, and many a Tragicke Stowre,  
 Giuing her dearest children one by one  
 Vnto a dreadful Monster to deuoure,  
 And setting vp an Idole of his owne,  
 The image of his monstrous parent Geryone.

(V.x.13)

The last line here seems to indicate that Geryoneo, son of Geryone, is as it were "son of Antichrist" - a little Antichrist. He executes his evil purposes by seeming to work for the true cause - Belge's cause: and this is the standard method of Antichrist when he usurps the true church. In the same way his Beast, having lured men 'unto her schoole' of doctrine and devoured them, 'deceiued [~~them~~] like a foole.' Driven out of her own City (or Church), Belge like Una flees into a wilderness; like the Woman of the Sun in Révelation, 'his cruelty so sore she drad,/ That to those fennes for fastnesse she did fly.' Also as in Revelation, her loneliness is stressed: she is 'All solitarie without liuing wight.'

Belge's City is a figure of Rome, where the Roman Catholic Church was deformed by Antichrist into a false Church.

That castle was the strength of all that state....  
 And that same citie, now so ruinate,  
 Had bene the keye of all that kingdomes crowne.

(V.xv.26)

Here the allegory surfaces in 'the keye of all that kingdomes crowne':  
 an allusion to the Keys of the Kingdom entrusted to St. Peter, as the  
 first Pope. (The 'crowne' is the crown of the righteous in Heaven.)  
 From this Spenser proceeds to allegorize the manner in which, for His  
 own purposes, God allowed Antichrist to assume power in His church.  
 Rome was a 'goodly Castle',

Till that th'offended heauens list to lowre  
 Vpon their blisse....  
 When those gainst states and Kingdoms do coniure,  
 Who then can thinke their hedlong ruine to recure?

But [Geryoneq] had brought it now in seruile bond,  
 And made it beare the yoke of inquisition,  
 Stryuing long time in vaine it to withstonde;  
 Yet glad at last to make most base submission,  
 And life enjoy for any composition.

(V.xv.26-27)

Here, as in the reference to the Keys, Spenser makes his target  
 explicit by the word 'inquisition'. And the 'base submission' of  
 believers to this spiritual tyranny is a redaction of the traditional  
 notion that the time of Antichrist would see his triumph because of  
 the weakness of the faithful. Thus Geryoneo has forced men 'the  
 honour that is dew/To God, to doe vnto his Idole most vntrew' (V.xv.27).

This narrative, and the other eschatological narratives in the FQ,  
 represent the poet who described Rome as a great 'seuen-headed Beast,/   
 That made all nations vassals of her pride.'<sup>16</sup> Thus one aspect of  
 his poem is concerned with the 'justification' of the Protestant Church.  
 In this Spenser reveals his own participation in a period, beginning  
 in his lifetime, when eschatology became a pre-eminent concern of  
 English life. And his use of the Revelation in his epic reflects  
 the orthodox uses to which a poet could put Revelation imagery, and  
 indeed how a poet tended to treat such imagery.

But in one respect his eschatological theme differs from that  
 which affected poets in the Seventeenth Century. His poem is alleg-  
 orical, and so is his treatment of eschatology. To seventeenth-



century poets eschatology was too immediate to be treated other than literally. Spenser may have been equally convinced that the Last Days were a contemporary phenomenon, but his contentment with allegory was not often a feature of later chiliarism: poets of Marvell's time tended to treat eschatological tropes rather more directly.

Perhaps this was due to the Civil War. The prophecies of the Last Days in Matthew had warned of such conflicts:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars....  
for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

(xxiv. 6-7)

Such conflicts were predicted as characteristic of the period of Antichrist's ascendancy, and as preceding the Last Day. To many Englishmen it seemed that this text in Matthew, and the tribulations predicted in the Seven Vials of Wrath (Rev. xv) accounted for the phenomenon of Civil War. Precisely because this was a Civil and not a foreign war, they considered that it was a tribulation sent by God as a punishment for the sins of England.<sup>17</sup> This attitude, which saw in a major contemporary event a manifestation of these as the Latter Days, encouraged a literalist approach to eschatology.

Moreover, such literalism or 'historicism' was increasingly the norm in seventeenth-century writings on eschatology. It was founded on the historicity of Revelation, as indeed it had been from the beginning. But an increasingly urgent sense of the eschaton during the 1640s probably tended to exaggerate literalism, to the point where allegory was no longer an absolutely suitable mode for an eschatological theme. An historical literalism was the norm in prose; and it also distinguishes several of the poets of the day.

I would now like to say a little about one of those poets and prose-writers, Milton. The importance of eschatology in his poetry has been suggested by several recent studies. In Milton and the Book

of Revelation (Alabama, 1975), for instance, Austin C. Dobbins has demonstrated the influence of Revelation upon Paradise Lost.

Similarly, Howard Schulz, in a study entitled 'Christ and Antichrist in Paradise Regained' suggested that Milton's portrayal of Satan in this poem would have identified him to Milton's contemporaries as a representative both of prelacy and of Antichrist.<sup>18</sup> Writing about the same poem, Michael Fixler has argued, in Milton and the Kingdoms of God (1964), that Milton's chiliasm remained operative after the Restoration, and that Paradise Regained is a reminder that believers should await the Second Coming with patience rather than with precipitate activism.<sup>19</sup>

In view of Milton's enduring chiliasm, it is not surprising that when he wrote his Ode on the Nativity, he chose to stress the fact that this First Advent was in a sense only a promise of what the Second Advent would make reality: salvation. He was a man of his time, and in that time the Second Advent was much anticipated. Thus the 'Hymn' of the Ode points out that the redemptive plan only comes to fruition at the Last Day:

The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy,  
That on the bitter cross  
Must redeem our loss,  
So both himself and us to glorify;  
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep,  
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.

....

The aged Earth, aghast  
With terror of that blast,  
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,  
When at the world's last session  
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

(XVI-XVII)

At this point Milton has moved from the Passion to the universal resurrection: showing the latter two elements of the tripartite model of providential history. 'And then at last our bliss/Full and perfect is': that is the last act of this drama of Incarnation.



And then at last our bliss  
 Full and perfect is,  
 But now begins; for from this happy day  
 Th'old Dragon under ground,  
 In straiter limits bound,  
 Not half so far casts his usurped sway,  
 And wroth to see his kingdom fail,  
 Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

(XVIII)

The Dragon of the Revelation is 'bound' for that thousand years succeeding the Nativity. Here and in the previous stanza Milton moves easily between the two points on the timescale of redemption, Incarnation and Second Coming: their relationship is that of promise to fulfilment: from 'now begins' to 'full and perfect is.' The temporal relationship between these events is "real" time: it covers the period between the Incarnation and the end of the world.

Milton's emphasis upon the Second Coming, as the culmination of the redemptive drama, is an indication of the eschatological emphasis of his times: but his participation in that preoccupation is evident elsewhere. Particular to this poem is rather the fact that this eschatological framework brings the Nativity into direct relationship with the present moment; it shows that the time at which the Ode is written (and read) - the Latter Days - is the time when the promise of the Nativity will be fulfilled. These are the Latter Days: therefore it is now that the significance of the Nativity becomes reality. The present time is caused by the Ode to engage with the past event which it recalls.

This element of immediacy in the Ode would have been instantly recognizable to contemporary readers. Milton, like Marvell, was a poet of his times in a manner which a modern reader has to recapture. The Ode exemplifies this point: it 'exists' in the Latter Days of hope. It is not insignificant that in his Poems of 1645 Milton placed the Ode first: it is a statement of present hopes, as well as of the event that evoked such hopes.

This immediacy of chiliastic hopes is evident also in Milton's metrical versions of the Psalms. These, written in 1648 during the Second Civil War, refer to the eschatological ideas prevalent in contemporary attitudes towards the conflict. I have mentioned already the notion that the Civil War was God's 'punishment' of the English. For the Parliamentarian party this notion became one of purgation rather than of mere chastisement: a positive rather than a negative view of the poena. Purgation implied improvement, and thus seemed to indicate a clearing of the path for Christ's Coming.<sup>20</sup> This attitude motivates Milton's Psalmic Versions.

The attitude to which I refer becomes evident both in Milton's choice of Psalms, and in his additions to them in his own versions. One of his choices is Psalm LXXX, which mourns the devastation of Israel. (Milton's interpolations are underlined.)

Why hast thou laid her hedges low,  
And broken down her fence,  
That all may pluck her, as they go,  
With rudest violence?

In this Miltonic Psalm Israel becomes England, the New Israel.<sup>21</sup> The notion that some national sin had provoked the Civil War moves Milton to translate a Psalm about God's chastisement of his Elect Nation: 'why hast thou laid her hedges low?' And to emphasize this sense of violation Milton adds the phrase, 'With rudest violence'. The Psalm records his sense of the devastation of England, both physically and spiritually, during the civil wars.

The sins which gave rise to this visitation of judgement are described in Milton's version of Psalm LXXXI. Here the Lord speaks to the New Israel:

....O that Israel would advise  
To walk my righteous ways!  
Then would I soon bring down their foes  
That now so proudly rise,  
And turn my hand against all those  
That are their enemies.



By means of the Psalm Milton is referring to the sins which prevent England's contentment: 'O that Israel would advise/To walk my righteous ways!' It is this unregenerate spirit, Milton suggests, that has allowed a resurgence of the Cavalier forces and thus caused the Second Civil War: 'their foes/ That now so proudly rise.' This latter sentence is Milton's interpolation, and a reference to current events in England. Reform yourselves, Milton suggests, and God will quell your enemies the Royalists. God will <sup>6</sup>se<sub>Λ</sub>nd you: 'And turn my hand against all those/ That are their enemies.'

Milton reiterates this message of self-reformation in his version of Psalm LXXXV. There he suggests that God will come to the aid of His poeple, but again he emphasizes the necessity to avoid a relapse into sin:

To his dear saints he will speak peace;  
But let them never more  
Return to folly, but surcease  
To trespass as before.

Milton's personal conviction of the importance of this "reformation" leads him to interpolate a special emphasis: 'but surcease/ To trespass as before.' The responsibilities of the Elect Nation, and God's guardianship of them, evoke the hope that 'To his dear saints he will speak peace,' and bring the civil conflict to an end. Milton's doubts about continued aggression, and his call for the 'works of peace', became most pronounced in his Sonnets to the Parliamentary leaders. To him the conflict was merely a prelude to the real issue, which was to establish a godly state in England.

Such a state would establish an earth suitable for Christ to grace with His Second Coming. So Milton invokes His aid for the Parliamentary party, which will prepare England for His Coming:

Thou, Shepherd that dost Israel keep,  
Give ear in time of need....  
and from thy cloud give light....  
Awake thy strength, come, and be seen  
To save us by thy might.

Here Milton's additions to Psalm LXXX are critical to his message. He makes the Psalm a document of the present by stressing that this is a 'time of need', when the fate of the Elect Nation hangs in the balance of war. It is especially important that the Shepherd Christ 'be seen to' save His Saints: this addition implies Milton's feeling that God must indicate once and for all that the Parliamentarians are the godly party. 'Be seen to save us by thy might': make the hand of God obvious by decisive victories.

The invocation 'come' refers to this manifestation which Milton desires of God. An earlier line shows the form which this 'Coming' must take: 'from thy cloud give light'. Once again, this is Milton's addition to the original Psalm: it alludes to the belief that Christ's Second Coming will be in 'clouds of glory'. Thus 'from thy cloud give light' is a reference to the hope of an imminent Second Coming. Milton envisages the triumph of the godly party as a prelude to this Coming: Christ will save the Saints by his Coming, and their triumph will provide the proper circumstances for that Coming - a reciprocal relationship.

Surely to such as do him fear  
 Salvation is at hand,  
 And glory shall ere long appear  
To dwell within our land....  
 Then will he come, and not be slow;  
 His footsteps cannot err.

(LXXXV)

The belief in an imminent Coming is reflected in Milton's elaboration of the Psalm: that He shall 'ere long appear.' This motif also inspires Milton's alteration of the Psalm in the last two lines. For these the Hebrew reads: 'He will set his steps to the way.' This Milton has altered to: 'Then will he come, and not be slow.' His version reflects belief in the Coming, and that it will be a "swift coming": it was axiomatic that Christ would not tarry, that he would hasten to his Second Advent.<sup>22</sup>



As soon as England is righteous (13-14), 'Then will he come'; England must reform if she wishes to see the Second Coming as soon as she desires. Milton's chiliasm is urgent and personal. He sees the fate of England, and the Parliamentary cause, in eschatological terms: and his message is that England must earn the bliss of the Coming. His metrical translations of the Psalms are motivated by this idea, and eschatological tropes characterize their contemporary relevance. He sees England in 1648 as a participant in the eschaton.

Milton's prose also evinces this literal attitude of expectation. He saw his pamphlets and prose as salvos for the godly cause, and thus as more important - at least for the duration of the Civil War and Protectorate - than his vocation as a poet. This sense of mission, and of the objectives of that mission, pervades his prose; his personal mission was related to what he saw as England's national mission.

He expressed the hope that 'this great and warlike nation' would become pure in religion, in his Of Reformation in England. Then England

may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the....most Christian people at that day, when thou, the eternal and shortly expected King, shalt open<sup>23</sup> the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world.

[my italics]

His ambition was for England to prove herself the Elect Nation, the 'most Christian people' to be judged on the Last Day. Thus he regarded his efforts in the Parliamentary cause as an attempt to impress the true nature of this mission upon his country; as, therefore, his personal contribution to the realization of the 'Kingdom' on earth.

In Areopagitica he celebrated this vision:

Yet that which is above all this, the favour and the love of Heaven, we have great argument to think in a peculiar manner propitious and propending towards us. Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her, as out of Sion, should be proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of reformation to all Europe?....

Now once again by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his church, even to the reforming of reformation itself; what does he then but reveal himself to his servants, and as his manner is, first to his Englishmen?<sup>24</sup>

[my italics]

Not only in this visionary attitude to England, but also in the main features of eschatological thought, Milton was in tune with his times.

He too identified the Pope as Antichrist: remarking, 'Mark, sir....how the pope came by St. Peter's patrimony....idolatry and rebellion got it him.'<sup>25</sup> And in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates he was careful to associate Charles I with Antichrist. Charles' episcopalian alliance provoked Milton's notorious anticlericalism to the point where he observed darkly that

now we know, O thou our most certain hope and defence, that thine enemies have been consulting all the sorceries of the great Whore....let them embattle, and be broken, for thou art with us.<sup>26</sup>

For Milton it went without saying that the bishops deferred to 'the great Whore'.<sup>27</sup>

Like others, he abused his opponents in the rhetoric of the Revelation. On one occasion he likens Salmasius, the Royalist apologist, to the seven-headed Beast - each head a bishop - who carries the Whore:

thou art a very talkative ass thyself, and rid by a woman, and being surrounded with the....heads of the bishops....thou seemest to represent that beast in the Revelation.<sup>28</sup>

When Milton's cause died with the Protector, and the Restoration seemed to prohibit the establishment of a godly government in England, Milton did not abandon his eschatological beliefs. Rather he came to the conclusion that men could not build the Kingdom. He fell back upon the idea that Christ's Coming must be awaited with patience rather than with activism.



Milton's attitude towards the Civil War and its objectives provides a useful counterpart for Marvell in the context of his times. Milton also demonstrates an essential difference in seventeenth-century eschatological motifs as against those in the poetry of Spenser. The orthodoxy of eschatological belief was common to both poets: but Milton treats eschatology literally in his writings about contemporary history. And whereas Spenser's allegory of eschatology was detailed and complete, Milton could afford to assume the alertness of his audience to eschatological tropes; he could be oblique or fragmented in his reference to this system, where Spenser tended to use a complete eschatological "structure" within his narrative. His successors tended to take eschatological premises for granted. They could depend upon recognition by a reader of the most offhand allusions. And the offhanded nature of such allusions was itself a facet of the familiarity of eschatology. This point is very important indeed.

Thus these two poets provide a context for Marvell in two ways. First, they display the pervasive nature of eschatology in poetry referring to contemporary events. In the case of Milton, he demonstrates a view of the eschaton evoked by the most prominent event of his own time. Second, these poets show how eschatology functioned in poetry of their period; that it could range from sustained allegory to inexplicit allusion, and still be critical to the poet's statements. The Civil War in particular was an occasion for the effects of eschatology upon contemporary poetry.

### iii. Providential History and Appleton House

Marvell, too, in his own way, was involved with the religious-historical philosophy of his time. One of the poems that illustrates this involvement is Upon Appleton House,<sup>29</sup> where the poet's reflections upon the Fairfaxes become implicated with reflections upon the Civil War

in which Fairfax was such a prominent figure. Thus parts of the poem reflect Marvell's own attitude to the conflict. (I will be considering other aspects of the poem in a later chapter.)<sup>30</sup> I would like to glance at some of these, and the way in which they embody the pre-occupations which were so marked in Milton's writings concerning the war.

One such part of the poem reflects the almost universal view that I described above, that the Civil War was both a consequence of national sins, and a visitation which punished those sins. This is how Marvell expresses that idea:

Oh Thou, that dear and happy Isle  
The Garden of the World ere while,  
Thou Paradise of four Seas,  
Which Heaven planted us to please,  
But, to exclude the World, did guard  
With watry if not flaming Sword;  
What luckless Apple did we tast,  
To make us Mortal, and The Wast?

(XLI)

Here England is again the subject of God's particular regard. A 'Paradise' and the 'Garden of the World', it is a second Eden. Marvell suggests, with some playfulness, that it is the sole repository of virtue left on earth; it can 'exclude the World'. This image is that of Eden after the expulsion of Adam and Eve, guarded by the Angel with 'flaming Sword': thus Marvell suggests that although the rest of the earth is fallen, and hence 'excluded', the English remained in their own Eden. But this description is of England in its "prelapsarian" state, before the Civil War: the War's 'Wast' shows that the English have now tasted the 'Apple' too. 'What luckless Apple did we tast, / To make us Mortal, and The Wast?' The 'Wast' is the War, a consequence of England's 'Fall'.

This notion, of an England that is an Elect Nation, a treasury of reformed religion protected by its 'four Seas', is echoed in Marvell's later prose tract, Mr. Smirke: where he describes



we in England, that are another world, that are under an imperial crown [that of the Christian Emperor], that are 'none of them' [Papists or Lutherans]....but have a distinct Catholick faith within our four seas....

(84-5)

This is England's nature as the Elect Nation, an Eden of Reformation;<sup>31</sup>  
what in stanza XLI Marvell sees as 'Wast(ed)'.

This stanza's "postlapsarian" view of England comes to a climax in the penultimate stanza of the poem.

'Tis not, what once it was, the World;  
But a rude heap together hurl'd;  
All negligently overthrown,  
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.

(LXXXXVI)

The disorder of England's 'World' is a consequence of the national cataclysm, whereby the foremost Christian nation, 'The Garden of the World', was 'All negligently overthrown'. The country described as 'Wasted' in stanza XLI is here accordingly reduced to 'Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone': there is no greenery left in what was once a 'Garden'. The conditions of life have been radically altered by the Civil War; a thought conveyed by the alteration of the familiar terrain of England. The metaphor of devastated landscape combines with the "postlapsarian" image of England, to express a sense that a national integrity has been lost: devastation is not merely a topographical consequence of the war but also its spiritual consequence. In the question, 'What luckless Apple did we tast...?' Marvell expressed that sense of national sin which stamped contemporary views of the war.

The transformation of England from a 'Garden' to a 'Desert' imitates an alteration in the national "environment", the overthrow of all that is familiar. Resulting from this is a sense of chaos, of the familiar ordering of things having disappeared in 'a rude heap together hurl'd'. The immediate consequence of this breakdown of Order is a personal insecurity. Marvell feels that no-one is safe in the cataclysm, because in the absence of Order force is predominant.

Thus, when the Mowers of Death 'massacre the grass along', they inadvertently kill all the inoffensive inhabitants of the grass:

Unhappy Birds! what does it boot  
To build below the Grasses Root;  
When Lowness is unsafe as Hight,  
And Chance o'retakes what scapeth spight?

(LII)

All men are endangered by the conflict, because 'Lowness is unsafe as Hight' where a country's Order has crumbled; and they are at the mercy of an arbitrary 'Chance'. When the Death-like Mowers 'massacre the Grass' they are decimating the population in general: for the grass here is the Biblical symbol of mankind - 'all flesh is grass' (Isaiah xl. 6). The Mowers' heedlessness, their decimating activity, and their inoffensive victims the birds, express a sense of insecurity as a major feature of the Civil War. (Indeed, several commentators have understood the Mower section here as a full-scale "imitation" of the war.)<sup>32</sup>

Reacting to this insecurity, Marvell hides in the woods.

How safe, methinks, and strong, behind  
These Trees have I incamp'd my Mind;  
Where Beauty, aiming at the Heart,  
Bends in some Tree its useless Dart;  
And where the World no certain Shot  
Can make, or me it toucheth not.  
But I on it securely play,  
And gaul its Horsemen all the Day.

(LXXVI)

This stanza seems to encapsulate Marvell's lifelong caution and secretiveness, those prominent qualities which I described above.

'Safety' is the overriding consideration here: 'How safe....have I incamp'd my Mind'. This is, first, a caution in one's personal life: 'Beauty' misses his heart - he is in no danger from passion (as, indeed, his death as a bachelor proved). Secondly, this is a security from public events and their sometimes dire consequences: 'the World....me....toucheth not'. Marvell's predilection for cryptic statement, I suggested earlier, was a product of an obsessive self-protectiveness.



When he says that 'the World no certain Shot/ Can make', he is referring to this habit of cryptic ambiguity: the world cannot be sure of its target in his work, because Marvell has been at pains to avoid providing any explicit target.

This two-fold security gives Marvell an opportunity for playfulness, on the subject of playfulness itself. 'I on [the World] securely play, /And gaul its Horsemen all the Day.' Here the World is at war, Marvell is a Gaul to its 'Horsemen!', and his 'play' 'galls' them;<sup>33</sup> having 'incamp'd' himself behind ambiguity, Marvell can tease 'the World'. His playfulness is, as it were, made possible by his caution.

These notions are some of the psychological effects of an age marred by Civil War: a sense of national disorder and of sin; a resulting insecurity, and its concomitant of caution.

But the sense of national sin is also an eschatological trope. Marvell shares the vision of his fellow poets: that history is eschatology in action. Like them, he saw the Civil War as a sin and as an effect of sin. Also like them, he saw this conflict as one of the signs of the Latter Days, when there are to be 'wars and rumours of wars' (Matt. xxiv. 6):<sup>34</sup> a notion which appears in Appleton House, as well as in other poems that I shall be examining.

The characterization of England as the New Israel is wittily drawn:

The tawny Mowers enter next;  
Who seem like Israalites to be,  
Walking on foot through a green Sea.  
To them the Grassy Deeps divide,  
And crowd a Lane to either Side.

(XLIX)

Here the Mowers' progress through the meadows is described as a 'green Sea' counterpart to the Red Sea crossing of the Israelites.<sup>35</sup> The grasses part, just as the waters parted to provide a path for God's

people. Thus the Mowers are "typed" as members of the New Israel. Characteristically, Marvell conveys the Type with a delicate humour: this sea is green, not Red. But the Israelitish image is created precisely to refer to the destiny of the English.

This motif, and other national motifs, are present in Appleton House for good reasons. Through its portrait of General Fairfax, the poem contains intimations of the national life. Fairfax's estates, the 'lesser world' (LXXXVI) of Appleton House, refer outward to the "greater world" of events in England.<sup>36</sup> Thereby 'Things greater are in less contain'd' (44).

Certainly these estates provide a suitable microcosm of the nation of which Samuel Hartlib, the chiliast and reformer, remarked: 'these 3. Corn, Cattel, and Wood, are the very strength and sinews of this Land.'<sup>37</sup> By the same token, the action of the central sections of Appleton House includes a harvest of 'Corn' (XL-LV), a herd of 'Cattel' (LVII-IX), and a 'Wood' (LXI - LXXVIII), thus providing a truly representative microcosm of England's topographical character at this time.

As well as providing a landscape of England in 'lesser' proportions, Appleton House describes a train of events which not only imitates the national circumstances, but also rehearses the eschatological destiny of the Elect Nation. Throughout the poem the history of the Fairfaxes and of England is seen as a part of the universal history.

For Protestants, England's especial role as an Elect Nation was based upon her Reformation, which cleansed the Church by expelling the Catholic Antichrist. Accordingly, the eschatological theme of Appleton House first comes to the fore when Marvell meditates upon the history of Nunappleton's own parochial Reformation: the transformation of a "popish" nunnery into a Puritan house.



We opportunely may relate  
 The Progress of this Houses Fate.  
 A Nunnery first gave it birth.  
 For Virgin Buildings oft brought forth.  
 And all that Neighbour-Ruine shows  
 The Quarries whence this dwelling rose.

## (XI)

'The Progress of this Houses Fate' imitates that of England: Popery in 'Ruine', a Reformation represented by the reconstruction of a building. As Marvell remarks later, Appleton House was 'no Religious House till now' (XXXV).<sup>38</sup>

For when it was the residence of 'Suttle Nunns' (XII) - 'Hypocrite Witches' who seduced Isabel Thwaites from her true destiny - it was a place of "Popish Idolatry". To convey this fact, stanzas XII to XXXIV are an evocation, heavy with ironic undertones, of the wrong kind of religious observance: ritualism, materialism, and hypocrisy, which a reforming Fairfax extirpates. In stanza XXXIV Marvell celebrates this demise of a superstitious religion, and the Henrician Dissolution of religious houses:

Thenceforth (as when th'Inchantment ends,  
 The Castle vanishes or rends)  
 The wasting Cloister with the rest  
 Was in one instant dispossessed.

"Popery" as Marvell describes it here was an 'Inchantment', exercised by 'Witches' (XXVI): an allusion to the idea that the Antichristian Church was an illusion, a matter of 'lying wonders'.<sup>39</sup>

This national event - the Dissolution and Reformation - is reflected in the poem by means of the Fairfacian family history: involving an incident in which William Fairfax rescued his betrothed from the cloister. This fact in itself has a "reforming" resonance, since the true Church was seen as the 'Bride' of Christ (from the Song of Solomon), requiring rescue from Antichrist:<sup>40</sup> thus the rescue of a bride is an incident with a peculiar appropriateness for Marvell's purpose. (Moreover, to this end Marvell has already evoked 'the great Bridegroom'

Christ, of whom the nuns claim to be 'Each one a spouse' (xiv, xv).) Furthermore, this is also a parochial incident which may reflect the national experience of Reformation, and in this manner suitable to a poem of a "microcosmic" significance for the national life.

Apart from the use of such "microcosmic" incidents as the little Reformation and the harvesting Mowers, Marvell makes extensive use of comedy as a miniaturizing device. For instance, when the nuns are alerted to William's assault on their convent, their defensive measures are turned into farce:

Some to the Breach against their Foes  
 Their Wooden Saints in vain oppose.  
 Another bolder stands at push  
 With their old Holy-Water Brush.  
 While the disjointed Abbess threads  
 The gingling Chain-Shot of her Beads.  
 But their lowd'st Cannon were their Lungs;  
 And sharpest Weapons were their Tongues.

(XXXII)

The comic satire of this stanza has a religious point, directed against the idolatry of 'Wooden Saints' and the ritualism represented by 'their old Holy-Water Brush' and 'Beads': all of which are italicised for comic effect. The serious burden of this farce is that such things 'in vain oppose' the actions of a puritan Saint.

The comic medium of this reforming message is a function of the "miniature" scale of Marvell's poem. At every stage of the poem's historia paula this controlling comedy mediates between the "greater world" and this country estate. As the stanza on the nuns indicates, this comic medium should not be mistaken for trivialisation of Marvell's theme.

Again, in keeping with this scale, the experience of William Fairfax personalizes the Puritan attitude to Catholicism. He fears that because the nuns 'like themselves....alter all' (XXVII), his betrothed will be infected by their vice. When he says, 'How I fear/



Though guiltless lest thou perish there' (XXVIII), he is referring to a spiritual death; reflecting the Protestant view that the Catholic Church, by deluding the faithful, betrays them to 'perish' in Hell. This moves him to a "prophecy" (fulfilled by Marvell's time) that 'sure those buildings [religious houses] last not long,/ Founded by folly, kept by wrong.' (XXVIII). To such a 'building' the reformed architecture of Appleton House stands in contrast, itself a symbol of the reforming spirit in England.

This symbolic use of 'houses' recurs at a later stage in the poem, placing the symbolic point at a stage in contemporary, post-Reformation times. In stanza XLVI Marvell describes Appleton House - representative of the reforming spirit - as bearing antipathy towards Cawood Castle, a representative of episcopacy. 'As if it quarrell'd in the Seat/  
Th'Ambition of its Prelate great' (John Williams, Archbishop of York).<sup>41</sup> By Marvell's day, as I have observed above, the enemies of true religion in England were identified as the Bishops: therefore at the "contemporary" stage of the poem's chronicle, Appleton House's opponent is not the ruined nunnery of the past but the episcopal threat of the present. England's Antichristian saboteurs were now the 'Prelate(s) great'. In this fashion this stanza, and the nunnery episode, reflect the anticlericalism and anticatholicism which galvanized Puritan chiliasm.

Such an animus in the poem would have been congenial to Fairfax himself, a Puritan who - to judge from passages in his manuscript-book - was as virulently anticatholic as any of his contemporaries.<sup>42</sup> To reflect the national reforming character, the poem recalls not only the break with Rome but also the motivation behind all reformation at this time. The Nunappleton estates are seen to reflect the fact that the "Popish" corruption of William Fairfax's time continues in the episcopal Arminianism of Thomas's day.

The family history, involved with Reformation by means of the Nunnery episode, is also connected by Marvell with the history of 'all the Universe' (XXXI); with, that is, the eschatological pattern of which Reformation is a part. Hence Marvell remarks the historical importance of 'the great Race' of Fairfaxes:

Is not this he whose Offspring fierce  
 Shall fight through all the Universe;  
 And with successive Valour try  
France, Poland, either Germany;  
 Till one, as long since prophecy'd,  
 His Horse through conquer'd Britain ride?  
 Yet, against Fate, his Spouse they kept;  
 And the great Race would intercept.

(XXXI)

This progenitor ('he whose Offspring....') is William Fairfax, the "reformer" of the Nunnery; and that episode is here linked to actions which affect 'all the Universe', thus placing it in the eschatological context. Accordingly, Thomas Fairfax is an eschatological figure, one who was 'long since prophecy'd'. His action in history refers especially to 'conquer'd Britain', but is part of a process involving Europe also ('France, Poland, either Germany').<sup>43</sup> This process is cumulative ('Till one..'), so that Thomas Fairfax is seen as the telos of the 'great Race', its destination in time. Thus the pattern he represents within family history - teleology - is analogous to the eschatological character of time itself: welding together the parochial and the general aspects of the poem.

Moreover, when the nuns tried to disturb this pattern 'And the great Race would intercept', they were in fact acting 'against Fate': not only the 'Fate' of the Fairfaxes, but the universal 'Fate' in which they participate. This stanza encapsulates the idea that no-one, least of all the defenders of a false religion, can prevent or alter the destined course of history; and the attempts of the nuns to arrest this process contrast with the Fairfaxes' activity to forward it. The family obeys the prime directive of chiasm, to act in concert with



historical 'Fate'. They 'make their Destiny their Choice' (LXXXIII).

This imperative, one's accord with history, was also incumbent upon the nation as a whole, most particularly because it was the Elect Nation.<sup>44</sup> When Mowers, representative of the New 'Israalites', cross their 'green Sea' (XLIX), they enact the anti-type of the exodus of the Jews from their captivity and their journey to the Promised Land. I say its anti-type - the passage is usually understood by reference to the type alone<sup>45</sup> - because the Promised Land of the New Israel is not Canaan but the New Jerusalem of Revelation. In this anti-type the Red Sea, figure of baptism,<sup>46</sup> refers to the "perfected" baptism of fire at the Last Day .

the day of Judgement [*is*] when that world and this  
and all that shall be born hereafter, shall passe  
through the same Red Sea, and be all baptized with  
the same fire.<sup>47</sup>

[*my italics*]

This eschatological typology in the Red-Sea crossing is used in stanza XLIX to represent the New 'Israalites' journeying towards their national goal.<sup>48</sup> For Parliamentarians and Royalists alike, that goal was chiliastic: a national counterpart to the teleology of Fairfax's 'great Race'.

It has been noted that stanza XLIX is the central stanza of the poem, numerically speaking:<sup>49</sup> and I would assign it a central thematic place because of its characterization of the Elect Nation, its figural identification of their destination, and its inauguration of the 'Civil War' in the poem.

The poem's reference outward to the "greater world" of national events is maintained in these subsequent stanzas: the harvesting of the Mowers becomes a bucolic metaphor for the horrors of Civil War (L-LIII). This episode provides the sort of amalgam of levity and seriousness common in Marvell:

The Mower now commands the Field;  
 In whose new Traverse seemeth wrought  
 A Camp of Battail newly fought:  
 Where, as the Meads with Hay, the Plain  
 Lyes quilted ore with Bodies slain:  
 The Women that with forks it fling,  
 Do represent the Pillaging.

(LIII)

No seventeenth-century reader, recalling the Civil War, would have found such stanzas completely comic. The bucolic event of harvest provides a correlative for the Civil War in a personal poem; it brings the "mighty matter" into a personal perspective. The communal phenomenon of harvest is thus a microcosm of the countrywide war; and its humorousness reflects the distance in seriousness between its own trivial events and the momentous events of the War. The harvest refers to something larger than itself, and its own "smallness" by comparison is indicated by humour. Only in this way can it successfully provide an intimate reflection of a public cataclysm.

It is, therefore, natural that the military metaphors employed to describe Fairfax's garden (to a different end) earlier in the poem, should have laid the basis of this metaphorical episode. But there the metaphor turned upon cultivation (creation): here it turns upon harvest (destruction). As I have indicated above, the grass here harvested is mankind, massacred by that traditional Mower, Death; 'The Mower now commands the ~~battle~~ Field' (LIII). This harvesting of men places the War in its eschatological context. In Revelation xiv. 14-16, the last 'Mower', Christ, harvests mankind:

upon the cloud one sat, like the Son of Man, having....  
 in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came....  
 crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud,  
 Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for  
 thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And  
 he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth,  
 and the earth was reaped.

This passage bases itself on the Biblical motif which describes man as 'grass': the harvest of that grass is the fulfilment of mortal



time, and this Mower is the last and most powerful agent of death in that guise. This consummating devastation is mimicked by the Mowers of Appleton House, as if in "rehearsal" of the real event. In this form the Civil War is placed within the eschatological scheme as one of those latter-day 'wars' that contribute to the last harvest, and the national reference of the passage is (as usual) further extended to universal reference.

The devastation which is a necessary part of the eschatological design in history had several stages, each containing particular agents of destruction. In one of these stages the Locusts of the apocalypse appear, empowered by God to 'torment' antichristian souls. In stanza XLVII these are recalled by the 'Grasshoppers' (identified with locusts in this period)<sup>50</sup> which preside over the Mowers' 'Massacre':

And now to the Abbyss I pass  
Of that unfathomable Grass,  
Where Men like Grashoppers appear,  
But Grashoppers are Gyants there:  
They, in there squeking Laugh, contemn  
Us as we walk more low then them:  
And, from the Precipices tall  
Of the green spir's, to us do call.

Not only do these creatures "introduce" the harvest of flesh in this poem, but they are associated with 'precipices', a feature of the 'wasted' world revealed in stanza LXXXVI, and hence with the motif of devastation. In fanciful form they recall their apocalyptic counterparts, the features of which are harnessed to the stanza's conceits.

And there came out of the smoke [of the pit] locusts  
upon the earth, and unto them was given power....And  
it was commanded them that they should not hurt the  
grass of the earth, neither any green thing....but only  
those men who have not the seal of God in their  
foreheads....they should be tormented....And the shapes  
of the locusts were like horses prepared unto battle....  
and their faces were like the faces of men.

(Rev. ix. 3-7)

From these cryptic images Marvell builds his fantastic conceit. Here the locusts originate in the 'pit', while Marvell's playful equivalents inhabit the 'Abbyss'; 'Men like Grasshoppers appear', whereas the locusts have 'faces....like the faces of men'. The grasshoppers are 'Gyants', the locusts as large as 'horses'; the grasshoppers 'contemn' men, the locusts 'torment' them; the latter have 'power' over men, while the grasshoppers "overtop" the men who are 'more low then them'. In both passages the 'green' face of the world is emphasized, with resonances of the biblical grass: the sinister nature of the apocalyptic locusts is carefully "miniaturized" into the uneasy 'squeaking Laugh' of their counterparts, which is merely a hint of the sinister.

I shall be discussing other aspects of this stanza a little later: for the moment, it is sufficient to note the way in which these 'locusts' were explicated by the exegetists of the Geneva Bible. They explained that 'Locustes are false teachers, heretikes, and worldlie suttil Prelates, with Monkes, Freres, Cardinals, Patriarkes, Archebishops, Bishops, Doctors, Baschelers and masters which forsake Christ to mainteine false doctrine': they are 'false prophetes', with power over those who are susceptible to error. (Marvell himself applies the 'Locusts', in this precise sense, to heresy in the First Anniversary - as we have seen.) In other words, these 'grasshoppers' represent the episcopal power which was the source of the national sin of religious error - that which 'wasted' England. Their overweening character (represented elsewhere in the poem by the 'Prelate great' of Cawood) is here reflected by their disproportionate size. In this manner the episcopal establishment is placed in its true light: as an element in the provocation of Civil War, and as part of the eschatological process of the current Latter Days. They are a contemporary, Protestant form of that error represented by the 'Suttle Nuns' - 'suttil Prelates'. (Similarly, Marvell complained in RT that the



bishops 'affected pre-eminence....Lording it over Gods inheritance'.)<sup>51</sup>

As I have suggested, these eschatological resonances are controlled by the "diminution" of the poem. One such diminishing device appears first here, at the point of harvest, in concert with its humorous "microcosm": the theatrical perspective. This is created by recurrent reference to theatrical devices, which transform such events as the harvest into a play or 'masque'.<sup>52</sup>

No Scene that turns with Engines strange  
Does oftner than these Meadows change.

This Scene again withdrawing brings  
A new and empty Face of things.

And see how Chance's better Wit  
Could with a Mask my studies hit!

(XLIX, LVI, LXXIV)

By means of such linking passages, the poem proceeds like a theatrical spectacle. The first pair of couplets quoted here frames the harvesting episode: Marvell announces that, like actors, 'The tawny Mowers enter next' (XLIX). In formal terms, this theatrical perspective reconciles the far-reaching resonances of the action and the compact world of Nunappleton - which is seen as a theatrical "mime" of the larger world - preserving the decorum of this microcosm.

Just as the comic devices of the Nunnery episode had both a miniaturizing and a thematic function, so this theatrical format has an eschatological resonance. For the metaphor of 'theatre' was in this period habitually attributed to the "drama" of history. One of the persistently popular books of the century was Thomas Beard's The Theatre of God's Judgements (1631), a survey of the retributive providences of God in human history; it implemented the notion that history was a play, written by God, of which the final Act is the Last Day.<sup>53</sup> (A notion which, as we shall see, appears in several of Marvell's poems.) As Thomas Browne described it,

This is that one day [the Last Day], that shall include  
and comprehend all that went before it, wherein as in  
the last Scene, all the Actors must enter, to compleate  
and make up the Catastrophe of this great peece.<sup>54</sup>

This drama of history, moving towards the 'Catastrophe' of the eschaton,  
is reflected in the 'Scenes' of Appleton House that record current  
historical events. The Mowers are "actors" because they participate  
in the historical drama. Thus the theatrical metaphor functions both  
as an analogy to the greater drama of the "greater world", and as a  
mechanism of decorum. Its capacity to achieve both these ends simult-  
aneously therefore unifies the frame and the theme of the poem, both  
of which are comprehended in the metaphor. By this means Appleton  
House is best enabled to "rehearse" the events of the eschaton.

In the eschatological drama, the 'harvesting of the earth' is  
part of the universal desolation of the Latter Days: which is a  
purgative desolation. Similarly, the poem's 'harvest' is succeeded  
by an image of England desolated ('empty') and cauterized ('rase and pure')  
by the War.

This Scene again withdrawing brings  
A new and empty Face of things;  
A levell'd space....  
The World when first created sure  
Was such a Table rase and pure.

(LVI)

England's new appearance as a "Tabula Rasa" seems to characterize the  
War as purgative.<sup>55</sup> This, the view of Parliamentary chiliasts,  
is here the situation, momentarily at least. But the 'levell'd'  
nature of the terrain in fact bodes ill: it presages the 'Levellers'  
of the next stanza (LVII).<sup>56</sup> Their name, which is here used topo-  
graphically to indicate the depredation of the landscape, also implies  
the claims of their splinter group - the Diggers - for common ownership  
of land;<sup>57</sup> a claim which allows their incorporation into the metaphoric  
landscape.



The Levellers' appearance signifies the advent of radical groups at the end of the Civil War. (Marvell's distaste for such factions is recorded in Hastings and the First Anniversary.) The 'Cattle' introduced into the razed meadows by the Levellers/villagers crop the grass even closer; that is, England suffers further depredation, by faction.

For to this naked equal Flat,  
Which Levellers take pattern at,  
The Villagers in common chase  
Their Cattle, which it closer rase;  
And what below the Sith increast  
Is pinch't yet nearer by the Beast.  
Such, in the painted World, appear'd  
Davenant with th'Universal Heard.

(LVII)

The 'Table rase' is here 'closer rase(d)', and the agents of this spoliation are the 'democratick' 'Universal Heard',<sup>58</sup> with overtones of "the rabble"; England is at the mercy of such elements after the breakdown of the familiar order. Moreover, this 'Beast' is not just a cow but the 'Beast', figured by domestic animals, and characterizing the spoliators as agents of Antichrist. They exploit the deprived nature of England after Civil War.

Therefore, the subsequent stanzas portray the vulnerability of the nation, and the havoc wreaked by such forces. The river and the land become confused, and the species are compounded; the cows become hallucinatory images (LIX, LX, LVIII). These effects of disjunction not only convey the disordered aftermath of War, but also the "uncertain perception" that such disorder may cause.<sup>59</sup>

Then, to conclude these pleasant Acts,  
Denton sets ope its Cataracts;....  
The River in itself is drown'd,  
And Isl's th'astonisht Cattle round.

Let others tell the Paradox,  
How Eels now bellow in the Ox;  
How Horses at their Tails do kick,  
Turn'd as they hang to Leeches quick;

How Boats can over Bridges sail;  
 And Fishes do the Stables scale.  
 How Salmons trespassing are found;  
 And Pikes are taken in the Pound.

(LIX-LX)

Here Nature herself is "out of joint": the elements of earth and water become indistinct from one another, and natural categories are confused as a result of the flooding. 'Fishes do the Stables scale'. While attached to the "actuality" of the flooded river, this disruption of the natural order reflects figuratively the character of a War which divides a nation against itself, and throws men into unfamiliar "categories".

As elsewhere in this poem, this national significance is seconded by a Latter-Day context. The disarray of Nature which Marvell describes here was an element of the world's decay in the Latter Days.

the terrors of the Judgement shall be spoken aloud by  
 the immediate forerunning accidents, which shall bee so  
 great violences to the old constitutions of Nature, that  
 it shall break her very bones, and disorder her till shee  
 be destroyed....The sea....shall rise fifteen cubits  
 above the highest mountaines, and thence descend....then  
 all the beasts and creeping things, the monsters, and the  
 usuall inhabitants of the sea shall be gathered together,  
 and make fearfull noyses....the wild beasts shall leave  
 their dens and come into the companies of men,so that  
 you shall hardly tell how to call them, herds of Men or  
 congregations of Beasts.<sup>60</sup>

These 'great violences to the old constitutions of Nature', the confounding of species, the 'noyses' (as of the 'Eels', LX), provide an eschatological resonance to Marvell's lines on the 'Paradox' of nature's confusion. The flooding river is the agent of this confusion, and that too is a latter-day sign: 'The decay of the parts argues the dotage of the Whole....The sea now rageth where the ground was dry: and fishes swimme, where men walked'<sup>61</sup>: that is, 'Fishes do the Stables scale'. These confusions are both the effects of War and Latter-Day signs, just as the War itself is one of the Latter-Day wars.



One particular stanza endows these effects with an eschatological significance:

Then, to conclude these pleasant Acts,  
Denton sets ope its Cataracts;  
 And makes the Meadow truly be  
 (What it but seem'd before) a Sea.  
 For, jealous of its Lords long stay,  
 It try's t'invite him thus away.

(LIX)

'Pleasant' here means "foolish", "making fun": the river 'concludes' these pleasantries by flooding the meadows.<sup>62</sup> In this manner it becomes a minor imitation of the Deluge. The War which it succeeds was a sign of the Latter Days, of which Daniel said that 'the end of it shall be with a flood' (ix.26). This 'flood' too is a 'conclusion': it is an imitation of the End presaged by War.

The Flood 'makes the Meadow truly be/ (What it but seemed before) a Sea.' This is a symbolic statement, suggesting that whereas the 'Sea' of the Meadow was a "Sign", an image of reality, the flood has made the image reality: the flood is an anti-type of the 'green Sea'. (That is, what was a metaphor of "waters" has become a real "flood".) This involves a "typological" fulfilment within the poem. On another level, this indicates that the War which was a sign of the End has been succeeded by the End itself, the Deluge. The meadows "were" the War, the flooding of the meadows "is" the Deluge prefigured by that War.

Since the Deluge is part of the "final Act" of the historical drama - the Last Day - it is properly described here as concerned 'to conclude these....Acts'. So that here, as elsewhere in the poem, the theatrical metaphor "contains" and also enacts the eschatological pattern.

This figurative level is maintained in the third couplet. 'For, jealous of its Lords long stay,/ It try's t'invite him thus away.' On the literal level the 'Lord' here is Fairfax, who has retired to his estates at Nunappleton: he is 'invited away' by his Denton estate,

which has caused the river joining the estates to flood, thus indicating its jealousy that he should prefer to stay at Nunappleton.<sup>63</sup> This meaning is a familial one, adumbrating the analogous national meaning of the lines: that Fairfax is 'invited away' from his retirement by his standing (represented by Denton, the more splendid estate), and by the political turbulence of the times (the flood). In this muted manner Marvell indicates his feeling that men like Fairfax are badly needed in public life at this time. In an earlier stanza he had described Fairfax as the one man who could have repaired the 'Wast' of England (XLIV). To reflect the urgent need of England for such men is the "national" intent of the couplet.

Its figurative intent invokes another "Deliverer" for England, the one who must ultimately come. This is the divine 'Lord', Christ. The meadows (England) 'invite him thus away' from Heaven, 'jealous of his long stay'; that is, His Coming is too tardy for the spirit of England: she brings upon herself a Deluge in order to signify that His time has come, the Coming that follows upon that Deluge. (The word 'stay' involves a twist on the biblical assurance that 'He will not tarry' but hurry.)<sup>64</sup> This is a playful statement of impatience for the Last Day. It wittily envisages the chaos of England as in a sense a virtue, because it hastens the Coming. It 'invites' that Day, just as hundreds of men at this time echoed the biblical invocation, 'Come quickly, Lord.'<sup>65</sup>

The delicacy of this double level of statement is characteristic of the poem's treatment of the Civil War. The literal and figurative levels are two aspects of ambiguity in this couplet. On the one hand, the stanza's statements refer to Fairfax and his estates, on the other they refer to the eschatological destiny of England. Fairfax's meadows are a microcosm of England; and he is a human Deliverer (XLIV) who figures the divine Deliverer. This relationship rests partly upon the ambiguity of the italicised word, 'Lord'. But the general double



level of the stanza simply continues the procedure of the poem up to this point.

From here the trope of Deluge is maintained to the end of stanza LXI.

But I, retiring from the Flood,  
Take Sanctuary in the Wood;  
And, while it lasts, my self imbark  
In this yet green, yet growing Ark;  
Where the first Carpenter might best  
Fit Timber for his Keel have Prest.  
And where all Creatures might have shares,  
Although in Armies, not in Paires.

(LXI)

Marvell's refuge is in an 'Ark' like that of the 'first Carpenter', Noah. Thus this image relates his present experience to the first Flood, which was understood to be a Type of the final Deluge.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, the Ark itself was traditionally a Type of the Church Militant in the world, the heroine of the eschatological drama;<sup>67</sup> Marvell, who 'imbarks' in it, is of course a member of this Church, and thus implicated in its destiny. This stanza therefore indicates the personal aspect of the poem's eschatological theme.

Similarly, at this point (LXII), the poem focuses upon Marvell's internal experiences, as he takes refuge from the Flood. In the wood he meditates upon the natural phenomena that surround him - not without some frivolity - until in stanza LXXIII he claims to be able to interpret the "signs" of the natural world and even to "prophecy":

Out of these scatter'd Sibyls Leaves  
Strange Prophecies my Phancy weaves:  
And in one History consumes,  
Like Mexique Paintings, all the Plumes.  
What Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said  
I in this light Mosaick read.  
Thrice happy he who, not mistook,  
Hath read in Natures mystick Book.

(LXXIII)

By referring here to the Cumaean Sibyl, Marvell recalls a tradition of classical prophecy which had been assimilated into the Christian revelation since the time of Lactantius, and which held currency in

Reformation thought.<sup>68</sup> What 'Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said' (that is, in the classics and in the Old Testament) was relevant to the 'one History' of progressive revelation, because of the Christianization of classical authors and the Old Testament's typological relationship to the New. When Marvell refers to the 'light Mosaick' of the wood he is (as has long been recognized) punning on the "Mosaic Books" of the Bible<sup>69</sup> ('leaves', in this case, of a book). Indeed he is, in suitably "light" mood, reflecting upon the 'one History' to which all prophecy was related: Christian eschatology. And to read in the "book of Fate",<sup>70</sup> as he does here, was the appropriate occupation of the elect instruments of God in all times; but most especially in a doubtful time of Civil War.

Analogous to this obligation to "read" history and the prophecies relevant to its course, was the necessity to read the "signs" of Nature: the sort of natural events which Nunappleton has presented to Marvell's gaze.

The common providence of God in the various seasons and order of nature, may afford excellent matter for contemplation, much more that speciall providence of his in the guidance of humane affairs, which have been alwayes mannaged with various wisdom.<sup>71</sup>

That is, the interpretative activity of the Elect is two-fold, being directed simultaneously at the sequence of historical events and at the patterns evident in Nature, 'speciall providence' and 'common providence'. Hence, in addition to his readings in 'History', Marvell reads also in 'Natures mystick Book'. This two-fold interpretation of phenomena relates to the events just witnessed in the meadows, which are themselves both "natural" and "historical". Moreover, Marvell displays the constant anxiety of the Elect that they should be 'not mistook' in their understanding of such providences: that they should not "mis-read" the purposes of God.



Presumably he is satisfied with his studies in the wood, for he relinquishes his 'Sanctuary' there and returns to the meadows: returning, that is, from the interpretation of events back to the location of those events, from privacy back into history. He finds a peaceful landscape, for the War/harvest has passed, and the flood has receded (LXXIX). So it was understood, that after the Deluge 'The sea.....shall.....thence descend into hollownesse'.<sup>72</sup>

Then evening begins to fall over the landscape (LXXXIII-IV), an evening which in a metaphorical sense is also the twilight of England and the world. Suitably, this sunset period is marked by a 'Coming': not yet that of Christ, but the parochial 'Coming' of Maria Fairfax.

Maria such, and so doth hush  
The World, and through the Ev'ning rush.  
 No new-born Comet such a Train  
 Draws through the Skie, nor Star new-slain.  
 For streight those giddy Rockets fail,  
 Which from the putrid Earth exhale,  
 But by her Flames, in Heaven try'd,  
Nature is wholly vitri'fied.

(LXXXVI)

Maria's is a heaven-born Coming, such a manifestation that Comets pale next to her light. The italicised words of the stanza, especially, endow her with wider significance than Nunappleton itself would allow; for she implies something about the "greater world" outside this microcosm. She inhabits, and affects, 'The World'; she is likened to a portent; she is 'in Heaven try'd', she affects 'Nature' itself. These expansive terms reflect the eschatological resonance of this little 'Coming'.

Further, it was understood that the world would end in conflagration, and that by this conflagration it would be 'vitri'fied' into the 'Sea of Glass' foretold by Revelation.<sup>73</sup> In a similar manner Maria's 'Flames', 'Heaven'-sent, 'vitri'fy' 'Nature'. Maria is here compared to the 'halcyon', symbol of peace, and in this fashion her character

recalls the character of the Prince of Peace: even as she imitates His Coming.<sup>74</sup> This resonance is appropriate to the historical narrative of the poem, since Maria's appearance occurs as the effects of War have receded.

The full nature of Maria's Coming will be discussed in a later chapter, since Marvell's source for this characterization of his pupil has a complex history. For the moment, a few other observations are relevant.

The basis of this portrayal is Maria's virtue, that she speaks 'Heaven's Dialect' (LXXXIX). And her "Coming" performs in microcosm what Christ would effect universally; it restores some order to the meadows of her microcosmic 'World'. Nature 'recollects' itself in her presence (LXXXIII).

'Tis not, what once it was, the World;  
But a rude heap together hurl'd;  
All negligently overthrown,  
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.  
Your lesser World contains the same.  
But in more decent Order tame;  
You Heaven's Center, Nature's Lap.  
And Paradise's only Map.

(LXXXVI)

Mary's 'lesser World', the microcosmic world of Nunappleton, is inspired to 'order' itself by her presence (LXXXIV); in this small world she has effected a repair of its chaos, that 'decent Order' lost to England and the larger world. Properly, then, she is not only a figure of the divine order ('Heaven's Center'), but also a premonition of the paradise that will supervene upon the earth after the true "Coming": she is 'Paradise's only Map'.<sup>75</sup> In this manner her "Coming", like her father's character as "Deliverer", is a figure of the universal Coming.

In the next and final stanza, the evening moves into darkness.

But now the Salmon-Fishers moist  
Their Leathern Boats begin to hoist;  
And, like Antipodes in Shoes,  
Have shod their Heads in their Canoos.



How Tortoise like, but not so slow,  
 These rational Amphibii go?  
 Let's in: for the dark Hemisphere  
 Does now like one of them appear.

(LXXXVII)

The conceit of tortoise-like fishermen has a vivid quality: it has been explained in an earlier stanza that the image of the tortoise reflects the character of men, who carry souls within their bodies/shells.<sup>76</sup> Therefore I would suggest that the 'tortoise' carries some allusion to mortality: the body - like his shell - is, as stanza II notes, merely an 'Inn' briefly inhabited by the soul. But this is in fact only a minor element in the allusiveness of this stanza, which has been so often derogated and has been so often a source of puzzlement as well.<sup>77</sup>

The true force of the stanza is eschatological. This Final Image ends an eschatological poem with the only image that could properly do this; an image of the End itself.

The darkness that here closes upon Nunappleton is a metaphor of the world's darkening at the end of time, an End seen throughout the poem as imminent: it has been confirmed by both historical and natural "signs". The image that conveys the eschatological force of this darkness is that of the fishermen, 'Like Antipodes in Shoes,/ (Who) Have shod their Heads in their Canoos'. They are, as it were, "upside down", as if their feet were in the air: Antipodeans in the wrong hemisphere. In fact they are still in the same Antipodean hemisphere, for it too is on its head: since the 'Hemisphere/Does now like one of them appear', it too must seem "upside down". The implication of this image is that the world has been turned upside down; and this is a central trope of eschatology. The Scriptures predicted that at the Last Day the world would be 'turned upside down'.

Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

(Isaiah xxiv. I)

This passage of Isaiah referred to the desolation of the earth at the End, and was one of the most potent metaphors of this chiliastic age.

This potency was revealed in several senses. First, to radical chiliasts - like the Fifth Monarchists - this motif had a political moral: 'the world turned upside down' represented the 'overturning' of traditional hierarchies.<sup>78</sup> To them the disruption of the social and political order was positively enjoined by Ezekiel;<sup>79</sup> which advocated the destruction of the 'kings of the earth' in the cause of Jesus the Fifth King:

And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown....exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he comes whose right it is; and I will give it him.

(Ezekiel xxi. 25-27; my italics)

This injunction to overthrow kings was one of the texts adduced to justify the radical position both during and after the Civil War against the King. It could be associated with such texts as Psalms cxlvi. 9 ('the way of the wicked he turneth upside down') and Isaiah xxiv. 21 ('in that day....the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones.... and the kings of the earth') in the service of radical political action. In this manner, also, such factions associated themselves with the first Christians, who had been described by their opponents as those who 'turned the world upside down' by their beliefs.<sup>80</sup> This idea of the inverted world, its character in the Last Day, was a powerful force in contemporary politics.

This is, therefore, a motif with both eschatological and national resonances; appropriately, since the national history was, for contemporaries and in this poem, eschatology in fulfilment.

This motif was frequently used to describe the activities of those radical movements who took it literally:<sup>81</sup> the Levellers,



characterized earlier in the poem as desolators of the land, were amongst such elements. It is to current political tumults of this kind that the Final Image refers, in its 'national' sense. Observing these subversive elements - amongst other things - men of the time thought that they could see the great 'overturning' in progress.

If we.....consider the great revolution and turning of things upside down in these our days, certainly the work is on the wheel: the Lord hath prepared the instruments of death against Antichrist.<sup>82</sup>

Current events, the "signs of the end" reflected throughout the poem, are here summarized as the national process of 'turning....things upside down'. In this fashion the Final Image culminates the poem's microcosmic picture of the nation.

The End was also a matter of Nature's 'overturning': something reflected in earlier passages of the poem. The earth is laid waste and dissolved, an occurrence graphically described by the same passage from Isaiah:

Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste....The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled....The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth....Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth....the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved.... The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.

(Isaiah xxiv. 1-6, 18-20)

This, the natural world 'overturned', is in the penultimate stanza the current state of the 'World':

'Tis not, what once it was, the World;  
But a rude heap together hurl'd;  
All negligently overthrown,  
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.

(LXXXVI)

The world is 'overthrown', overturned: the desolation predicted by Isaiah is reflected by the lack of vegetation in this wasted landscape of 'Gulfes' and 'Deserts'. (Marvell points out that even Nunappleton

'contains the same'.) Here the condition of the overturned world prepares for the image, in the next stanza, which intimates the End.

Just as, earlier in the poem, the Type of the Red Sea preceded its anti-type of Deluge, so this 'overturning' was prefigured in the harvesting passage. Such a prefiguration was proper in that context, since it related to the state of man, the biblical 'grass':

And now to the Abbyss I pass  
Of that unfathomable Grass,  
Where Men like Grashoppers appear,  
But Grashoppers are Gyants there:  
They, in there squeking Laugh, contemn  
Us as we walk more low then them:  
And, from the Precipices tall  
Of the green spir's, to us do call.

To see Men through this Meadow Dive,  
We wonder how they rise alive....  
But, as Mariners that sound,  
And show upon their Lead the Ground,  
They bring up Flow'rs so to be seen,  
And prove they've at the Bottom been.

(XLVII-VIII)

Here the natural hierarchies are overturned: men 'walk more low then' grasshoppers. The power of the Locusts of the apocalypse is itself an inversion, since they had 'power' over men in order to accomplish the divine purpose; in normal circumstances man is the lord of creation, and here he has been subordinated. Marvell associates the grasshoppers' eminence with 'Precipices': a presage of the 'Precipices' that feature in the overturned world of stanza LXXXVI. Then follows a bucolic rehearsal of the overturning of men, who 'prove they've at the Bottom been'. As indeed they have, since that low order of creation - grasshoppers - have been able to lord it over them. This joke is seconded by another: for the 'unfathomable Grass' of flesh has been 'sounded' by these men, a paradox revealed only by close comparison of these two stanzas. In effect, by sounding the 'unfathomable Grass' the 'Marriners' have sounded the nature of the flesh (grass), their own mortality. That is, they discover that which is most fully



revealed at the Last Day - mortality for men, destructibility for the world. This is merely a playful rehearsal, built into fantastic conceits, for the 'world turned upside down' in the Final Image: it stands in relation to the latter as a 'Type' within the poem.

That the Final Image represents not a rehearsal, but the End itself, is indicated by the injunction of the last line: 'Let's in'. This imperative echoes Isaiah, the advice of which is that on the Last Day the elect must "go in":

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut  
thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little  
moment, until the indignation is overpast.

(Isaiah. xxvi. 19-20)

It is incumbent upon Marvell and Maria, as members of the elect, to obey this injunction: 'Let's in'. The directive to the faithful is personalized here, to refer to the inhabitants of Nunappleton; and in this way the microcosmic focus of the poem is maintained even at the End.

In the same "miniaturizing" fashion, Marvell chooses a characteristically playful form for his finale: the fishermen with their huge 'Shoes'. Appleton House is distinguished by this light touch throughout, and in explicating the poem one cannot help but do violence to this delicacy. The poem wears its eschatology lightly, although it is no less serious for that. Its style displays Marvell's jocoserious mode in action.

The same delicacy is displayed in the way Marvell specifies these 'overturned' individuals as 'fishers'. They are 'rationall Amphibii' as a result of this calling, whereby they can be said to inhabit both sea and land. On the figurative level, this indicates that they are men of the Latter Days; for during this period sea and land are compounded (as we saw in sts. LXXVIII-IX). Therefore Marvell can call them 'rationall Amphibii' - men, who are distinguished by their 'rationall'

faculty, who are also in a sense 'fish'. In the Latter Days, 'fishes swimme where men walked', and vice versa.

Secondly, this characterization of their occupation enables their relation to the motif of 'overturning'. In so far as these are fishermen, they can recall the character of the very first Christians; they are not "fishers of men" but they are members of an equally humble stratum of society. As Marvell put it in another poem, 'The Apostles were so many fishermen',<sup>83</sup> and nothing more, in worldly terms; for this reason Christ chose them. Equally, because He chose them for their humility, there is a strong relationship between the occupation of 'fishermen' and the idea of humility. As Marvell noted in one of his prose works, Christ himself embodies the notion of spiritual exaltation within a humble station.

He who was "Lord of all", and to whom "all power was given both in heaven and in earth" was nevertheless contented to come in the "form of a servant", and to let the emperours and princes of the world alone with the use of their dominions.<sup>84</sup>

Such associations, of humble social status with a high spiritual destiny, underlie Marvell's use of "fishermen" here; and connect them with the motif of social inversion which is implied in the 'world turned upside down'.

Marvell himself explicitly related the idea of 'the world turned upside down' to its source in the characterization of the first Christians, and described Christ himself as one of these "inverters".<sup>85</sup> Returning, therefore, to the notion of humility that is associated with fishermen, it would appear that these Marvellian 'fishers' represent the capacity of the humble to be exalted. (The 'tortoise' motif may also subserve this idea, since the second stanza of the poem makes it clear that their humble self-containment is to be contrasted to the overweening pride of some men.) The "inversion" motif supports this reading, since Isaiah predicts that, by the overturning of the world, men



and their estates in life will also be "inverted". The mighty will be brought low, and the humble exalted:

Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty....and turneth it upside down....And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller....  
And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

(Isaiah, xxiv. 1-2, 21)

It was noted above that this overturning implied the humbling of kings; and as this passage makes clear, it extended to all social hierarchies. This disruption of human orders is carefully moralized by a great authority of the time, the Geneva Bible: that 'by these wordes the Prophet signifieth an horrible confusion, where there shalbe nether religio(n), order nor policie....There is no power so high or mightie, but God will visite him w<sup>th</sup> his roddes.' It is this social and political inversion which is intimated by the inversion of the 'fishers': turned upside down, they are as it were the humble ending "on top".

Perhaps this idea reflects Marvell's sense that the 'high ones' were in some way at fault in England; that the Civil War was their peculiar sin, which made 'Lowness unsafe as Hight' for more humble men. The national sin had been particularly ascribed, by Puritans, to the Bishops, who had swerved from the true and 'primitive' faith to the 'popishness' of Arminianism; represented in the poem by the 'Prelate great' of Cawood Castle. So Marvell may intend the "apostolic" resonances of the 'fishers' as a counterpoint to these 'high ones'; but the same critical stance could comprehend the political 'high ones'.<sup>86</sup> In the 1650s - when this poem was probably written - that meant the military 'Grandeess'.

His characterization of Fairfax as unique amongst the 'high ones' seems to support this interpretation. For Fairfax alone possesses the

virtues required of her leaders in England's parlous hour, and he is no longer one of the 'high ones':

And yet there walks one on the Sod  
Who, had it pleased him and God,  
Might once have made our Gardens spring  
Fresh as his own and flourishing.

(XLIV)

But it did not please either Fairfax or God, the author of destiny. This remark has often been misread, as if Fairfax were at fault;<sup>87</sup> but in fact it was axiomatic that even when men followed their own bent - as Fairfax did by retiring from public life and compromise - they were obeying the will of God in His historical purposes.<sup>88</sup> Since it was willed by 'him and God', then evidently it must follow that England's eschatological role required otherwise than that she should have remained a 'Garden'. It is this thought that determines the 'one History' of the rest of the poem, the movement to 'the world turned upside down'.

In this stanza the relationship between the gardens of Appleton House and England's 'Garden' is explicit. Fairfax is a 'Gardener' both in the literal and in the political senses.

For he did, with his utmost Skill,  
Ambition weed, but Conscience till.  
Conscience, that Heaven-nursed Plant,  
Which most our Earthly Gardens want.

(XLV)

The relationship between Fairfax's destiny and England's is a close one. Indeed, it is this relationship that binds together the poem's portrait of the Fairfaxes, and its vision of current events in England. In this sense 'Things greater are in less contain'd' (l.44); and Fairfax's 'lesser World' bears directly upon the "greater world".

In this fashion Upon Appleton House provides a coherent picture of Marvell's attitude to contemporary events; an attitude which, as later chapters will demonstrate, is confirmed by other poems which treat



the national life. In its treatment of the Civil War and its aftermath the poem effects a chiliastic vision of England's destiny as the Elect Nation: its destiny as it 'pleased /Fairfax/ and God'.

Without comprehending this eschatological trope, we cannot fail to find much in the poem obscure; as the many and diverse critical accounts of the poem in recent years amply demonstrate. Indeed, more recent criticism has tended to attempt to justify this poem, which has so often been found wanting: not unified, or overlong, or even "rambling".<sup>89</sup> In fact, it is only by recognising the eschatological theme and its witty variations that the poem can be seen in its unity. D.C. Allen recognised that the harvesting section had a connection with the Civil War; Maren-Sophie Røstvig suggested some typological motifs in the poem; and Joseph Summers saw 'some apocalyptic strain' (a vague one, admittedly) in Maria's arrival on the scene; while Leishman realised, in isolation from his overall reading of the poem, that her 'vitrifying' was in some way related to the vitrification of the earth.<sup>90</sup> None of these commentators has understood these motifs in the way that I have suggested they function; and they have failed to see the eschatological theme of the poem, its complex and ubiquitous effects, and its relationship to the comprehensive doctrines of the period. Their intimations may be seen as at once a lack of thematic recognition, and an indication that the true theme of the poem has forced, here and there, an opening within their respective accounts of the poem. Above all, the long-standing question of the poem's unity is answered by the comprehensive function of the eschatological vision in the poem; a vision which will be further elaborated in a later chapter.

The function of this theme is, as I have indicated, at once "universal" and "parochial": aspects which are comprehended by the poem's "microcosmic" devices. Moreover, the persona of Marvell within the poem, together with his portrait of his employers the Fairfaxes,

gives to the eschatological theme a personal dimension. The intimacy of providential destiny to the life of the poet, as well as the public face of the eschaton, are contained in this poem.

I will be discussing other eschatological aspects of Appleton House in a later chapter, since my purpose here is limited to a demonstration of Marvell's eschatological interpretation of the Civil War and its aftermath. But I must mention, here, that the "universal applicability" of eschatology in this period is never better displayed than by the fact that it is a prominent feature in what was - generically speaking - a "Country House" poem.<sup>91</sup> It was innovatory to create a vision of universal events in a poem the mode of which was essentially parochial and intimate. In applying this generic pattern to the portrayal of Fairfax, Marvell was enabled to expand it by reference to the public destiny in which Fairfax had cut so impressive a figure.

Therefore Appleton House comes to embrace its intimations of the national life within the eschatological design: the Reformation, the destined race of Fairfaxes, the character of the Elect Nation, the Civil War, postwar tumults, the Deluge, a Coming, the benighting of the world, and finally 'the world turned upside down'.

Of this national destiny the history of the Fairfaxes is a microcosm. An earlier Fairfax strikes a blow against Antichrist and for self-determination, by freeing his intended bride from the wiles of Papist nuns; Thomas Fairfax could have been the Deliverer, not only of a bride, but of England herself. His estates represent, through the theatrical metaphor of history, what England is now: a meadow reaped in blood and razed by faction. Equally, his gardens, in their careful order (XXXVI-XL), represent what England might have been under the Gardener Fairfax - still 'the Garden of the World'. His garden is a diagram of what England has lost, but that loss was by divine design.



When the Fairfaxes 'make their Destiny their Choice' (LXXXIII), they are following the Puritan ethic of adjusting their own lives according to their sense of the destined course of history; their 'Destiny', or necessity, becomes their 'Choice' or freedom.<sup>92</sup> This is the Puritan chiliast's definition of man's freedom, as well as his obligation, within God's inexorable plan. The story of Appleton House, and of its 'destined' owners, is that of England in little. Fairfax is in retirement; England and the world are in eclipse. The eschatological bias of Marvell's observations is thus both national and particular: a personalized portrayal of providential history.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE REVELATION IN ACTION:

#### The Poet and Contemporary History in 'An Horatian Ode'.

In the foregoing chapters I proposed an interpretation of the development of Marvell's political thought, and that his politics were based upon eschatological premises. In so doing I omitted discussion of his Horatian Ode. I did this because, as I said, the Ode is itself very controversial, and hence requires rather more detailed study than would have been commensurate with the aims of that chapter. Accordingly, this chapter is concerned to study the Ode, in the context established by the previous chapters. Thus I wish to demonstrate in the Ode Marvell's philosophy of eschatology in confrontation with the contemporary events described in the Ode.

The first section of this chapter is concerned with the congruity between Marvell's historico-political philosophy, and the problematic of his poetry. This proposition is the basis of my approach to the Ode's construction. The second section introduces the Ode by a brief survey of the sort of interpretations which have been placed on this poem, and outlines my own approach to its interpretation. The third section investigates the presence of the Horatian atmosphere in the poem, to which I refer throughout as the Roman Parallel. This section is concerned to understand how and why Marvell might have used the Roman Parallel in the Ode, by examining the same Parallel in Tom May's Death, which was written in the same year.<sup>1</sup> The fourth section begins my examination of the Ode itself, by considering Marvell's use of ambiguity in the poem: the aims of this section are structural. Thus the fifth section, from this basis, proceeds to interpret the Ode's ambiguous presentation of Cromwell himself. The sixth section examines the Roman



Parallel in the Ode, its relationship to Marvell's presentation of Cromwell, and its utility in the providential view of the Ode. This is followed by a conclusion.

Throughout, I refer to the providential attitude of the poem as "providence" or "the Chiliastic View", according to context. The purposes of this chapter are to demonstrate this Chiliastic View as the "arbiter" of the Ode.

i. Providential History and the Problematic

In the foregoing chapters I discussed Marvell's belief in eschatology; and indicated that the providential view of history implied in eschatology was the guiding principle of his attitudes to contemporary events. Now I wish to consider how this principle was related to his poetic method or "procedure". It seems to me that the concept of "Providence" in history and the use of Dialectic in Marvell's poetry are analogous.

Dialectic involves the argument of two contrary elements which are eventually brought together in synthesis. The same procedure characterizes the providential directive in history: history is the argument of evil with good in the world. But finally evil is subsumed into a process whose ultimate issue is good. Thus history is a dialectic of good and evil resulting in a synthetic product, which is God's plan. The resulting principle, that evil is as necessary as good to God's purposes, was emphasized by Marvell when he stated that God has

distinguished the government of the World by the intermitting seasons of Discord, War, and publick Disturbance. Neither has he so ordered it only (as men endeavour to express it) by meer permission, but sometimes out of Complacency.

(RT, 231-2)

God Himself 'intermits' evil phenomena with good by His will, His 'Complacency'. This is the 'dialectic' in history.

The idea of a providential directive at work in history is based upon the notion that evil is "redeemed" by its participation in God's design. This is fundamental to Christian belief. A passage in Augustine's City of God stresses its importance for the Christian view of history; at the same time, it compares this providential dialectic to the creative activity of the poet:

For God would never have created a man, let alone an angel [Lucifer], in the foreknowledge of his future evil estate, if he had not known at the same time how he would put such creatures to good use, and thus enrich the course of the world [sic] history by the kind of antithesis which gives beauty to a poem....a kind of eloquence in events, instead of in words.

(XI.18. 449) [my italics]

Augustine compares the Creator to a poet, and the course of providential history to a poem. History in the providential view is a 'dialectic' of the antitheses, evil and good; a poem too is characterized by antithesis. The point of Augustine's comparison of history and poetry is that both are founded upon antithesis: both are dialectical.

Dialectic, the poetry of God in history, is also the problematic of Marvell's poetry. In this sense it is poetically analogous to the dialectic of providential history: it is capable of acting as a poetic equivalent of Marvell's view of history. Thus Marvell's problematic is peculiarly qualified to convey his sense of the process at work in history.

This reflection of providential history in his problematic is, I suggest, the basis of the Horatian Ode. The Ode refers to contemporary events in the historical process, and attempts to place these events in a providential context. To convey this dialectical sense of history it uses the dialectical procedure characteristic of Marvell's poetry. The following sections of this chapter are concerned to demonstrate the congruity of providence and the problematic as they function in the Ode.



ii. Approaches to the Horatian Ode

An introduction to interpretation of this poem almost of necessity involves a review of some previous interpretations. This is because An Horatian Ode seems to have provoked more controversy than any other Marvellian poem. In order to locate the "difficulty" evoking this controversy, it is necessary to indicate the variety of interpretation in which that controversy consists; that "difficulty", it transpires, is a matter of how one interprets Marvell's view of Cromwell.

For instance, Legouis thinks that the poem exercises an impartial view towards both Cromwell and Charles. Margoliouth thinks that Marvell's sympathies are divided, but that ultimately he sees Cromwell as an ideal ruler for the state. Cleanth Brooks, on the other hand, thinks that Marvell admires and disparages Cromwell in roughly equal proportions. In answer to this Douglas Bush suggested Cromwell's portrayal as in some sense a god-given ruler; Bradbrook and Lloyd-Thomas take a similar view. But Ruth Wallerstein sees in the Ode 'an unresolved conflict of feeling'. Hyman favours a depersonalized view of Cromwell and of Charles in the poem - Cromwell as 'might' in power and Charles as 'right', unable to retain power. Mazzeo returns us to a favourable view of Cromwell, as a portrait of the authentic Machiavellian Prince.<sup>2</sup> I think this selection of views gives sufficient indication of the "difficulty" in the Ode as far as critics are concerned: is Cromwell right, wrong, or 'impartially' viewed?

This bias in criticism of the Ode is hardly surprising, since the Ode was written for the occasion of 'Cromwell's Return from Ireland'. Since the Ode has evoked such a variety of interpretation concerning its portrayal of Cromwell, it seems a fair conclusion that the poem itself has not helped critics overmuch on this point. It does not seem to have made the sort of unequivocal statement that would have precluded controversy about its view of Cromwell. Or at least,

critics who do not "prefer" Cromwell have been able to read as equivocal those statements in the poem which pro-Cromwellian critics have considered unequivocal. As usual, Marvell has proved himself 'ambiguous': although most critics adhere to one or the other side of the ambiguity. One can say of pro-Cromwellian, anti-Cromwellian, and neutral readings of the Ode that they represent respectively an 'unequivocal' poem; an 'equivocal' poem which results in an unfavourable view of Cromwell: and an 'equivocal' poem which results in the purist's interpretation of 'equivocation', that the poem is 'impartial'.

The crux of the critics' disagreement is the question of Marvell's allegiance in 1650, when the Ode was written: many of them preface their remarks on the Ode by suggestions as to where his loyalty lay, or at least a presumption that Marvell was unarguably Royalist or Parliamentarian. If he was a Royalist at this time, then - it seems to some - the Ode must present an unfavourable picture of Cromwell. If not, then the Ode must be favourable to him. On the other hand, if one plumps for the 'impartial' view one need not worry unduly about Marvell's personal loyalties, as in order to be impartial he must have abrogated them. This seems to me to be the sort of thinking that has dominated approaches to the Ode. In the flippant view (and one cannot help that view sometimes), interpretations suggesting 'impartiality' tend to hug the safer ground, since they avoid to a great extent the "problem" of Marvell's allegiance, and the pitfalls (of equivocation vs. equivocation) which attend upon those readings which derogate or elevate Cromwell. Suffice it to say that, whatever the rights and wrongs of these interpretations of the Ode, they prove one thing by their very variety: that the Ode is the sort of poem which does not render up its "meaning" easily.

I don't think it does, either: for I contend that Marvell's poetry involves a consistent use of ambiguity. An Horatian Ode is an example of his problematic in action. Its consistency resides



precisely in its consistent use of ambiguity as a form of dialectic. One of the elements of this dialectic is Charles I, and another is Cromwell himself; but it is not wholly a dialectic of personalities. Rather it is a dialectic of history, in which these personalities participate.

Thus, although Cromwell is the subject of the poem, he is not the context of the poem. Rather his portrayal is a crystallization of that context. One cannot, I suggest, equate Cromwell and the Horatian Ode; the characterization of Cromwell is not equivalent to the philosophy behind the poem, but a product of that philosophy. Before we can understand Marvell's attitude to Cromwell in this poem we must understand the formative principle behind that attitude.

This formative principle was Marvell's belief in providential history and the eschaton. It is in this context that he views the personages and the events of his own time that are contained in the Ode.

When Marvell writes, 'Tis Madness to resist or blame/The force of angry Heavens flame', he is expressing the moralitas of providential history: that, whether one likes it or not, any historical event is willed by God and one must accept it as such. Perhaps the clearest statement of how one should respond to such events is that made by Augustine. He says:

Divine providence....warns us not to indulge in silly complaints about the state of affairs, but to take pains to inquire what useful purposes are served by things. <sup>3</sup>

The same doctrine motivates Marvell's repudiation of the capacity to 'resist or blame' what Heaven has decreed. <sup>4</sup>

This thought is reiterated later in the poem, when Marvell states that Charles 'call'd [not] the Gods with vulgar spight/ To vindicate his helpless Right'. This attitude is fundamental to belief in providential history: 'not to indulge in silly complaints about the state of affairs.' It is an attitude reflecting the belief that God

has His reasons, however obscure they may be to mortal eyes (as Marvell himself noted in The First Anniversary.<sup>5</sup>) Therefore the correct response to events is 'to take pains to inquire what useful purposes are served by things.' To see through to the useful providence behind them, is the concern of a man who holds history to be a fortunate process.

In previous chapters I showed how this response to events guided Marvell's political development; in particular, how it affected his response to the Civil War and its aftermath. An Horatian Ode reflects that War and aftermath: and in so doing it displays the same guiding principle that characterized Marvell's attitude to history throughout his life.

This attitude, as I suggested in Chapter III, coloured Marvell's political allegiances. Between 1648 and 1650 these were Royalist; the last of his Royalist poems was Tom May's Death, which was written after the Ode.<sup>6</sup> Therefore it would seem that Marvell was still substantially Royalist when the Ode was written.

However, I also remarked in that chapter that the terms 'Royalist' and 'Parliamentarian' are themselves relative. The nature of allegiance, I suggested, was a complicated one. Therefore it should not surprise us if the Ode does not imitate the caricaturist view of a Cavalier; that Marvell was Royalist at this time does not necessarily mean that the Ode is a piece of blood-and-thunder propaganda for the Royalist cause and against Cromwell's; nor should we expect it to be. And, as I noted, response to Cromwell himself was ambivalent on both sides.

Furthermore, the Ode was written after the execution of the King. Charles II provided a new focus for the Royalist cause, but the Civil War had ended in a Royalist defeat. The Ode is a poem written in the consciousness of regicide and defeat: the cause Marvell supported had lost. The point I wish to emphasize here is not an emotional, but a



formal one. Marvell chose to write his Ode in an Horatian form. There is a distinct similarity between Horace's situation after the Roman Civil War and Marvell's after the English Civil War: in both cases the poet's allegiance had lain with the losing side. It seems to me that this fact is not a matter of coincidence; that, indeed, the Horatian form of Marvell's Ode is an acknowledgement of the fact that Marvell's own cause had lost.

This is a formal point to bear in mind when approaching the Ode. The emotional point, I would suggest, is not that of defeat itself but rather of how Marvell was to respond to that defeat. This response, if it was not to 'resist or blame' providence, had to 'take pains to inquire what useful purposes are served by things':<sup>7</sup> therefore, however abhorrent defeat - and regicide in particular - may have been to Marvell, his belief in providential history demanded that he do his utmost to understand the divine purpose behind that defeat.

This, it seems to me, is the "context" of the Ode. This poem records both Marvell's personal loyalties and his attempt to move beyond those loyalties to a providential view of contemporary events. It represents his effort to 'take pains' to reconcile himself to an event which was the destruction of his own cause, and yet de facto an event willed by God Himself. What some have called the 'impartial' tenor of the Ode is not a matter of Marvell's political 'neutrality' - he was not neutral. It is not truly impartiality either. It is in fact a matter of Marvell's personal reconciliation with the courses of providence.

In that sense the Ode is a very personal poem. At the same time it has an impersonal element, in the sense that it defers to the absolute nature of providential history. Thus the poem contains two contrary elements: a personal disappointment, vying with faith in the ultimate issue of providential history.

In this context, it seems to me that one can say something about Marvell's attitude to the subject of the poem: Cromwell. Providential belief demanded of Marvell that he see Cromwell's rise as sanctioned by God: it had happened, therefore it was destined to happen. What this belief did not require was that Marvell view Cromwell himself as intrinsically good.<sup>8</sup> Providence made use of good and of evil equally, in a dialectic of history. Therefore the Royalist Marvell, if he felt that Cromwell was an unrighteous rebel, could allow himself to state this view. But at the same time he had to acknowledge that, whatever the nature of Cromwell himself, providence had decreed his rise to eminence and the triumph of his cause.

Thus the poem records personal disappointment, as well as personal faith in the purposes of providence; a Royalist's view of Cromwell, and a believer's view of history. The dialectic of these elements is, I suggest, the problematic of An Horatian Ode. It is this dialectic that I intend to demonstrate in the following sections of this chapter.

### iii. The Roman Parallel: 'Tom May's Death'

In this section I wish to discuss what might be the advantages for Marvell's purpose of an Horatian form, and what effects he may have intended it to have. The most obvious consequences of Horatian form are the Roman allusions and concepts that are sprinkled through the poem: such as 'Caesars head' (23), the anecdote of the Capitol (68), 'Caesar' again (101), and 'Hannibal' (102).

This sort of Roman trope has seemed to some critics very important for our understanding of the poem;<sup>9</sup> others have seen it as mere elaboration. But if Marvell seems to be drawing some analogy between the Roman and the English States, then he himself provided the proper perspective for such an analogy. In fact analogies of this kind were



very fashionable, and Marvell provides his critique of them in his poem on Tom May's Death.<sup>10</sup> From this critique, written so soon after the Ode itself, it becomes clear how Marvell regarded Roman 'analogies'. For this reason it is instructive to consider the Roman Parallel in Tom May.

May appears to have singled himself out for Marvell's vilification, first because he was something of a poetaster, second because he was a Parliamentarian, and third because he was a turncoat from the Royalist cause. After his defection to Parliament he became in the 1640s its apologist, writing a History of the Parliament. Writings of this sort prompted Marvell to call him a 'Most servil' wit, and Mercenary Pen.' (40). As for May's historical philosophy, it was as false as his poetry, at least in Marvell's eyes: he compared him with the least reputable historians of past eras. 'Polydore, Lucan, Allan, Vandale, Goth,/ Malignant Poet and Historian both.'<sup>11</sup> From this it is possible to conclude that May's version of history was not to Marvell's taste. For May's interpretation of history was in part a use of Roman analogies to "justify" the triumph of Parliament in the Civil War: as if England were another Rome.<sup>12</sup> This comparison Marvell reviles in a speech which he puts into the mouth of Jonson, as "arbiter of poets". Jonson evicts May from the poets' Elysium with these words:

Go seek the novice Statesmen, and obtrude  
On them some Romane cast Similitude,  
Tell them of Liberty, the Stories fine,  
Until you all grow Consuls in your wine.  
Or thou Dictator of the glass bestow  
On him the Cato, this the Cicero.  
Transferring old Rome hither in your talk,  
As Bethlem's House did to Loretto walk.  
Foul Architect that hadst not Eye to see  
How ill the measures of these States agree.  
And who by Romes example England lay,  
Those but to Lucan do continue May.

[my italics] (43-54)

For Marvell England under Parliament and Republican Rome are quite dissimilar: 'How ill the measures of these States agree.' Thus men like May, 'Malignant Poet and Historian both' (42), prove their speciousness when they 'by Romes example England lay.' The point of Marvell's criticism of May's Roman analogy is that by this means he transferred to Parliamentary rule in England the famed honours of Republican Rome.

Marvell takes revenge upon this 'Romane cast Similitude' by turning it against the oligarchs of Parliament. Thus he remarks that May has turned 'chronicler to Spartacus' (74), the rebel who led an army of slaves against Rome: the derogation in this remark consisting equally in the rebellious character of Spartacus, and in the implication that the Parliamentarians are "slaves": just like the 'servil' May. By 'Spartacus' it has been suggested that Marvell referred to any one of several Parliamentary generals, but in view of Fairfax's eclipse and the ascendancy of Cromwell at this time, Cromwell himself would seem to be the more likely referent here: most especially as May had praised Cromwell to the skies. In this way the Roman Parallel is turned against Cromwell, as Marvell's congruous revenge on May's use of the Parallel for the contrary purpose. Hence Marvell's distaste for an elevatory Parallel becomes an index of his distaste for the cause May supported; it becomes a method not of praising, but of dispraising Republicanism. As a despised method, the Parallel is suited only to purposes which are not elevatory to that political belief.

The same inverted use of the Parallel occurs earlier in the poem. Jonson is portrayed as ruler of poets in Elysium: and as May approaches Jonson is reciting, 'Sounding of ancient Heroes, such as were/ The Subjects Safety, and the Rebels Fear' (15-16). In ancient times, Marvell implies, heroes were servants of the ruler, protecting loyal 'Subjects' and terrorising 'Rebels'. When Marvell begins to speak of



May's own poetry, he indicates that May's version of ancient heroes is as 'Rebels', like Spartacus. Marvell's heroes are monarchists; May's are subversives.

May's sort of hero also appears in Jonson's speech, not as a hero but as a 'Cheat'. Jonson sings of 'how a double-headed Vulture Eats/ Brutus and Cassius the Peoples cheats' (17-18). Here Marvell is alluding to the last Canto of Dante's Inferno, where Satan is a 'monstrous bird' with three mouths, two of which are devoted to the mastication of Brutus and Cassius.<sup>13</sup> Marvell has turned this three-headed devourer into a 'double-headed one', as if he were devoted solely to the punishment of Brutus and Cassius (in Dante Satan consumes Judas too). Thus Marvell implies that, in his eyes, the revolt of Brutus and Cassius against Caesar, and their assassination of him, are qualifications for this, the ultimate torment of Hell. This pair of Roman Republicans obviously refers to similar figures in Marvell's own day: to men who rebelled against Charles and perpetrated his regicide. This allusion, like Marvell's reference to 'Spartacus', once again turns the Roman Parallel against the Parliamentary cause.

Throughout Tom May Marvell's use of the Roman Parallel is contemptuous; Republican Rome is not to his taste as a model for England. Therefore we may conclude that, although Marvell uses a Roman Parallel in his Ode, this Parallel is not intended to glorify the English Republic by the Roman pattern. It must be there for some other purpose; and that purpose may, if Tom May is anything to go by, include a certain amount of disparagement of the Parliamentarian cause. If, as some critics have suggested, the Ode has an Augustan trope, this Parallel will not be a matter of simple elevation.

This interpretation is supported by a particular analogue to the Ode in Tom May. Here Marvell states the role of the true 'Poet and Historian' (viz., himself) in these degenerate times:

When the Sword glitters ore the Judges head,  
 And fear has Coward Churchmen silenced,  
 Then is the Poets time, 'tis then he drawes,  
 And single fights forsaken Vertues cause.  
 He, when the Wheel of Empire, whirleth back,  
 And though the Worlds disjointed Axel crack,  
Sings still of ancient Rights and better Times,  
 Seeks wretched good, arraigns successful Crimes.

[my italics] (63-70)

The 'successful Crimes' are those of the English rebels, who have assumed the supreme power. Marvell's vision of the current political scene is bleak: the Law has been corrupted by intimidation, the 'Sword' ; and the 'Churchmen' he always despised now prove themselves 'Cowards' too, unwilling to resist the unrighteous regime. In the face of this general submissiveness Marvell states his own militant mission, to 'Single fight forsaken Vertues cause.' This is, he implies, an aim proper to poetry: such a time as this 'is the Poet's time.' This is a passionate statement of opposition. Marvell's attitude to the "English Republic", as he saw it in 1650, is quite clear.

And in this statement of his own loyalties Marvell clarifies a statement in the Ode. He says in the Ode that Cromwell's success provokes 'Justice against Fate [to] complain,/ And plead the antient Rights in vain.' In Tom May he says that those 'antient Rights' are his own cause, as a poet who 'Sings still of ancient Rights and better Times.' His own cause is the cause of monarchism.

Thus Tom May provides a demonstration of how Royalism motivated Marvell's attitude to the use of a Roman Parallel in describing the Republican government.

One might ask why he should have used a Roman Parallel in the Ode: and there are several reasons for his use of this Horatian form. First, as I have remarked, Horace's situation after the Roman Civil War was similar to Marvell's own, since both their causes suffered defeat. Second, as occurred in Tom May, Marvell could turn the Roman



Parallel to his own political purposes: and of this more later.

Third, generically speaking, the Horatian Ode was a mode proper to Marvell's "occasional" purpose, which was to consider Cromwell as he appeared on his 'Return from Ireland'. It was a suitable genre for a private man whose subject was a public figure.<sup>14</sup> Thus an Horatian form had several recommendations for Marvell's purposes, apart from the fact that he was a student of the classics.

Nor should we forget the utility of this form for a poet tender of his own freedom. The political climate of 1650 was such that, if Marvell's poem fell into the wrong hands,<sup>15</sup> it might be interpreted as subversive in some way. Tom May makes it clear that Marvell had a low opinion of the Judiciary at this time, and this may have heightened his almost congenital feeling of insecurity. Against this possibility of reprisal, the form of the Ode was a useful safeguard. The Horatian form tended to be associated with the praise of a public figure, and thus as a genre could assist Marvell in resisting any anti-government interpretation which might be placed on his poem. Not that this generic factor prevented Marvell's criticism of the new regime. An interesting comparison for this point is Pope, who when he wished to satirize his King chose an Horatian imitation as his form: it appeared to be a poem of praise, but its statements were ironically slanted so as to imply the opposite of their immediate meaning. But this appearance of praise was sufficient to secure Pope against any unpleasant litigation over his poem.<sup>16</sup> This protective quality of the Horatian form, its apparent positiveness, may well have appealed to Marvell in his own circumstances.

In addition, the Roman Parallel arising out of Horatian tropes could itself convey Marvell's attitudes - as it had done in Tom May. Nor did the 'Roman Colour' of Horatian language preclude Marvell's statement of a Christian belief in providential history. Quite the

contrary: poets of this period frequently used "pagan" or classical formulations for Christian ideas, without any sense that it might be in some way improper to do so.<sup>17</sup> Notions of "impropriety" in such matters become current only in eras when faith is on the defensive; it did not concern the generally devout Seventeenth Century. Thus, when in the Ode Marvell refers to 'the Gods' (61), he is using a classical formulation for 'God'.<sup>18</sup> This use of classical formulations is a requirement of the Horatian form that he has chosen.

The lessons of the Roman Parallel are two-fold. First, that the Horatian form of Marvell's poem is a genre proper to his purpose, and able to contain the Christian perspective of providential history. Second, this Roman Parallel is unlikely to portray the parliamentary Republic in any favourable light, although it may have other uses.

Moreover, the Roman Parallel provided a pertinent historical flavour for the Ode. As Marvell portrays the phenomenon of Cromwell's ascent, and the events in England related to that ascent, he gives a general perspective to his poem. For this perspective the Roman Parallel provides a relationship between two separate ages in history: that of the Roman Civil War and the Augustan period, as against the Civil War recently experienced in England. The relationship of the two is not necessarily that of exact similarity, such as might "endorse" the new regime. Rather it is defined by its purpose, which is in a general sense at least, to place the English Civil War in the process of history: to show that it is an event that partakes of this process. The Civil War is not seen as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of the long series of events which is the perspective of providential history. In other words, Marvell sees his own times not as sufficient unto themselves, but rather as a piece of world history. This is the more general function of the Roman Parallel in the Ode.



Finally, and most important, the Augustan/Horatian period was of particular significance for chiliasts. It had long been an orthodox tenet that the reign of Augustus had established the conditions proper to Christ's first advent: a world-empire and universal peace. For chiliasts this foreshadowed the nature of the Second Coming, which would follow the establishment of a Christian world-empire and thereby invite the return of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Marvell used this chiliastic Augustan motif on several occasions, as we shall see in later chapters. Thus the Augustan timing of Christ's First Advent becomes, in the Ode, a suitable Parallel for the current time, when His second advent was expected.

#### iv. Ambiguity in the Ode

In the foregoing sections I have discussed my approach to the Ode and the propositions on which that approach is based. At this point I want to consider how ambiguity becomes a constituent of the Ode, and thereby implements Marvell's problematic. This ambiguity figures mainly in the poem's portrayal of its subject, Cromwell.

The first aspect of this portrayal to appear in the poem is in fact an oblique approach to Cromwell. The poem opens not with him, but with a 'forward youth'.

The forward Youth that would appear  
Must now forsake his Muses dear,  
Nor in the Shadows sing  
His Numbers languishing.  
'Tis time to leave the Books in dust,  
And oyl th'unused Armours rust:  
Removing from the Wall  
The Corslet of the Hall.

(1-8)

'The forward Youth must now appear', because it is at this point in English history that Civil War calls him to military action. The 'corslet' that was left to rust because England was at peace, must now be returned from decorative obsolescence to its proper use. War has occurred before, as the Corslet's existence indicates: this is a

continuous process of war and peace in alternation. Thus the poem is introduced by the moment (like other moments in the past) when peace gives way to war.

These lines provide a valediction to the time when it was possible to 'languish' and to attend to the cultural pursuits of the 'Muses' and 'Books'. This is a time of war, when different values obtain. In this way the poem's initial couplets establish an "atmosphere" for the lines that follow: the atmosphere not of peaceful, "civilized" values, but the rude values of war.

So restless Cromwell could not cease  
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,  
But through advent'rous War  
Urgèd his active Star.

(9-12)

'So': "in just this fashion", Cromwell left the 'inglorious Arts of Peace' for 'active' life. He too was 'forward': he 'urged' his star of destiny voluntarily. In this 'appearance' the word 'so' compares Cromwell and the 'forward Youth'.

This comparison has led some readers to understand the 'Youth' here as referring to Cromwell himself. In fact it would be rather odd to compare someone to himself. Rather, Cromwell is shown to be like other men faced with war, in so far as war demands of men that they turn to action. This is the general impact of war. If we are to see any specific 'Youth' here, it is not Cromwell but rather one who has shared the impact of the War.

This person is Marvell himself, a poet who 'Must now forsake his Muses dear'. He can no longer write the poems of love: poems about 'dear' loves, which 'languish' in adoration of the beloved.<sup>20</sup> His muses are 'dear' both because they are the ladies who "inspire" his poetry by his love for them, and because poetry itself is 'dear' to him. It is the occupation to which he has devoted himself. Here the poet, Marvell, is characterized as the young poet preoccupied with the intimate theme of Love. This personal facet puts him in the



'Shadows' of life - these being one's existence as a private person. From these war invites him to 'appear', to take part in the un-'shadowed' arena of public events.

Yet his private existence, echoed in his 'dear' poetry, matters a great deal to him: it is, precisely, 'dear'. What he shares with Cromwell is the fact that the times invite him to leave the private life. But he is different from Cromwell, in that his 'appearance' is a matter of leaving what he best likes: whereas Cromwell 'could not cease/ In the inglorious Arts of Peace'. There is no 'glory' in private <sup>s</sup>existence, or in peace: war alone is glorious in that sense. Thus, when Marvell describes 'the inglorious Arts of Peace', he is not derogating those arts: for he has already described them as 'dear'. Rather he is revealing that characteristic which made such Arts unacceptable to Cromwell. He is a man of ambition: not only has he a 'Star' of destiny, but he 'urges' that destiny. He is 'the Wars and Fortunes Son'. By his ambition, and his aptness for 'advent'rous War', he is differentiated from the poet who is fond of 'the inglorious Arts'.

This initial comparison of the poet and Cromwell is very important: it sets the scene for the poem, being its very introduction. (It returns in the finale, where Cromwell's have become the 'Arts' of power.) This introduction contrasts the reactions of the poet to those of Cromwell, in the face of war: one is a man whose artistry depends on peace, the other a man whose artistry depends on War. One is concerned with order, 'Numbers': the other with the vagaries of fortune, the 'advent'rous' aspect of war. This contrast turns on the similarity of their situations: both are Englishmen 'called' by the fact of Civil War. The difference is in their reactions to that fact: a difference which defines Marvell's stance vis à vis his subject, Cromwell. It is men like Cromwell who, pursuing their 'Stars' in war, have impelled Marvell to leave the Muses of Love for poetry of a more public nature:

like, indeed, this poem. The Horatian Ode as a form is the medium of such private excursions into the public realm. Cromwell has entered public life as a General: the poet has entered public life by turning to a public theme. His attitude to Cromwell is that of a private citizen to a national figure, a reflective man to an active man. In a sense this exordium is Marvell's protest at writing this poem at all.

The contrast between the poet and his subject throws into relief the 'active' nature of Cromwell: it emphasizes his force, his 'fiery way', 'Courage high', and 'industrious Valour'. But this contrast also detaches the poet from his subject. Because he is not of Cromwell's kind, he can observe him from a distance: the reflective man reflecting upon the active. 'And, if we would speak true,/ Much to the Man is due': this is the sort of statement a writer makes when he is "evaluating" someone: its quality is equable. The poet has made this sort of evaluation possible because he has defined his own exclusion from Cromwell's values.

The fact that their values are different is not used as a springboard for an assault upon Cromwell. Rather, it is a perspective for the poem's attitude to Cromwell. It shows the poet's bias but does not indulge that bias. In this manner the "objective" perspective defers to Marvell's belief that his personal feelings towards Cromwell are not absolute; that they are not the arbiters of history.

Thus Marvell's initial statements about Cromwell do not lean towards either condemnation or approval. Rather, they describe Cromwell in such a way that either view could be possible. In effect, they are ambiguous, both in kind and in intention.

Cromwell is 'restless', ambitious: we are not given any guidance as to whether this ambition is praiseworthy or simply self-seeking.



So restless Cromwell could not cease....  
 But through adventurous War  
 Urgèd his active Star.  
 And, like the three-forked Lightning, first  
 Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,  
 Did thorough his own Side  
 His fiery way divide.

(9-16)

Cromwell is both a portent and the occurrence portended: he is portentous like the 'Lightning' and acts as the Lightning, carving a 'fiery way'. He both presages a cataclysmic event and enacts that event. But this fact does not imply that he is virtuous or otherwise: it simply displays that he is a force. At first sight that force is neutral. It is in the last couplet that it becomes ambiguous. 'His own Side' refers, in one sense, to Cromwell as a Cloud 'nursing' lightning, which Cromwell as lightning then breaks 'thorough'; thus he is at once that through which the lightning breaks - his 'own Side' - and the force that breaks it. What does this mean? Does it imply that Cromwell's innate "force", hidden so long in the 'Clouds' of seclusion, erupts with such violence that he himself is a victim of it? That he is not in control of his own force? The poetry here is neutral in feeling, so the statement remains ambiguous. All we can say, at this point, is that Cromwell is a force: how much control he exercises over that force, and what sort of force it is, remains substantially in question.

Cromwell  
 Did thorough his own Side  
 His fiery way divide.  
 For 'tis all one to Courage high  
 The Emulous or Enemy;  
 And with such to inclose  
 Is more then to oppose.

(15-20)

Here the second pair of couplets seems to say that a force like Cromwell takes little account of whether it meets friend or foe, 'Emulous or Enemy': any opposition will attract the enmity of 'Courage high'.

Thus, when Cromwell breaks through his 'own Side' Marvell is referring, among other things, to his emergence from the ranks of his own party, to a place at its head. The implication may be (since 'Emulous and Enemy' are equally susceptible to Cromwell's force) that he is prepared to 'divide' or break up his own party. This implication is reinforced by the next couplet, where the poet remarks that 'with such to inclose/ Is more then to oppose.' By this he may mean that it is more dangerous to join cause with such men, than to oppose them: that to be in their party is to be even more exposed to their virulence than if one were openly ranged against them.<sup>21</sup>

Yet as a statement, this couplet is almost blatantly mysterious - if it is possible to be such a thing. It could mean that it is 'more' to support than to oppose such men as Cromwell, in the sense that it is "better" to support them. Even in this sense the statement's difficulty multiplies, since one might ask: "better" in what way? 'More' virtuous, or simply 'more' politic? What value is the poet placing on the word 'more'?

In effect, the most that one can say of these concatenations of ambiguity, is that the passage is ambiguous: that would seem to be the very principle of the passage. It represents Cromwell with the implication that he may be in some sense "genuine", an awesome Man of Destiny: or in some sense he may be malign, a terrible Man of Destiny. The potential for either view is contained by ambiguity.

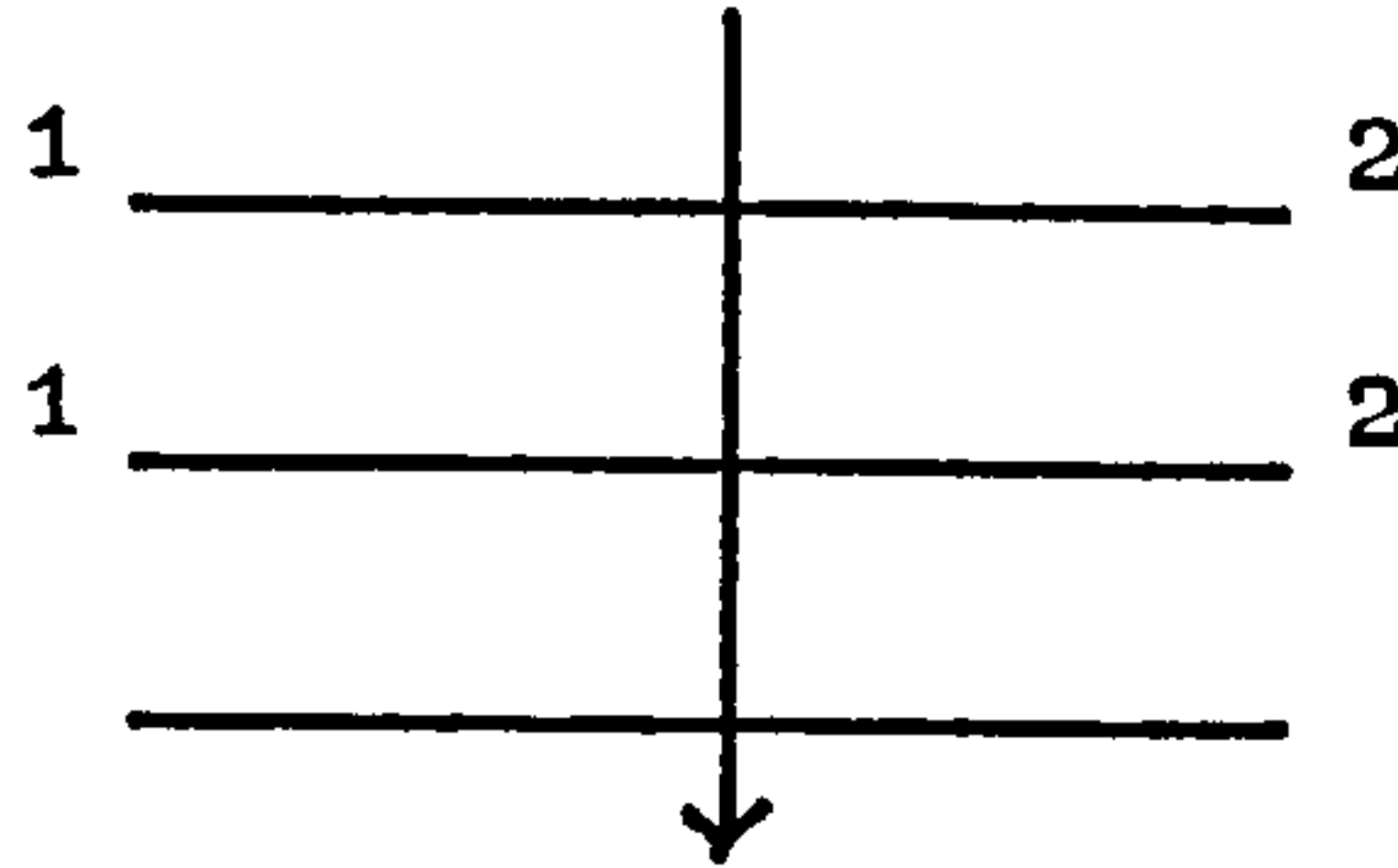
This consistent use of ambiguity in the passage is not a matter of "impartiality". Marvell's sympathies lay with the cause which Cromwell had destroyed. Rather, these ambiguities are a mode of presentation. That is, they present Cromwell as himself ambiguous: they allow the reader to think of him in a "double" manner. Is he the force straight from the heavens which men must not oppose because his force is righteous; or is he an avatar of malignity signified by the



wracking of the heavens, whose power cannot be opposed because it is indiscriminate in its destruction? Well, Cromwell is both. If one chooses either possibility, and ignores the other, one is denying the ambiguity of this passage. Marvell's language comprehends both possibilities, therefore we must accept both possibilities.

It may be objected that this attitude to Marvell's ambiguity is deconstructive - that it makes a nonsense of "unified" poetry. But in fact this attitude, and the poetry it reflects, is constructive in kind. My proposition was that Marvell's problematic is based upon ambiguity. This poem is a demonstration of that problematic in action.

When discussing the features of Marvell's procedure, I drew a model of how ambiguity functioned in the problematic.



At the time I identified the vertical line as the poem's language; the horizontal lines as moments in the poem when ambiguities arise; and at one end of each line is potential meaning 1, at the other end potential meaning 2. As I said, the features of this model may vary from poem to poem, but the model provides a characteristic picture of the problematic.

I have returned to this model in order to show in codified form the function of ambiguity in the Ode. The passage which I have been discussing shows the features described in the model. Each of the ambiguities evinced in the passage supplies opposed views of Cromwell. For instance, in the couplet turning on the paradox 'inclose....oppose', it is evident that there are oppositional implications for the character of Cromwell. Hence the word 'more' has both negative and positive implications for Cromwell: call its positive meaning 1, and its negative meaning 2, place it within the model:





It is this attitude, hostile to Cromwell, which inspires the "negative" narrative of the poem, of meanings which express that hostility.

On the other hand, Marvell possesses another attitude to the triumph of Cromwell and his cause: an attitude stemming from a belief in providential history. Thus 'to resist or blame' the triumph of Cromwell and his cause would be to criticize God Himself, who decreed that triumph. In some way Marvell must reconcile himself to that triumph. It is this reconciling impulse that motivates the "resigned" narrative of the poem, the narrative that consists of meanings which are not unfavourable to Cromwell.

It may be objected that for Marvell to provide a narrative reflecting his antipathy to Cromwell was in itself to defy the providential conception of history. This is not the case. As I have indicated, one could believe that a phenomenon was providentially dictated, without considering that phenomenon itself to be intrinsically good. The character of providence was to make equal use of the good and the evil. Marvell saw in the triumph of the Parliamentary cause the support of providence, but he saw that cause itself as malign. Thus he provides in his poem both a providential view of Cromwell as a force in English history, and a personal view of his antipathy to Cromwell and his cause: the poem sees Cromwell as an intrinsically malign instrument of an ultimately fortunate providence. This pattern of opposites provides the dialectical movement of the poem.

#### v. The Ambiguity of Cromwell

In this way the ambiguities of the poem tend to focus upon the portrayal of Cromwell himself. For this reason I want now to consider various aspects of that portrayal, and the ambiguities which typify them.

From the initial passage (1-20), Marvell moves to a chronicle of Cromwell's activities (21-90). Having described Cromwell's

'appearance', he continues:

Then burning through the Air he went,  
And Pallaces and Temples rent:  
And Caesars head at last  
Did through his Laurels blast.

(21-24)

Cromwell is 'burning' because Marvell is still describing his 'fiery way'. He is, in fact, a fiery "destroyer", one who 'rents' and 'blasts'. He climbs 'To ruin the great Work of Time.' This destructive aspect of Cromwell in the poem is a development of Marvell's portrayal of him as a "man of action": his capability for activity is such that he can perform such feats of ruination. These feats prove his "force".

So much one Man can do,  
That does both act and know.

(75-76)

His "force" characterizes the 'forced Pow'r' of the Republic, which is based upon a martial victory.

This typification of Cromwell as martial man, a force, and a destroyer, is supported by a similar motif: of Cromwell as Hunter. In fact Marvell calls him 'the English Hunter', terrorising the Scots. He also portrays him as a hunter of Royal quarry.

He wove a Net of such a scope,  
That Charles himself might chase  
To Caresbrooks narrow case.

(50-52)

Marvell makes him Charles' executioner too: 'That thence the Royal Actor born/ The tragick Scaffold might adorn.' 'Thence', meaning, "as a result of Cromwell's stratagem"; Cromwell not only pursues his prey, but dispatches it also. This predatory quality in Cromwell moves Marvell to describe him as a hunting hawk:

So when the Falcon high  
Falls heavy from the Sky,  
She, having kill'd, no more does search,  
But on the next green Bow to pearch;  
Where, when he first does lure,  
The Falckner has her sure.

(91-96)



This, and the other predatory images of Cromwell, suggest a portrait of a man who is highly efficient: he always gets his prey, whether it be Charles or the birds 'kill'd' by the falcon. But, although the motifs of the Hunter and the Destroyer endow Cromwell with an almost superhuman efficiency, they do not make him an attractive figure.

The feeling of the passages containing Hunter-Destroyer motifs is remarkable by its absence: Marvell's lines have a neutral quality. But the presentation of Cromwell as Hunter-Destroyer, however neutral in feeling, is itself an unfavourable comment. The same unfavourable comment appears with more virulence in Royalist propaganda of the period. Two examples of such propaganda, in pictorial form, portray Cromwell accompanied by beasts emblematic of a rapacious nature in the man they represent.<sup>22</sup> One portrays him, ironically, as a preacher, with a wolf resting on his shoulder; the wolf carries the implication that Cromwell is a predator. Another picture portrays him as a regicide, with an axe in one hand and a bleeding head in the other: behind Cromwell stands a leopard. The leopard, like the wolf, characterizes Cromwell as a killer, the man who killed the King. This predatoriness, a Royalist imputation, is the manner in which Marvell has chosen to portray Cromwell in the Ode. Such a portrayal reveals his own hostile attitude to his subject.

But Marvell is careful to avoid any virulence of feeling in this portrayal of Cromwell. Marvell's language gives the appearance of being descriptive rather than didactic. This calm descriptiveness is perhaps more effective in convincing the reader that Cromwell is indeed a destroyer. But, although we are made to realize Cromwell's "rapacity", we are not invited to consider this as a condemnation; the poem does not dissolve into diatribe against Cromwell. His unattractiveness is kept in its place, as a fact rather than as a judgement. This is because Marvell cannot allow himself to make Cromwell's

malignity the final directive of the poem: for his purpose is to place Cromwell in the perspective of providence. Therefore his malignity has to be described in such a way as to allow a larger perspective upon Cromwell. Thus Marvell's antipathy is expressed by pure description of the Hunter-Destroyer, without any indulgence of feeling.

This abstraction of statement from feeling recurs throughout the poem. It is what has puzzled readers most when they attempted to discover Marvell's attitude to Cromwell. But in fact this "abstraction" is an effect of the double perspective: Marvell's portrait of Cromwell qua Cromwell is not favourable, but he must attend also to the providential view of Cromwell as an actor in history.

He never enthuses about Cromwell, but he does not revile him either: his philosophy impels him to a more double-edged portrayal. The difference between the feeling of the Ode concerning Cromwell, and Marvell in enthusiastic mood about Fairfax, is an instructive difference. Of Cromwell he remarks that 'If we would speak true,/ Much to the Man is due.' Of Fairfax, in later years, he writes:

And yet there walks one on the Sod  
Who, had it pleased him and God,  
Might once have made our Gardens spring....  
For he did, with his utmost Skill,  
Ambition weed, but Conscience till.

(Appleton House, XLIV-V)

Marvell's personal enthusiasm for Fairfax is the sort of feeling absent from the Ode's portrayal of Cromwell. Another example of this difference between enthusiasm and the feeling of the Ode, is the First Anniversary, where Marvell writes about Cromwell after his own change of heart towards him. An instance of this is the passage in that poem where Marvell describes Cromwell's abandonment of a secluded life on his estates for the burdens of power:

For all delight of Life thou then didst lose,  
When to Command, thou didst thyself Depose;  
Resigning up thy Privacy so dear,  
To turn the headstrong Peoples Charioteer;

(221-4)



Here Cromwell has come to share the values of the poet who at the exordium of the Ode was called away from his 'Muses dear': in the First Anniversary Cromwell has become the right sort of man, to whom 'Privacy' is 'dear'. This passage is a piece of encomium; more formal, perhaps, than the encomium upon Fairfax, but still very "positive". When Marvell describes the same phase of Cromwell's life in the Ode, what he writes seems to convey very little feeling.

Much to the Man is due.  
 Who, from his private Gardens, where  
 He liv'd reserved and austere,  
 As if his highest plot  
 To plant the Bergamot,  
 Could by industrious Valour climbe  
 To ruine the great Work of Time.

(28-34)

The feeling of this passage is confined to surprise - that a relatively obscure gentleman could rise to the height of power: no other explicit feeling seems to animate it. In this way the passage contrasts with the encomiastic nature of the parallel passage in the First Anniversary. One can see reflected in these passages the difference in Marvell's attitude to Cromwell in 1650 as against that he held in 1654. The feeling of the Ode is in appearance at least neutral: which is another way of saying that it is ambiguous.

To this interpretation of how Marvell avoids either explicit elevation or explicit condemnation of Cromwell, some might object, on the grounds of the passage in the Ode where Marvell "reports" the Irish view of Cromwell. This, indeed, is the only passage in the poem of what some have considered explicit praise of Cromwell.

And now the Irish are ashamed  
 To see themselves in one Year tam'd:....  
 They can affirm his praises best,  
 And have, though overcome, Confest  
 How good he is, how just,  
 And fit for highest Trust:  
 Nor yet grown stiffer with Command,  
 But still in the Republick's hand:  
 How fit he is to sway  
 That can so well obey.

(73-84)

In this passage there are several obstacles to a reading which sees this as sincere praise of Cromwell. (Marvell's attitude to Cromwell is such that praise is highly unlikely, but nevertheless I shall confine myself to discussion of the obstacles present in the passage itself.) The first of these obstacles is that Marvell is not here speaking in his own voice: he is putting this encomium into the mouths of the Irish: 'They can affirm his Praises best.' Therefore there is no necessity to assume that these views are his own.

There is another element in the passage which makes its statements "doubtful".

In line 80, the attempt is made, in accordance with the needs of encomium, to identify Cromwell in Ireland and Cromwell in England....The Irish (on the natural construction) admit that Cromwell is fit for 'highest Trust' by themselves; but in the next couplet, the Trust becomes the office of Trust held by Cromwell, seen as conferred on him by the English. Syntactically (as is obvious) lines 81f. run forward to 'How fit....', but the difficulty remains.<sup>23</sup>

I quote this piece of criticism because it seems to record both a truth and a misconception about this passage: and this combination is peculiarly revealing. It is certainly true that 'Trust' in Ireland and 'Trust' in England are not equivalent, and that the passage seems to equate them. For this critic that equivalence is a logical 'difficulty' because he thinks that Marvell is writing 'in accordance with the needs of encomium'. In fact there was no reason why, if Marvell had intended to praise Cromwell, he should have placed himself in this 'difficulty': it was purely his own choice how he wrote this passage. And it seems to me to be a quite deliberate choice on his part, to seem to equate Irish 'Trust' and English 'Trust'. He was aware that most Englishmen of his time had no love for the Irish (and he shared this prejudice).<sup>24</sup> Thus, by seeming to equate the conditions of 'Trust' in Ireland with its conditions in England, he was violating English feeling, the prejudice of any contemporary reader; and his own feeling too. By



this violation he is implying something: it is a deliberate piece of writing. He is implying, in fact, that just as the 'Trust' of subduing Ireland is in no way the equivalent of the 'Trust' of power in England, equally Cromwell's military mission in Ireland is no basis for entrusting him with power in England. To Marvell and to others the "turbulent" Irish were "inferior" in their political requirements to the English: it was well enough for Cromwell to go and teach them a lesson, but that lesson was not suited to the more "refined" politics of England. When Marvell says that 'They can affirm his Praises best', he is suggesting that Englishmen should accept Cromwell at an Irish valuation: which is an irony. Thus by an ironic equation of Irish and English political needs, Marvell implies that Cromwell's suitability to the Irish situation is precisely the sort of 'Trust' for which he is 'fit': and therefore an example of why he is not fit for power in England.

Prejudice against the Irish in England was extremely strong. Indeed, it has often been adduced as a "justification" of Marvell's "Irish" passage. It has seemed to many critics that this passage required justification because it portrayed the Irish as grateful to Cromwell for his bloody suppression of them. This gratitude has seemed to such critics a curious thing. The most frequent explanation for it that I have seen is that Marvell (like his fellow Englishmen) was so contemptuous of the Irish that he felt they ought to be grateful for being defeated.<sup>24</sup> This extreme of prejudice seems to me incredible: surely anyone would accept, however much they abhorred a country, that its inhabitants would not positively enjoy conquest? Nevertheless, several critics have opined that this strange "gratitude" of the Irish is a facet of Marvell's prejudice,<sup>25</sup> and sadly remark that we must excuse this fault in his character. I myself think that Marvell can be given the benefit of the doubt; he may have disliked the Irish, but I doubt that he was so foolish as to mistake their mood. Instead,

he placed praise of Cromwell in their mouths precisely because praise was so unlikely to come from that quarter that their praise itself becomes ironic. Marvell implies that if one will believe that the Irish love Cromwell, one will believe anything. In a sense his Irish encomium is a grim joke. (It has also another rationale, as we shall see.)

The campaign in Ireland is an instance of Cromwell as Parliament's 'Hunter'. It leads on to the 'Falcon' image of Cromwell's "obedient predatoriness"; and thence to a passage in which Cromwell is seen to spread his martial conquests into Europe at some future date. Then Marvell describes how Cromwell will strike terror into the Scots during his next campaign. Throughout, Cromwell is a man of the 'Sword' (116), 'the Wars and Fortunes Son' (113). This sort of portrayal, which insists upon Cromwell's 'force', is highly ambiguous. Is that sword applied unselfishly, in the interests of England, or is Cromwell some ghastly machine? Throughout the poem that ambiguity is allowed to stand.

This "political" ambiguity of the 'Hunter', the question of his motives and purpose, provides local ambiguities throughout the poem. Those ambiguities tend to consist in a "statement of fact" about Cromwell, or a comment on his rise, which also contains a defamatory potential.

One of these was 'inclose....oppose'; another was the description of Cromwell's 'restlessness', where we are not told whether this restlessness is a product of personal ambition of an unattractive kind, or whether it is in some sense praiseworthy. In fact both Royalists and Parliamentarians had doubts about how many of the Parliamentary leaders were truly revisionist, and how many were simply striving to advance themselves.<sup>26</sup>

This doubt about Cromwell appears again in other sections of the poem. For instance, the couplet 'And Caesars head at last/ Did through



his Laurels blast.' Caesar's laurels, the Roman adornment for the princeps,<sup>27</sup> is metonymic for Charles' position as King. The couplet can be read transitively or intransitively, so that either Cromwell 'blasted' Caesar's head through the laurel crown; or, simply, Caesar's head was blasted through the crown. This ambiguity reflects two distinct views of Cromwell's part in Charles' downfall. Either it was the particular agency of Cromwell which overthrew Charles, or Charles was simply "overthrown." At this point in the poem Marvell merely implies that perhaps Cromwell was the Prime Mover of the regicide.

There is further potential for implication in this couplet. If Cromwell was Charles' most bitter enemy, was he simply trying to remove the supreme power in the land for his own purposes? This implication is a potential of the statement that Charles' head blasted 'through' the laurels: the laurel crown is now vacant. Perhaps Cromwell wanted to release the crown for himself.

This potential, of Cromwell's monarchical pretensions, is maintained in Marvell's description of Cromwell's life before his emergence into national politics.

Who, from his private Gardens, where  
He liv'd reserved and austere,  
As if his highest plot  
To plant the Bergamot....

(29-32)

In an article concerning this quatrain W.R. Orwen described the traditional association of the Bergamot pear with kingship.<sup>28</sup> It was known as the 'pear of kings', and a seventeenth-century reader would have recognized it as such. Thus, although in earlier years Cromwell's 'highest plot' seemed to involve planting pears, this statement in fact indicates that his 'highest plot' did not stop at literal pears, but extended to pears as a metaphor for kingship. Orwen does not think that the use of 'Bergamot' sullies Cromwell's republican image (though I find it difficult to see how this could be). But I would

suggest that Marvell is joking here. He pretends to be trivialising Cromwell's youthful occupations as harmless and unpolitical, his 'highest plot' being his garden plot: but then these pears have monarchical associations that imply that perhaps Cromwell was 'plotting' for kingship even in those days. This implication is not a statement; rather it is a potential in the couplet. Its purpose is to maintain the ambiguity of Cromwell's portrayal in the poem.

A similar ambiguity characterizes a later quatrain.

Nature that hateth emptiness,  
Allows of penetration less:  
And therefore must make room  
Where greater Spirits come.

(41-44)

The 'greater Spirit' is Cromwell, who occupies the space where once Charles ruled - perhaps that vacant laurel crown has something to do with the idea of 'emptiness'. Charles had to be crowded out if Cromwell was to take his place: an idea which introduces the next passage, concerning Cromwell's pursuit and execution of Charles. But in what sense is Cromwell a 'greater Spirit': is he "stronger", or simply more ambitious? The ambiguity of this word 'greater' maintains the generally ambiguous nature of Cromwell's portrayal. Moreover, it is succeeded by praise of Charles, who 'nothing common did or mean', and his 'spirit' is thus proved noble: a fact which renders this 'greater Spirit' in Cromwell even more difficult to locate precisely. The ambiguity of Cromwell is stressed: it takes account, by implications, of Marvell's dislike, without allowing this dislike to become absolute in the poem.

The emphasis of this continuous ambiguity, its leaning towards defamation, becomes more acute in the lines:

And Hampton shows what part  
He had of wiser Art.  
Where, twining subtile fears with hope,  
He wove a Net of such a scope,



That Charles himself might chase  
 To Caresbrooks narrow case.  
 That hence the Royal Actor born  
 The Tragick Scaffold might adorn.  
 (47-54)

Here Marvell suggests that Cromwell allowed Charles to escape from 'Caresbrook' in order that eventually Cromwell would be able to have him executed. This idea, that Cromwell had connived at Charles' escape, was a common slander against him: and much emphasized by Royalist propaganda.<sup>29</sup> Yet Marvell chose to state this as if the slander were true, knowing that to do so constituted an explicit defamation of Cromwell. By his use of this imputation he makes of his attribution of 'wiser Art' to Cromwell a statement that Cromwell was underhand in his methods.

This passage is the only explicit defamation of Cromwell in the poem. Yet it contains no element of vituperative feeling; it is presented as a statement of fact. Thus Marvell is still being careful to restrict his antagonism to Cromwell, within such bounds as to prevent its overwhelming the poem.

This restraint is again preserved by ambiguity in Marvell's description of Charles' execution. 'He nothing common did or mean/ Upon that memorable Scene.' This 'He' is Charles, who cuts an impressive figure in Marvell's description. Marvell emphasizes the pronoun by italics;<sup>30</sup> which seems to indicate that although Charles 'nothing common did or mean', some other person did. Who this person was we are not told. But the only logical person who could be identified in this line is Cromwell; and to make this identification is an invitation made by the line. That invitation, however, remains inexplicit.

Ambiguity returns in the description of Cromwell's relationship with Parliament. Marvell seems to portray him as the deferent<sup>ial</sup> servant of the Republic:

Nor yet grown stiffer with Command,  
 But still in the Republicks hand:  
 How fit he is to sway  
 That can so well obey.  
 He to the Common Feet presents  
 A Kingdome, for his first years rents:  
 And, what he may, forbears  
 His Fame to make it theirs:  
 And has his Sword and Spoyls ungirt,  
 To lay them at the Publicks skirt.

(81-90)

The first line here says that Cromwell is 'Nor yet' overbearing.

This seems to mean that "despite" his power he is not tyrannical to the state. But it could also mean that he is not overbearing now, although he might become so in the future.<sup>31</sup> A similar ambiguity features in the second line: 'But still' could imply that Cromwell is "consistently" deferent to the Republic, or that he is "as yet" deferent: that he might cease to be.

This passage is ambiguous also in historical terms. The realities of power in 1650 were quite otherwise than would appear from these lines. Cromwell was in control of the Army, and in the Army resided the effective power of Parliament. In other words, while the military Grandees agreed amongst themselves, Parliament's actions had to be sanctioned by them.<sup>32</sup> Marvell is misrepresenting the political situation, not because he is concerned to maintain the fiction of a Republic in England, but precisely to portray the relationship of Parliament to Cromwell ironically.

Throughout the poem Cromwell is portrayed ambiguously. The consistent use of ambiguity allows an equilibrium of attitudes to Cromwell, between the not unfavourable and the defamatory. Thus Marvell can portray his personal antipathy to Cromwell and his cause, without making this the absolute arbiter of the poem. His motive for this ambiguity of presentation is to maintain his sense of Cromwell's malignity, while subduing this to the fact that Cromwell's rise, whether good or evil in itself, was sanctioned by Providence. In this manner



Marvell's portrayal of Cromwell becomes ambiguous as a principle of its presentation.

vi. The Chiliastic View and The Roman Parallel

The ambiguity of Cromwell in the Ode is a product of Marvell's dialectic. The thesis and the antithesis within this dialectic are, respectively, a personally antipathetic view of Cromwell accompanied by a providential view of him; Cromwell is both the man disliked by Marvell and an agent of providence. These antithetical views can coexist in the poem because a providential view of Cromwell can contain the notion that Cromwell himself is malign. God is an ironist; and Marvell can envisage His purposes in terms of a poetic irony.

The thesis of the dialectic is that 'Tis Madness to resist or blame/ The force of angry Heavens flame': the purposes of Providence, however malign its instrument, must not be denied. The antithesis is the 'forced Pow'r' of Cromwell and his cause. The possibility of their synthesis lies in the fact that 'Heaven's flame' is a 'force', just as Cromwell's is a 'forced Pow'r'.

In this section I am concerned to show the 'Chiliastic View' of Cromwell, and how it is eventually reconciled with Marvell's antagonism to him. In this dialectical movement the Roman Parallel is a contributory factor; as I have suggested, the Horatian cast of the Ode provides a vehicle for Marvell's double perspective on Cromwell.

The most important element in this Roman Parallel is the Horatian phenomenon of 'Augustanism'; Horace wrote of Augustus, while Marvell writes of an Augustan Cromwell. This facet of the poem, an Augustan bias, has been recognized by several commentators on the Ode, although I see its effects somewhat differently.

Like the erstwhile Octavius, Cromwell triumphs in a Civil War. Also like Augustus, he appears to be 'in the Republic's hand', while

in fact possessing rather more power than a true Republican system would allow. The position of Augustus in the Roman state was an ambiguous one: technically he was answerable in all things to the Senate. In fact this was largely a fiction, although Augustus himself was anxious to maintain it; and the fiction that Rome was still a Republic was maintained partly because of Roman antimonarchism. The position of Cromwell in the English Republic was increasingly similar to that of Augustus in the Roman. And, of course, both owed their positions to military success. This congruity between Horace's ruler and England's Cromwell provides Marvell with an Horatian form for his subject.

Thus Cromwell is portrayed as a new 'Caesar' (101), one who transforms the state from one kind of political entity into another (35-36). He 'casts the Kingdome old' into the 'Republick', whereas Augustus transformed the fictional Republic of Julius into his own incipient Empire. In fact, Caesar's title of Dictator and Augustus' protean title of princeps were different names for much the same extent of power. Thus Augustus' "transformation" of the Roman state was really a development of what it had been already - a proto-monarchical state.<sup>33</sup> The same development is implied by Marvell's ambiguous references to Cromwell's monarchical pretensions. His ironic portrayal of Cromwell as servant of the Republic could as well describe Augustus' position in the state. Both as conqueror and as princeps, Augustus provides a Type for Cromwell.

When Marvell envisages a career of foreign conquest for Cromwell (97-104), he is drawing another Roman Parallel with Augustus. 'A Caesar he ere long to Gaul,/ To Italy an Hannibal'. Augustus' foreign conquests were much vaunted - especially by Horace. Further, just as in Marvell's portrayal of Cromwell, Augustus had spent his early years in provincial obscurity, 'reserved and austere';<sup>34</sup> for such sobriety he was if anything notorious. In this too the Augustan



Type provides a suitable format for Marvell's description of Cromwell's career.

As I have said, Augustan and Horatian tropes have often been discussed in relation to the Ode; but such discussions frequently suggest that the Horatian cast of the Ode implies admiration for Cromwell. Whereas Marvell's use of the Roman Parallel in Tom May would seem to indicate that that is the one purpose for which he would not use the Parallel. The Roman Parallel in the Ode is not concerned to elevate Cromwell, but rather to act in concert with the purposes of dialectic.

The first ironic function of the Parallel is, as I have suggested, to maintain the Ode's implications that Cromwell has monarchical ambitions. An 'Augustan' format for Cromwell is highly suitable for this purpose: for it has unmistakable ramifications of monarchic power. And to compare Cromwell's foreign activities to those of Caesar in Gaul gives them an imperialist tinge.<sup>35</sup> Thus the Augustan motif provides a format for a critique of Cromwell's 'republican' image.

If there is any doubt that an Augustan model was antipathetic to the Parliamentarian "public image", then a passage by that party's foremost apologist, Milton, can dispel it. In his First Defence, Milton described Augustus as an exemplum of autocratic power of the worst kind. It is worth quoting what he wrote, as it makes clear just how contrary were the implications of Augustanism to the public claims of the Parliamentarians.

Dio....tells us in....his History....that Octavius Caesar, partly by force, and partly by fraud, brought things to that pass, that the emperors of Rome became no longer fettered by laws. For he, though he promised to the people in public that he would lay down the government, and obey the laws, and become subject to others; yet, under pretence of making war in several provinces of the empire, still retained the legions, and so by degrees invaded the government, which he pretended he would refuse. This was not regularly getting from under the law, but breaking forcibly through all laws, as Spartacus the gladiator might have done, and then assuming to himself

the style of prince or emperor, as if God or the law of nature had put all men and all laws into subjection under him. 36

In this passage Milton portrays Augustus as possessing an unscrupulous and illegitimate form of power: the worst possible sort of the worst possible rule, autocracy. These monarchical implications it was in the Parliamentarians' interests to eschew. When in his Augustan format Marvell attributes monarchist pretensions to Cromwell, he is providing a critique of Cromwell's 'Republicanism', and of the non-Republican workings of this supposedly Parliamentary state. In this sense, its monarchist sense, the Augustan motif is an ironic portrayal of Cromwell.

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In this sense it serves Marvell's personal view of Cromwell. If the dialectic of the poem was to be preserved, it must also allow a providential aspect to Cromwell. This it does allow. Damaging to Cromwell as a political man, the Augustan motif is also capable of allowing a sense of his 'usefulness' in history. This participation of the Roman Parallel in the Chiliastic View of Cromwell is what I wish to consider now.

The providential focus of the poem begins with its exordium. There Marvell characterizes the 'times', times of War and Fortune. These are particular times in history. But the very existence of the old 'Corslet' shows that times of war have occurred before in history: this moment of War is part of the continuous process of history. This provides a setting for the 'historical' aspect of the poem, its context for the Chiliastic View.

As in Appleton House, Marvell records his sense that the Civil War is a punishment for England's sins by Heaven itself: it is 'the force of angry Heaven's flame'. The agent of this devastation is



Cromwell, the malign rebel: the 'flame' of Heaven consists in his  
'Lightning':

like the three-forked Lightning, first  
Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst....  
His fiery way....  
Then burning through the Air he went....  
The force of angry Heaven's flame.

[my italics]

Cromwell's fiery power is the agent of Heaven's punishment. As the  
'Lightning' is both a portent of punishment, and the agent of punishment,  
it is also both a portent of Cromwell's emergence and the emergence  
itself. He did 'thorough his own Side/ His fiery way divide.' This  
lightning agency is what 'blasts' Charles. Cromwell's destructive  
force is ordained of Heaven as the scourge of England.<sup>37</sup>

I mentioned earlier that Cromwell's personal control of this  
force was not apparent. In fact control of his 'Lightning' is not  
attributed to Cromwell himself because it is not he himself, but Heaven  
who directs that force.

The 'three-forked Lightning' was that of the Roman supreme Deity,  
Jove: it was a punitive instrument.<sup>38</sup> It avenged the sins men committed  
against Jove. Thus this image provides a Roman symbol for God's  
punishment of England. It is in a long tradition of Christian uses  
of the classical pantheon. And the punitive nature of the Lightning  
provides a Roman analogue for the punitive aspect of Cromwell as the  
agent of 'angry Heaven.'

As a Roman Parallel, this image is particularly appropriate  
to the "Augustan" presentation of Cromwell. Augustus was frequently  
connected with lightning and thunder by classical writers. Suetonius,  
for instance, describing a dream prophetic of Augustus' destiny, says  
that the future princeps appeared

mortali specie ampliorem, cum fulmine et sceptro  
exuviisque Iovis Optimi Maximi ac radiata corona. 39

[my italics]

Here Suetonius invests Augustus with the attributes of Jove himself, including his fulmen (thunderbolt).<sup>40</sup> This association was a common one, intended to convey the notion that Augustus' power was divinely decreed. Similarly, Horace's Ode 1.12. is a statement of this divine authority of Augustus:

gentis humanae pater atque custos,  
orte Saturno, tibi cura magni  
Caesaris fata data: tu secundo  
Caesare regnes.

ille....  
te minor laetum reget aequuus orbem;  
tu gravi curru quaties Olympum,  
tu parum castis inimica mittes  
fulmina lucis.

Here Horace describes Augustus as Jove's 'right hand' and 'viceregent': Augustus is the 'lieutenant' on earth of Jove the Thunderer. This conception of Augustus as the instrument of Jove on earth is the source of Marvell's Augustan format for Cromwell as God's instrument.

Augustus was consistently associated with thunder and lightning, and with Jupiter Tonans.<sup>41</sup> The prophecy of his destiny (reported by Suetonius) involved a portent of Lightning:

Velitris antiquitus tacta de caelo parte muri responsum  
est eius oppidi civem quandoque rerum potiturum....sero  
tandem documentis apparuit ostentum illud Augusti potentiam  
portendisse.<sup>42</sup>

In this account Lightning was a portent of Augustus' destiny; Marvell makes the same portent refer to the destiny of Cromwell. The divinely-created destiny of Divus Augustus is attached to Cromwell as agent of Heaven; and as Augustus was the lieutenant of Jove, so Cromwell is the lieutenant of God. The Augustan parallel here provides a format for the providential view of Cromwell.

The difference between classical portraits of Divus Augustus and Marvell's portrait of Cromwell lies in Marvell's treatment of the image of 'Lightning'. Augustus was seen by his eulogists as a ruler of the 'Golden Age' type. But Marvell sees Cromwell as an agent of punishment;



he conflates Cromwell and the punitive instrument of Jove. It is as a destroyer in God's hand that Cromwell's malignity is providential.

Thus his treatment of Cromwell as "portent" and "agent" of wrath maintains the dialectic of Marvell's poem. The ambiguity of Cromwell is consistent: on the one hand he is personally disparaged, on the other he is providentially understood. Cromwell as the Destroyer may be personally unattractive, but his efficiency as a predator suits the purposes of God in history.

Cromwell's punitive aspect is seen in action when 'burning through the Air he went,/ And Pallaces and Temples rent' (21-22). The 'Pallaces' he destroys are metonymic for the monarchy; the 'Temples', metonymic for episcopal religion. These two institutions he has rooted up. The association of monarchy and the Church in this couplet is not merely to do with the fact that both are traditional institutions which give way to the new order. In fact the monarchy and the episcopal establishment are intimately associated in the Civil War struggle. As I mentioned in Chapter II, their association was the bugbear of Charles' cause in the eyes of many Englishmen (Marvell included), because the 'Papist' trend of episcopacy seemed to threaten a renaissance of Popery in England. Marvell shared in the antipathy to the bishops, and to their 'papist' tendencies. What Cromwell has done is to destroy the Arminians' 'Temples', whose Catholic features made such churches repugnant to those who feared Antichrist. Cromwell in effect destroys the 'Temples' which hold the Antichristian bishops. To describe the latter as Antichristian was a commonplace of the day: based upon the belief that Antichrist made his home actually within the 'temples' of God. 'He, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God' (2 Thess. ii.4).<sup>43</sup> Cromwell's function as an instrument in the eschaton is to eradicate the Antichristian element from English religion.

To this Marvellian thought one may compare that of a Puritan divine: who, having identified the bishops as the source of England's national sin - a backsliding into Antichristianism - says that Parliament must extirpate them: 'take thunder-bolts out of the hand of God, and so save....the Nation'.<sup>44</sup> Here, the 'Lightning' of God's wrath - Cromwell - similarly blasts the episcopal source of national sin, implementing Heaven's punishment. This work furthers the struggle against Antichrist and thus forwards the Last Day. In this sense Cromwell's work of destruction is providential.

But to root out episcopal 'Antichristianism' Cromwell of necessity had to destroy its ally, the monarchy. His motives for this, and the actual destruction of the monarchy, are not favourably presented by Marvell because of Marvell's own loyalties: Marvell had no love for episcopacy, but the monarchy had his loyalty. Hence in political terms Cromwell's destruction of 'Pallaces' with 'Temples' is not to Marvell's taste. But to the religious issue of Cromwell's action Marvell must assent.

For the fight against Popery was the last phase of eschatological history before the Coming, the phase in which Cromwell has appeared. His blow against Popery in England is a purgative of the sin which evoked Civil War. In purging this element Cromwell helps to purify England for her role in the last act of the eschaton; for hers is a Protestant role. In the perfecting of this role Cromwell's acts of destruction are providentially ordered.

In this particular act of destruction Cromwell is described as 'burning through the Air'. His element is the 'Air' because, during the last tribulations of the world, the final vial of Wrath to be poured on the earth is the 'plagues of the air.' These cause an earthquake in which 'the cities of the nations' fall; just as here, Cromwell as the vial of 'Heaven's flame' 'rent' the palaces and temples of England.



'This plague fell on the air, upon the prince of the power of the air, that is, the devil.'<sup>45</sup> It is an aspect of Cromwell's providential role that his element of destruction should be the 'Air'; this is a characterization of Cromwell as punitive agent, in which his nature as 'angry Heavens flame' is likened to that of the Seventh Vial of Wrath.

This characterization of Cromwell is related to current eschatological thought on the Civil War itself: a divine described that War as 'one of these seven vialls' which God was pouring on the earth during these Latter Days.<sup>46</sup> (Indeed, the wars of the Latter Days were - as I have mentioned - understood as part of these final tribulations; and the Civil War was identified as a Latter-Day War.)<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the same divine evoked God's 'viall of his revenging justice' as the punishment that England's national sin would provoke.<sup>48</sup> Thus it is appropriate that Cromwell's enactment of judgement during the Civil War should be described by Marvell in the manner of the Seventh Vial.

By this destiny he is called from his 'private Gardens' into the acts of history.

Much to the Man is due.  
Who....  
Could by industrious Valour climbe  
To ruine the great Work of Time,  
And cast the Kingdome old  
Into another Mold.

(28-36)

Cromwell is an actor in history: he acts upon 'the great Work of Time'. His function is within God's plan of history: in which God's 'great Work' was to create England, the Elect Nation. What Cromwell does is to 'cast the Kingdome old' of England into a Republican 'Mold'. To do this he has 'to ruine' the monarchic England, in his capacity as Destroyer.

And yet this destruction is God's work, as Marvell sees it. The way it contributes to that work is by forwarding the eschaton.

According to the eschatological view, history was a succession of world-'Kingdoms' or Ages of domination, the last of which would be replaced by the Kingdom of God. This allows Marvell a witty play on the word 'Kingdom'. By ending a 'Kingdome' in England, Cromwell has, on the chiliastic level, placed her that much nearer in time to the final Kingdom, which will be God's.<sup>49</sup> Thus Marvell sees the destruction of England's monarchic character as a work of providence: the fact that it was a work of 'ruine' too was something that one had to accept. The next Kingdom lies shaping in the 'Mold': to 'ruine the great Work of Time' is to initiate the universal destruction which ends Time altogether.

But Marvell cannot let this thought pass without a statement of his personal reaction to it. He records his antagonism in the next quatrain, where he states that Cromwell succeeds in his destruction

Though Justice against Fate complain,  
And plead the antient Rights in vain:  
But those do hold or break  
As Men are strong or weak.

(37-40)

Human values of 'Justice' complain against the providence of 'Fate'. In the course of providential history Marvell's own cause has been defeated: the 'antient Rights' are violated. This is Marvell's statement of the personal cost of the divine plan: he does not 'resist or blame' Heaven (human 'Justice' does that), but rather he expresses his sense of how strange Heaven's purposes are, in human terms.

Yet this distance between the human perspective and providence is something to which Marvell can reconcile himself. He notes that 'antient Rights' 'do hold or break/ As Men are strong or weak': a thought which echoes his statement elsewhere, that 'A good Cause signifys little, unless it be as well defended.' To defend it, the onus is on 'Men' to be 'strong'. Obviously Charles was not strong enough to defend the 'antient Rights'. It is men, not providence,



who are at fault.

As Charles was not strong enough to defend the old Kingdom, it was to redress this weakness in the Elect Nation that providence imported Cromwell.

Nature that hateth emptiness,  
Allows of penetration less:  
And therefore must make room  
Where greater Spirits come.

(41-44)

Cromwell is 'greater' than Charles in the sense especially that he is 'stronger': he is, after all, a 'force'. If that strength has dubious motives - like ambition, 'greatness' - then that is a facet of his malignity. 'Nature' decrees his supremacy; as in another statement of Marvell's, 'Nature' here means providence.<sup>50</sup> The image from physics in this passage demands the word 'Nature', as the physical aspect of God's providential order in the world.<sup>51</sup> It is in terms of this order that Cromwell's strength replaces Charles' weakness.

Marvell's resignation to this fact is something that he attributes to Charles also. He says that Charles

Nor call'd the Gods with vulgar spight  
To vindicate his helpless Right,  
But bowed his comely Head,  
Down as upon a Bed.

(61-64)

The salient feature of this quatrain is Charles' acceptance of the fact that 'the Gods' are willing to see his 'Right' violated, and himself dead. He 'bowed his comely Head,/ Down as upon a Bed.' The gesture of submission is not a political acquiescence.<sup>52</sup> It is, as Marvell states it, a gesture of acquiescence to the divine edict that Charles must die.<sup>53</sup> For this reason he did not call upon the 'Gods' with 'vulgar spight'; and this portrayal of Charles' submission to providence reflects Marvell's own compliance.

When he sets the scene for Charles' execution, he describes it as a theatrical occasion, complete with audience and applause.

That thence the Royal Actor born  
The Tragick Scaffold might adorn  
While round the armed Bands  
Did clap their bloody hands.

(53-56)

The scaffold becomes a stage, with Charles in the leading role of his own 'Tragedy'. This theatrical image is not a derogation of the event:<sup>54</sup> Charles is portrayed with sympathy throughout the passage describing the execution. In fact the theatrical motif is derived from a view of history current in the Seventeenth Century, which saw history as a 'Theatre'.<sup>55</sup> It is in this context, the providential 'Theatre' of history, that Marvell places Charles' execution. That execution is countenanced by God, not because Charles has transgressed, but because the fulfilment of God's plan demands it.

Thus Charles is described as 'the Royal Actor born.' As the future King, he had been 'born' to be an actor in history: his position demanded that role of him. This fact places him in contradistinction to Cromwell, who was not born to act in history, but had to 'climbe' (33) to it. This is the essential difference between Charles and Cromwell in history, that one was a legitimate 'Actor' while the other was self-made: albeit with the consent of providence.

Providence has thus removed Charles from his 'antient Rights' of Dei, Gratia kingship;<sup>56</sup> the right to be the lieutenant of God. Charles' virtue is to acquiesce in this overruling of legitimacy by the dictates of providence. This providential view of the regicide was common, in fact, both to the King and to his executioners: the latter truly believed that in executing him they were enacting the will of God,<sup>57</sup> and Charles himself, although conscious of injustice, described his imminent execution as a part of God's historical design.<sup>58</sup>



It was understood that in the last phase of this design horrors, destruction, and tribulation would disturb the nations. Marvell describes Charles' 'Tragick' end as one of these:<sup>59</sup> a part of the human 'tragedy' of the Latter Days. It was precisely in these terms of theatrical 'tragedy' that the most influential eschatologist of the period described the Latter Days; and he was not alone in using this "tragic" idea.

For now is the last Act begun of a most long and dolefull tragedy, which shall wholly overflow with scourges, slaughters, destructions.<sup>60</sup>

[my italics]

Charles' 'tragedy' on the scaffold is one of these latter-day 'destructions'.<sup>61</sup> And Cromwell is the instrument of this, as of other divine 'destructions'.

The point of the latter-day 'tragedies' was to purge the earth for the establishment of the next Kingdom: their issue was ultimately fortunate.<sup>62</sup> Thus Charles' execution, however distasteful to Marvell, must be one of these preludes to bliss, a 'sign' of future good. It is as such a prophetic sign that Marvell portrays it.

This was that memorable Hour  
Which first assur'd the forced Pow'r.  
So when they did design  
The Capitol's first Line,  
A bleeding Head where they begun,  
Did fright the Architects to run;  
And yet in that the State  
Foresaw its happy Fate.

(65-72)

Charles' 'bleeding Head' is a prophecy of England's 'happy Fate'. Intrinsically, the execution is a horrifying event - it 'Did fright the Architects to run.' But in terms of what it prophesies - the approach of the Last Day - it is the forerunner of a 'happy' end. That peculiarly 'happy Fate' is England's favoured position in the eschaton, of which the regicide is a 'sign'. Thus, although the immediate horror of the regicide is not forgotten in this passage, it is placed in a chiliastic perspective.

Marvell emphasizes that 'This was that memorable Hour/ Which first assur'd the forced Pow'r.' The new regime is based upon this act of force: it is illegitimate. The regicide in fact characterizes the new regime as a 'forced Pow'r'.

For the prophetic sign represented by the execution Marvell uses a Roman Parallel: the discovery of a human head during excavations for the building of the Capitol at Rome.<sup>63</sup> An augur interpreted its appearance as a sign of Rome's future prosperity. Thus the fortunate nature of the Roman event is proper to Marvell's own prophetic purposes concerning England's destiny.

This Roman Parallel is especially apt because the excavations were for Jupiter's first temple: a monument to their supreme god. This fact provides an analogy for the notion that God's 'temple', His new Kingdom, will be erected by the English, who are His chosen people. Thus the Roman event reflects Marvell's purpose, which is to show a providential aspect of the regicide.

When Marvell notes that the Caput 'Did fright the Architects to run', he is alluding especially to those Parliamentarians who were outraged by the regicide.<sup>64</sup> Marvell notes that they 'ran' from the phenomenon of regicide, and yet were 'Architects' of that state which the regicide was intended to 'assure'. This incongruity between their belief in the sanctity of kingship and their allegiance to a non-monarchical state gives Marvell an opportunity for this ironic allusion to them. The Latter-Day sign is too strong for their stomachs, even if Marvell himself can be reconciled to that sign.

The 'happy Fate' of England depends upon her industrious pursuit of her mission, which is to promote the Kingdom of God in the struggle against Antichrist. In effect this meant opposition to Catholicism, and in particular to those countries where Catholicism was strong. This mission is what qualifies the Elect Nation for her 'happy Fate':



therefore, having described the omen of this fortunate fate, Marvell proceeds to chronicle the way in which England pursues that mission under the new regime.

Of this mission the first instance is Ireland: the conquest of which is the occasion for the poem. The trouble with the Irish was, chiliastically speaking, that they were a great deal too fond of their Catholic faith. As one Englishman stated the matter, 'arise oh Lord and scatter the Irish rebels! arise oh Lord and confound Antichrist!'<sup>65</sup> To the English Ireland (or most of it) represented a running sore of Antichristianism in the British Isles themselves.<sup>66</sup>

Thus when Charles came to an agreement with the disaffected in Ireland, this concord aroused fears of the introduction of Popery in England: fears that the King had allied himself with the Catholic cause, which greatly damaged Charles' reputation in England.<sup>67</sup> Later, indeed, Marvell recalled the damage inflicted upon Charles' cause by the Irish rebellion, and attributed the Irish troubles to a Popish conspiracy intended to ruin that monarch: noting among the perfidies of the Papists those

in the time of his late Majesty, King Charles the First, (besides what they contributed to the Civil War in England) the Rebellion and horrid Massacre in Ireland....the Pope's Nuncio [there] assuming.... the temporal as well as spiritual power....[and] breaking the treaties of peace between the King, and, as they stiled themselves, the confederate Catholicks; ....all which ended in the ruine of his Majestie's reputation, government, and person; which, but upon occasion of that [Irish] Rebellion, could never have happened.

(GP, 259)

Thus Marvell manifests that he shared the popular view that the Irish, tools of Antichrist, were part of the Popish conspiracy to subvert the Elect Nation.<sup>68</sup>

And Irish Catholicism was becoming more militant in the face of English Protestantism. The religious question in Ireland became a

matter for the government in London; the topic was an emotive one, for the so-called "Irish massacre" of English Protestants in 1641 (mentioned by Marvell, supra) had alienated English feeling. When Cromwell was entrusted with the reconquest of Ireland in 1649, he defended his severity by claiming that his policy of severe reprisals was God's retribution for the massacre of 1641.<sup>68</sup> This notion that Irish Catholicism was the target of suppression was the salient feature of English thought on the matter.

Thus, when Cromwell suppresses the Irish, he is God's instrument, promulgating the mission of the English.<sup>69</sup>

And now the Irish are asham'd  
To see themselves in one Year tam'd:  
So much one Man can do,  
That does both act and know.

Marvell says 'And now the Irish are asham'd'; 'now', that the sign of England's mission has defined her 'Fate', it is possible to subdue the long-standing Irish threat. England's "purification" from her own Anti-christian elements has made her strong enough to quell Antichristian Ireland.

The source of this strength is Cromwell: 'So much one Man can do.' His fitness for the task is due to the fact that he both 'acts' and 'knows': this phrase refers to Cromwell's efficiency - he knows what to do, and does it. This ability to 'act and know' is a classical formulation in the Ode for the Puritan faculty of 'zeal'. Caesar, for instance (to whom Cromwell is compared in 101), was a celebrated example of this classical combination of action with knowledge;<sup>70</sup> and that combination was in general a Roman ideal.<sup>71</sup> So, here, the Roman Parallel provides this formulation for Puritan 'zeal': which denoted a similar combination,<sup>72</sup> of an alertness to Truth with the ability to enact God's purposes. This 'zeal' was the spirit of militant Protestantism in England,<sup>73</sup> and the watchword of the Cromwellian Army in particular: it was, in effect, the activist aspect of chiliasm.



So, in this poem, zealotry is the mission of England, which Cromwell manifests in suppressing the Irish.

This is Cromwell as the representative of England's mission. But this 'foreign' effect of Cromwell is in opposition to his role in England, where he is still the same man who pretends to be 'in the Republicks hand'. In English internal politics his malign aspect is uppermost. The difference between Cromwell's 'Trust' in Ireland and 'Trust' in England is in part the difference between Cromwell as providential instrument and Cromwell as political tyrant. Abroad he pursues England's mission in the eschaton; at home he is less worthy of endorsement.

It is as providential instrument that Cromwell 'to the Common Feet presents/ A Kingdome, for his first years rents.' That 'Kingdome' is the Catholic 'Age' or 'Kingdome' which he has subdued in Ireland. For Ireland was a part of the so-called 'Antichristian Empire' of the Pope, which was the power of 'Popery' in the world.<sup>74</sup> To the destruction of this nefarious Kingdom Cromwell has contributed by his exploits in Ireland.

The ambiguity of Cromwell at home consists, here, in his relationship to Parliament. Marvell portrays this relationship ironically, as if Parliament were in control of its War Machine. This ironic "tameness" of the predatory Cromwell he compares to the control of a handler over his hawk: 'Where, when he first does lure,/ The F~~u~~alckner has her sure.' The reality of power was that Parliament was tame to Cromwell: this sense of the image is ironic. Part of its irony is that the 'Falckner' truly in control of Cromwell is God: Cromwell is His tame "Destroyer".<sup>75</sup> God can certainly 'have him sure' when destruction is not His purpose.

In his choice of a bird of prey to represent Cromwell as divine instrument, Marvell may be using a Roman motif. The eagle was Jupiter's

messenger; Horace calls this bird the 'servant of the lightning', agent of Jupiter's decrees.<sup>76</sup> Marvell describes Cromwell as the 'Lightning' of God; and to compare him to the 'servant of the lightning' is further to characterize him as the instrument of God. In fact, the eagle was a common attribute of Jupiter.<sup>77</sup> In this comparison Marvell is also maintaining the Augustan aspect of the Roman Parallel. Horace describes Augustus in war as a hawk bearing down on his prey;<sup>78</sup> Marvell uses the same image for Cromwell in his Holy War.

This description of Cromwell as agent of God's judgements introduces a passage in which Marvell considers Cromwell's ability to enact them. Properly to do so he must perform England's mission by extending the struggle against Popery into Europe. This mission was of prime importance both to militant Protestantism, and to Marvell as one of its proponents.<sup>79</sup>

What may not then our Isle presume  
While Victory his Crest does plume!  
What may not others fear  
If thus he crowns each Year!  
A Caesar he ere long to Gaul,  
To Italy an Hannibal,  
And to all States not free  
Shall Climacterick be.

(97-104)

Marvell suggests that if Cromwell has 'crowned this Year' with the conquest of Ireland, he may produce such conquests every year. He has 'crowned' the year with the 'Kingdome' in Ireland. For Ireland was one of the 'crowns' of the Beast (his 'horns' were interpreted as kings in his power);<sup>80</sup> and Marvell looks for such 'crowns' wrested from Antichrist elsewhere in the world.<sup>81</sup> Specifically, he looks to Cromwell's conquest of 'Gaul' and 'Italy'. At this time France and Italy were the strongholds of Catholicism in Europe; France was the strongest Catholic power in Europe, and Italy was the homeland of 'Popery'. These two countries were therefore the most significant 'crowns' of the Beast. Marvell hopes that Cromwell, the English instrument of God, will by conquering them extirpate the two major



Antichristian powers. Thus he shall 'to all States not free/.... Climacterick be', by emancipating them from the power of the Beast.

A 'Climacterick' is a critical moment, marking the end of one epoch and the beginning of another.<sup>82</sup> Cromwell will provide this to 'all States' yet under the yoke of the Beast; thus he will be the 'Climacterick' to the world-empire of Antichrist, marking the end of the Antichristian era and the onset of the new Kingdom. As God's instrument against Antichrist, Cromwell is the 'Climacterick' to the Antichristian Age; a purgative instrument, not only in England, but in Europe also. This moment is the climax of Cromwell's providential role in the Ode. It portrays him as an agent of God in world history, who thus "realizes" the peculiar mission of England.

This vision of Cromwell's destiny is suitably contained in the Augustan format of the Ode. Suitably, because Augustus was considered the conqueror of the world; he too represented a 'Climacterick' to classical authors. Horace, Virgil and Ovid all saw him as an all-conquering ruler; and Virgil in particular portrayed him as a man of destiny who would inaugurate a new Golden Age: his equivalent of the Seventeenth-century 'Kingdom'.<sup>83</sup> It is this similarity of vision, a Golden Age and a man of destiny, that makes Virgil's description of Augustus' fate a possible source for Marvell's description of Cromwell's.

The Virgilian passage to which I refer is that at the end of the Sixth Book of the Aeneid, where the statement of Augustus' destiny is clearest:

hic Caesar et omnis Iuli/progenies magnum caeli uentura  
sub axem./ hic uir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius  
audis,/ Augustus Caesar, diui genus, aurea condet/  
saecula... /Cuius in aduentum iam nunc et Caspea regna/  
responsis horrent diuum et Maeotia tellus... /et dubitamus  
adhuc uirtutem extendere factis...?<sup>84</sup>

Here Virgil states that Augustus is the fulfilment of prophecy: 'hic uir, hic est.' In the same way Marvell envisages Cromwell as the man who can fulfil the prophesied defeat of Antichrist. Both men are men of destiny with a divinely ordained purpose on earth. Virgil says

that Augustus will bring a Golden Age for Rome, 'aurea condet/saecula', while Marvell states that Cromwell is the harbinger of the Kingdom Age: both Augustus and Cromwell represent 'Climactericks'. As part of his destiny, Augustus will - according to Virgil - extend the conquests of Rome; similarly, Marvell states that Cromwell's conquests will extend to 'all States not free.' Virgil's final thought is that with Augustus at their head, Romans cannot hesitate 'uirtutem extendere factis'. This thought appears also in Marvell's description of Cromwell's leadership in England's mission: 'What may not then our Isle presume/ While Victory his crest does plume?' Cromwell, like Augustus, inspires his country's militant spirit. In Cromwell's case that inspiration refers especially to England's reforming mission in the world, which will establish the Kingdom, the eschatological Golden Age. Hence the Roman Parallel of Augustus' inauguration of a Golden Age, provides a format for Marvell's Cromwell as agent of the Kingdom. Here the Roman idea expresses the Chiliastic View.

From this climactic vision of Cromwell's destiny Marvell returns to the struggle at home. This matter, like the rest of the poem, is still a part of the historical process: the Irish problem belongs to the past, the vision of Cromwell in Europe belongs to the future, as a prophecy of his role. The present matter concerns what Cromwell will be doing in Scotland, which is his current 'Trust'.

The Pict no shelter now shall find  
 Within his party-colour'd Mind;  
 But from this Valour sad  
 Shrink underneath the Plad:  
 Happy if in the tufted brake  
 The English Hunter him mistake:  
 Nor lay his Hounds in near  
 The Caledonian Deer.

(105-112)

This is Cromwell as Hunter again. Marvell portrays the Scots as cowards cringing from Cromwell's might. 'Happy if....The English Hunter him mistake', the fearful Scot goes into hiding. He is as



timid as the notoriously nervous 'Deer' of his land. The trouble with the Scots (as opposed to the Irish) was, in the immediate sense, their proclamation of Charles II. This was Parliament's current problem, and Cromwell was to be dispatched to rid them of it. If the Scots had declared for the new King, why should Marvell derogate them? Derogate them both by imputations of cowardice and by describing them as 'party-coloured', deceitful? Marvell's antipathy towards the Scots is a religious matter. As I have said, Marvell was a Puritan in religion although a Royalist in politics at this time: this, indeed, is a division that marks the Ode. Many monarchists would have felt a similar antipathy to the Scots, for the same religious reasons: as did some Parliamentarians.

The fact was that in order to gain Scottish aid for his cause Charles II had agreed perforce to a Presbyterian settlement in England, should he regain his throne.<sup>85</sup> This was an outrage to many in England: remember Milton's famous remark about the 'New Presbyter' being worse than the 'old Priest' of episcopacy?<sup>86</sup> The Independents in particular feared an established Presbyterian Church;<sup>87</sup> thus Marvell too was antagonistic towards the Presbyterians.<sup>88</sup> This religious question is the source of Marvell's antipathy to the Scots: not mollified by the fact that the Scots seemed prepared to turn coats for anyone who would promise them an English Presbyterian settlement. If Cromwell quells the Scottish threat he is defending the true character of English Protestantism. As in the case of Ireland, the Scots represented a religious as well as a political threat, exacerbated by outrage at the idea that the Scots could see fit to invade England.<sup>89</sup> In this passage the contemporary English prejudice against the Scots as a 'perfidious' nation<sup>90</sup> goes hand in hand with a religious issue.

With the prediction of Cromwell's success in Scotland Marvell closes the chronicle. He turns to apostrophize Cromwell himself.

But thou the Wars and Fortunes Son  
 March indefatigably on;  
 And for the last effect  
 Still keep thy Sword erect:  
 Besides the force it has to fright  
 The Spirits of the shady Night,  
 The same Arts that did gain  
 A Pow'r must it maintain.

(113-120)

This direct address to Cromwell inevitably involves a renascence of Marvell's personal feelings towards him. He has characterized Cromwell as the instrument of providence, 'Fortune';<sup>91</sup> but he has not forgotten that Cromwell is the 'Wars....Son' also. Cromwell rose by military means: his power is still an illegitimate power. The fact that he is providentially sanctioned but politically illegitimate, the collision of divine and human values, is reflected in the division of this line, between Cromwell as Son of Fortune and Cromwell as Son of War. This line defers to providence even while it puts Cromwell in his place.

The illegitimacy of Cromwell's 'Pow'r' evokes a warning from Marvell that to maintain that power Cromwell must remain 'industrious' (33); force is the basis of 'the forced Pow'r', and to retain that power Cromwell must hold to force. 'And for the last effect/ Still keep thy Sword erect': in the sense that Cromwell's sword is his power, this sword represents government by force. In this way Cromwell the Destroyer becomes a Defender, but because of his nature - and the nature of his power - that defensiveness is as much a matter of force as his destructiveness: the same 'Arts'. This thought, originating in Sallust,<sup>92</sup> is a warning in classical form.

The efficacy of Cromwell's sword is that it 'has force to fright/ The Spirits of the shady Night.' These are, on the political level, the dead: the Roman 'shades' or ghosts of men. They are those who, earlier in the poem, chose to 'oppose' Cromwell, and the 'bleeding Head' of Charles must be amongst them. Perhaps Marvell suggests that



they come to haunt Cromwell: perhaps also, that the memory of them inspires his living enemies. This too would seem to be a warning; the political level of this final passage is a sinister one. Marvell sees fit to warn Cromwell both of his political future, and of the fact that he must remain eternally vigilant. 'March indefatigably on': Marvell advises, even if he does not sympathize with, Cromwell. And this personal element in the lines recalls the exordium of the Ode, where the 'Arts' of the poet and the 'Arts' of Cromwell were opposed: the poem's closure on the Arts of Power circles back upon that opening thought. Cromwell has committed himself to the 'adventurous' life, and the distance of the poet from that modus vivendi is here reasserted.

But this finale takes account also of Cromwell's 'usefulness', his providential aspect. As the Final Image of the poem, it synthesizes the dialectic of personal and providential perspectives in the poem. It does so, first, by re-emphasizing Cromwell's efficiency: he is 'indefatigable', a thought which recalls that he is the 'industrious' instrument of God. He must be so 'still' (116), because it is that quality which ensures him the favour of providence.

He must maintain a vigilant sword 'for the last effect'. This 'last effect' is the end of history itself, the Last Day. (It is worth recalling that in The First Anniversary, Marvell described the Last Day as the 'wonderful Effect' (135) ). Reference to it completes the historical context of the poem. It was in the service of that day that Cromwell was called to power, and he must continue to serve it. His service is in the nature of the 'Sword', a militant service: by keeping that 'Sword erect', he will have it always in readiness for that service. (Readiness, after all, was the Puritan ethic of chiliasm.)<sup>93</sup> This is the providential sense of the lines: Cromwell's vigilance, which Marvell is advising him to 'maintain', is both a political and a chiliastic matter.

Cromwell is still an Actor in history: and his activity in this department is, like his political activity, a matter of force. He is at once 'the force of angry Heaven' and 'the forced Pow'r': on both levels his sword 'has force to fright' (26, 66, 117). Both his illegitimate (political) aspect, and his providential (historical) aspect depend upon this faculty of force. In this way a synthesis is made.

Thus, in the providential sense, the enemies of Cromwell are not only his enemies amongst men, but those "powers" which oppose his providential function. Like the ghosts of men, the agents of Antichrist come from the Underworld, the 'shady Night'. The Roman Underworld was both the region of the dead and the infernal domain of Pluto, their Devil.<sup>94</sup> Hence when Marvell uses the Roman trope of 'the shades', he can include in it both the dead and the infernal enemies of Cromwell. For Cromwell is the agent of God against Antichrist, and as such he must have both mortal and 'Spiritual' enemies. These are both, then, the 'Spirits' of the dead and 'Spirits' in the old sense of "demons".

Cromwell's function now, having quelled the Antichristian element in the British Isles, is to maintain the struggle against the Antichristian enemies of England: the force of his 'Sword' defends England against them, just as earlier Marvell saw his force as England's militancy towards them. The Holy War is fought on two fronts, aggressive and defensive. This is the providential aspect of Cromwell's defence, as opposed to the personal defence of his own power.

It is a spiritual war, against 'Spirits':

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

(Ephesians vi. 12)

'The rulers of the darkness of this world' are the most powerful

'Spirits of the shady Night', the avatars of the Beast on earth.<sup>95</sup>

In the fight against them the power Marvell attributes to Cromwell is



his 'Sword'. Several suggestions have been made by various critics as to why his Sword should have any special powers. One suggestion (probably that with widest currency) has been that the sword-hilt fashions a cross that is a talisman against 'Spirits'. This is unlikely, for if the sword is 'erect' its hilt is at the base, and therefore not a cross-shape at all. Furthermore, as E.E. Duncan-Jones has pointed out,<sup>96</sup> there was a strong Puritan hostility to representations of the cross, and to the talismanic use of it. Instead, she suggests that - as in Virgil's Aeneid - the spirits of the Underworld were considered to fear the "cold metal" of the sword. This seems to me to be a correct interpretation of the Roman Parallel in the 'Sword'. It frightens the dead mortals at least, for this reason.

However, this Final Image has also a chiliastic level of meaning, and as elsewhere in the poem this Roman Parallel provides a format for the Chiliastic View. Cromwell is a warrior in eschatological history, and in this Final Image he is the guardian of England against the forces of Antichrist. In this role his attribute is that 'Sword': and as an iconographical attribute this has a direct connexion with eschatology.

For the sword is the attribute of Michael, the Archangel who wars with the Dragon in Revelation xii. This Archangel provided the Type for Spenser's Red Cross Knight in the latter's encounter with the Dragon: he was the most significant of the Angels in the fight against Antichrist. In mediaeval legends he is represented as Captain of the host of Heaven against Lucifer and his fallen angels, and as such he appears in Paradise Lost Book VI.<sup>97</sup> For the Parliamentarians, the Civil War itself had been a conflict between 'Saint Michael and the Serpent' - between the Angel of the Saints and Antichrist.<sup>98</sup> Thus he was usually represented as a warrior, with a sword as his special attribute.<sup>99</sup>

The analogy between Cromwell's function as warrior in the eschaton and Michael's is very close. In the Final Image the attribute of Cromwell against the forces of Antichrist is that of Michael, the Archangel who wars with Antichrist. Cromwell and the Angel also have the same function of guardianship. Michael was understood to be the guardian and Prince of Israel; Cromwell in the Ode is the guardian and Prince of the New Israel, England. Both Michael's protective function and his militancy are present in the Cromwell of the Final Image. Thus Michael provides a figura for Cromwell's eschatological function.

This characterization of Cromwell is not peculiar to Marvell. An example of its applicability to Cromwell, in terms of the English eschatological preoccupation, is William Faithorne's emblematic portrayal of Cromwell.<sup>100</sup> This, 'The Embleme of England's Distractions', appeared in 1658, and provides an instructive parallel to Marvell's Final Image. Faithorne's engraving shows Cromwell as 'Pro Deo lege et grege', the Lord Protector and therefore guardian of England. Cromwell carries an erect sword, symbol of his strength in guardianship. That this might is holy is evident from the iconography of the Emblem. Cromwell is in fact portrayed on the model of Michael: he is the warrior-guardian with a sword, and crushed beneath his feet are the Beast and the Whore of Babylon.<sup>101</sup> Thus Cromwell in the emblem is Michael to the New Israel, the three kingdoms guarded by his might. Faithorne's emblem is an example of the stream of thought which inspired Marvell's Final Image.

This is the figurative level of the Final Image, which as it were emblemizes Cromwell's providential function. This level of statement admonishes Cromwell to remain the forceful instrument of God; the political level advises him to retain his own power by the same force. The two levels of statement are analogous; it is in the Cromwellian character of 'force' that they coincide.



Thus this Image synthesizes the dialectic of the poem: a dialectic that consisted in a two-fold portrayal of Cromwell, as malign politician and as providential agent. What made him malign was his character as a Destroyer: what made him providential was his function as Destroyer in the hand of God. The malign and the providential aspects of Cromwell were thus incipiently reconcilable: for his force as a Destroyer constituted his suitability to the purposes of God. His 'Sword' has thus both a tyrannous and a fortunate aspect, providing a synthesis of Marvell's double attitude to Cromwell.

Cromwell is still not legitimate, even though he is providential. The 'Pow'r' he has gained is still 'the forced Pow'r' (120, 66). This characterization of the Parliamentary regime echoes that of the King himself, who when admonished at his trial to remember that he was before a Court of Justice, replied, 'I find I am before a power.'<sup>102</sup> Marvell makes the same distinction between 'antient Rights' and mere 'Pow'r'. Cromwell's power requires to be 'maintained' because it cannot rest on legitimacy.

For the synthesis in the Final Image, between Cromwell as tyrant and Cromwell as Guardian, the Roman Parallel provides a format. The epigram from Sallust, and the 'Sword', provide Roman analogies for Marvell's view of Cromwell: the 'shades' terror of the sword provides a trope suited to the figuralism of Michael. Similarly, throughout the poem the Augustan motif from Horace provides a type both for Cromwell's ambiguity and for his destiny. The Horatian terms, 'Fate' (37), 'Nature' (41), and 'Fortune' (113) also provide a classical language for the Chiliastic View of providence. And the Horatian 'qualities of moderation and rationality'<sup>103</sup> that stamp Horatian form provide a vehicle for Marvell's balance of perspectives on Cromwell. His neutrality of feeling in the Ode is an equivalent to Horatian 'moderation', not because Marvell's personal feelings are

moderate, but because such neutralized feeling is required of him, if he is to portray both the malignity and the providence of Cromwell.

Also, by placing Cromwell in an historical 'typology', as an analogue to Augustus, the Ode gives form to its contextual sense of world history. That context is a basis for the historical sense that underlies the Chiliastic View. At the exordium of the Ode Marvell introduces a sense of 'the times' as both particular and serial, which provides a context for the historical providence of the Cromwellian phenomenon. Cromwell as Actor in history exists in this perspective. Thus, in its function as an historicizing element in the poem, the Roman Parallel again subserves the Chiliastic View. Christ was born in the reign of Augustus; perhaps He would 'Come' again in Cromwell's time. The dating of His birth is the major motive behind the Roman Parallel. Cromwell is one of those who prepare the world for His Coming.

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The dialectic between Cromwell's malignity and his providential "usefulness" is a dialectic required by Marvell's beliefs, which were in conflict with his personal loyalty. What he has done is what was required of him, 'to take pains to inquire what useful purposes are served by things.' It is this quality of personal reconciliation to history that gives the Ode its peculiarity.

In this reconciliation the Ode provides an example of how poetry formulates reality: how the 'feigned history' of the poet relates to the 'history' of real events. The distinction between 'feigned history', or poetry, and 'history', or events and chronicles of events, was one of the moral distinctions made by Bacon in The Advancement of Learning (1605):



The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul; by reason whereof there is, agreeable to the spirit of man, a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness....than can be found in the nature of things. Therefore, because the acts or events of true history have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical: because true history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence: because true history representeth actions and events more ordinary, and less interchanged, therefore poesy indueth them with more rareness.<sup>104</sup>

According to Bacon, therefore, 'the acts....of true history have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man': the value of poetry is that it gives 'some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man', and this fact at once distinguishes it from 'history' and redresses the morally unsatisfactory nature of history. The particular manner in which poetry redresses history is that it represents events as 'more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence.'

It is in this fashion that Marvell presents his private view of Cromwell in history, as a phenomenon willed by God in the perfecting of human history. Perhaps in this light the defeat of Marvell's own cause could 'give some satisfaction to the mind.' The providential problematic of the Ode is in a sense Marvell's consolation in the hour of defeat. It shows the emotional value of eschatology for an individual observer of his own time.<sup>105</sup> God is an ironist: and the Ode can afford that irony too.

## Appendix II

### A Parallel to Marvell's Ode

A pamphlet published in 1655 shows how an eschatological view of Cromwell could 'overcome' an author hostile to him; this, An Honest Discourse between Three Neighbours, Touching the present Government in these Three Nations, provides an interesting parallel to Marvell's view of Cromwell in the Ode.

The pamphlet appears to be written by one of Cromwell's Puritan opponents. The dialogue is set in the scene of Time and History: the interlocutors are Goodman Past, Goodman Present, and Goodman Future. This historical setting is immediately specified as an eschatological setting, with references to the current phase of time as the 'Latter Days'. 'The great day of God dawns apace': 'the hour is coming, and now is, when the Root of all things is seen, and the dead raised': 'in these last days....the little stone shall bruise all.'<sup>1</sup>

Current events are seen in this eschatological perspective:

Goodman Past....the openings of the book of the Revelation of these last days. All men are now eminently tried, whether they be Princes, Statesmen, Souldiers, Lawyers, Citizens, Country-men, or Members of Churches.<sup>2</sup>

In this time of 'trial', the problem the pamphleteer sets himself - and his interlocutors - is to understand Cromwell's government in terms of the providential purposes of God. One Goodman asks, 'What Man is there that understandeth times, and prophecies, and revolutions, in their Root in Eternity?'<sup>3</sup> This Root is, as it were, the root of the problem.

But the pamphleteer is in no doubt about the immediate political character of Cromwell. When Goodman Future asks, 'What dost thou think of the man called Protector? Is he all for himself, or all for Christ and Commonweal?', he adds that 'The Cavaliers say now, Did we not



prophesie true, These Reformers sought themselves?'<sup>4</sup> The implication that Cromwell is an example of selfish ambition recurs throughout the pamphlet. He is portrayed as an example of 'Self, Pomp, Pride, Gallantry, Excess, Policie, and Deceitfulness.'<sup>5</sup>

But the pamphleteer, like Marvell, knows that in one sense at least one cannot revile Cromwell: for he must possess the divine authority that creates earthly power.

Gods Foundation to his work in Nations, is infinitely larger then mans. Dost thou not believe that Gods wise providence doth nothing amiss, and suffers nothing but for good?<sup>6</sup>

This reminder of providential history comes, of course, from the prophetic character of Goodman Future. It recalls the other Goodmen to the fact that 'all worketh for good to them that are good.'<sup>7</sup> This conception of a fortunate history impels the pamphleteer - as it impelled Marvell - to see Cromwell's utility within God's plan.

Goodman Past. The Impartialist said also this: I am of every Christian's opinion....I know no difference, but only that of good and evil....I believe also, that this present Authority [Cromwell] obstructs good things, and yet that in other things the counsel of God prospers in this Cyrus his hand, though he comprehend it not when he is thus girded: he doth some good, but denieth another good; he doth some evil, but keepeth off evil also as an instrument.<sup>8</sup>

The writer sees Cromwell as the 'instrument' of God against evil.

But he is an unconscious instrument: 'the counsel of God prospers in.... his hand, though he comprehend it not.' His malignity, that 'obstructs good things', is proscribed by his providential character as an 'instrument'. Here, as in Marvell's Ode, Cromwell is placed in a providential perspective by a contemporary observer.

## CHAPTER VII

### REVELATION AND RENOVATION

#### I: Politics and the Virgilian Prophetic Poem

In the previous chapter I described Marvell's use of a "Roman Parallel" in the Horatian Ode to formulate his interpretation of contemporary history. In this chapter and the next, I want to show how another "Roman Parallel", Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, became for Marvell a similarly potent classical formula for the understanding of his own times. Therefore part of the purpose of these chapters is to define a genre which I will call Revelatory Eclogue, and to describe how this genre functions in Marvell's poetry.

The poems in which this classical formula operates are Illustrissimo Viro...., A Letter to Dr. Ingelo, and Upon Appleton House. This chapter is concerned mainly with the second of these poems; providing an introduction to the next chapter, which will discuss Appleton House in relation to the Virgilian formula.

This chapter consists of seven sections. The first of these glances back at Appleton House and the Horatian Ode in order to illuminate further the relationship of Marvell's problematic to his understanding of history; this provides a context for the later concerns of the chapter. The second section discusses the eschatological trope of 'renovation', which the third compares to the classical concept of a Golden Age. Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, the most influential statement of the Golden Age in this respect, is the subject of the fourth section, which traces the Eclogue's influence through the Reformation to the 1640s. The sixth section describes its influence on Marvell, using his poem A Letter to Dr. Ingelo as an example.

Throughout these two chapters I shall use the term "Revelatory Eclogue" to refer to the seventeenth-century recasting of Virgil's



Fourth Eclogue, and its use as a generic formula. In this phrase the word 'eclogue' should be understood in a special sense, since it refers not necessarily to poems in eclogue-form, but to those which utilize the Virgilian formula.

i. The Problematic and the Process of History

In the previous chapter I discussed the way in which Marvell's problematic reflected the "dialectic" of history itself: how, in a sense, eschatology and his poetry have in common the features of the problematic. In this section I want to develop this comparison of the problematic with the historical process, and with the way in which that process was customarily interpreted by the individual Saint.

Earlier in the thesis I described that characteristic element of Marvell's poetry which I called the "Final Image": that point at the close of a Marvellian poem at which synthesis is achieved, completing the problematic. I also observed the way in which the problematic reflects that dialectic of history, whereby the eschatological design subsumes both evil and good to produce the final triumph of God. In this analogy, therefore, the end of the poem - the Final Image - corresponds to the end of history. Both evince a teleological movement: just as the problematic of the poem moves inevitably towards resolution in the Final Image, so history tends ineluctably towards the Last Day which is the resolution of eschatology. In this manner Marvell's procedure imitates the 'great Design' which is his major theme.

This correspondence between the Final Image and the universal End is evident, on the thematic level, in Appleton House, where the conclusion of the poem is an image of the end of the world. Similarly, the Final Image of the Horatian Ode looks to 'the last effect' of history, urging Cromwell to imitate the poem by acting in cognisance of that 'last effect'. Moreover, there the Final Image performed that synthesis

of the problematic, thereby exemplifying both its thematic and its structural significance. (In all poems there is, as one theorist has noted,<sup>1</sup> a problem of closure, to achieve a sense of completed design. But Marvell's poetry, concerned as it is with many aspects of 'ending', overcomes this problem almost as a matter of course.) As we shall see, there are many more examples of the correspondence of the two teleologies (historical and poetic) in the Final Images of Marvell's poems; whereby the poems themselves insist upon their reciprocal relationship with the nature of history.

In Marvell, this relationship was peculiarly "essential"; but to mimic the design of history in less thoroughgoing manner was not unusual in this period. One may compare Herbert, whose anthology The Church ends with a L'Envoy expressing his anticipation of the Second Coming; indeed, the last few poems of this anthology are all concerned with the Four Last Things. In this fashion the culmination of The Church reflects her imminent triumph at the Last Day, although at a relatively simple level. Vaughan's L'Envoy, at the close of Silex Scintillans, has a comparable function; and Spenser, a poet of similar interests in this field, ended his epic on the imprecation of that 'Sabaoths Day'.<sup>2</sup> Thus Marvell was not the only poet to acknowledge in his poetry the teleological impetus of his beliefs, although he implemented them to an unusual degree.

Similarly, although it may seem evident that all poetry exists "in time" - the time required to peruse it - this fact attains rather more importance than usual in Marvell's case. If this reading-time is, in little, an experience of the movement of Time towards its end, it may readily accrue other patterns proper to chiliasm.

In the description of these patterns, one may begin with Augustine's formulation of the relationship between the "time" of a poem and Christian time. The latter is 'linear' time: and considering this fact (and



man's apprehension of it), he expounded the comparison of a Psalm - or sacred poem - in the course of recital:

I am about to repeat a Psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation is extended over the whole; but when I have begun, how much soever of it I shall separate off into the past, is extended along my memory; and thus the life of this action of mine is divided between my memory as to what I have repeated, and expectation as to what I am about to repeat; but "consideration" is present with me, that through it what was future, may be conveyed over, so as to become past. Which the more it is done again and again, so much more the expectation being shortened, is the memory enlarged; till the whole expectation be at length exhausted, when that whole action being ended, shall have passed into memory. And this which takes place in the whole Psalm, the same takes place in each several portion of it, and each several syllable; the same holds in that longer action, whereof this Psalm may be a part; the same holds in the whole life of man, whereof all the actions of man are parts; the same holds through the whole age of the sons of men, whereof all the lives of men are parts.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, according to Augustine, the time-process of a poem is common to both its parts and its whole; and the same time-process characterizes the lives of men and the ages of the world ('the whole age of the sons of men'); men live in 'expectation' on three levels, of the end of a poem, of their own lives, and of the "historical" future. Doctrinally, of course, Augustine is expounding the futurist emphasis of Christianity, which "lives for what is not yet" - the afterlife, the end of the world. Eschatology above all provides the 'expectation' of the Christian, and seventeenth-century preachers enjoined that all actions should tend towards the service of that End.<sup>4</sup> The ending was, as it were, always present, and the present was always referred to the End. The difficulty of this position was not only the "interval" between the two (that which is between expectation and end), the features of which are unknown; but also the way in which the present and the End are related to one another in the overall design. That is, without first knowing the overall design, it is impossible to understand that interval of (as Augustine puts it) 'consideration' between 'expectation' and 'memory'.

This was by no means an abstract problem for the chiliasts of Marvell's time. Its topical features and political importance will be traced in the next chapter, but for the moment it is sufficient to understand the problem in essence. Augustine provides a clue to it when he says that the temporal process of a poem involves, for our perceptions, the elements of 'expectation' and 'memory', which mutually readjust as time proceeds; what is no longer in process falls into memory, what is yet to be exists in expectation, and what is present is at the point of moving from expectation into memory. The chiliast's apprehension of history followed exactly this pattern; but the pattern was not self-sufficient.

For to relate one's own consciousness of time to God's, was to try to adjust one's own pattern to the great Design of history. The historical design was an integrated entity, and like all such entities it subordinated the parts to the whole; to the point where the parts are not only under the control of the whole, but unintelligible without it. From one's own little portion of time one had to perceive that whole - and then one needed not only to fit the part into the whole, but also actively to shape that part in a manner required by the whole design; to fit the whole, as it were, into the part. The only way in which this project became feasible was if that which was unknown, the interval between expectation and memory, was revealed; if one fore-knew, and if one knew also the whole design as a design in which past, present, and future cohered. This project was an unavoidable issue for the chiliast; and it was feasible because what he needed to know had been 'revealed' in the Revelation.

As I have indicated, "interpretation" was the fundamental requirement of the chiliast; Revelation had displayed to him the whole course of history after Christ's advent, providing him with the whole Design. He was supposed to take it for his guide, to identify the events to which its prophecies referred, and thus to 'place' himself in history.



He had to be aware of that place, because he was enjoined to act towards the fulfilment of those prophecies which were as yet unfulfilled.

The problem of the "interval", as I have called it, supervened because God rationed one's ability to understand His Revelation. By nature apocalyptic is symbolic and secretive, and it is precisely for this reason that "interpretation" is so necessary. Thus, in the course of stating the imperative nature of interpretation, at least one seventeenth-century writer finds himself indicating its fundamental difficulty:

history of prophecy, consisteth of two relatives, the prophecy, and the accomplishment; and therefore the nature of such a work ought to be, that every prophecy of the Scripture be sorted with the event fulfilling the same, throughout the ages of the world; both for the better confirmation of faith, and for the better illumination of the Church touching those parts of prophecies which are yet unfulfilled: allowing nevertheless that latitude which is agreeable and familiar to divine prophecies; being of the nature of their Author [God], with whom a thousand years are but as one day; and therefore are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages; though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age.<sup>5</sup>

This is Bacon's manifesto for 'the history of prophecy'. That is, these prophecies must be understood, but it is difficult to judge the time of their 'accomplishment' because Revelation has a prophetic, not a human, sense of time. The fact that God does not distinguish between a 'day' and a 'thousand years' was taken from Scripture (2 Peter iii.8); and the use of the word 'day' in Revelation was understood to be elastic.<sup>6</sup> If one did not know the time ('age') to which<sup>a</sup> prophecy referred, then it was difficult to understand anything at all: for one does not know which prophecies can be consigned to 'memory' and which to 'expectation'.

The potential solution to this impasse was God Himself, who intended that His Revelation should become revelatory by stages. At appropriate moments He would provide 'signs' to enlighten men, 'For such is the order of God's enlightening his church, to dispense and

deal out by degrees his beam, so as our earthly eyes may best sustain it.'<sup>7</sup> Thus it was understood that, as time ran down towards its end, so God's revelation of truth increased, until, at the Last Day, there would begin the time of perfect knowledge.

Truth [revealed truth] indeed came once into the world with her divine master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then [under the Roman Church] arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon and his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all....nor ever shall do, till her Master's Second Coming; he shall bring together every joint and member.<sup>8</sup>

Here Milton is expounding the doctrine of progressive revelation, the perfection of man's knowledge which will be attained at the End. (As we saw in Chapter III, Marvell too had asserted this belief.) Thus the process of time and history is itself a progression in revelation; and the continuous readjustment of 'memory' and 'expectation', known and unknown, means that every historical event adds to the sum of knowledge. For these reasons the End reveals all, and only then is the whole Design truly understood. As Daniel xii. 9 put it, 'the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'<sup>9</sup>

To see how this 'progressive revelation' and interpretation affects Marvell's poetry, it is necessary to go back to Augustine's comparison of time and the psalm. For him the familiar temporal sequence of a poem known by heart is a model of the omnipresent knowledge of God:

Certainly, if there be a mind gifted with such knowledge and foreknowledge, as to know all things past and to come, as I know one well-known Psalm, truly that mind is passing wonderful, and fearfully amazing; in that nothing past, nothing to come in after-ages, is any more hidden from him, than when I sung that Psalm, was hidden from me what, and how much of it had passed away from the beginning, what, and how much there remained unto the end.<sup>10</sup>



That is, perfection of knowledge is absolutely related to the perception of the whole design, whether it be of a poem or of history. As a divine expressed it in 1649, men did not understand the providence in current events because 'we cannot see the whole frame of things, how sundry particular events in a mutuall relation do concur to make up the beautie of the whole.'<sup>11</sup> Only the End of history reveals the shape of history.

Similarly, on the analogy of the poem, the 'beauty of the whole' is not evident until the poem is known, has been read to its end - as I have already indicated; integrity of design is common to both poems and history, and in both cases the End is the moment when all is revealed. This correspondence between the two 'Designs' becomes important in Marvell's case, because of the correspondence in his poetry between the Final Image and the universal End.

Moreover, until the moment of the Final Image the problematic remains unresolved, just as history remains unresolved until the End; and this involves also the reflection that the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the problematic do not become 'beautiful' - understood and solved - until the Final Image has so resolved them. In fact, the Final Image is decisive in a Marvellian poem not only because it is resolving and conclusive, but also because (like the universal End) it 'reveals' what has gone before.

At the end of any poem, it has been noted, 'we should be able to re-experience the entire work'.<sup>12</sup> In our experience of a Marvellian poem, the process is more complicated. If one has apprehended the nature of the problematic, the first reading involves the understanding of ambiguities and antitheses: and as one progresses through the poem one follows their mutual readjustments until, in the Final Image, the pattern is complete. That is, throughout one's reading one is constantly retaining and readjusting elements because the problematic demands it;

just as, in the experience of history, 'interpretation' constantly retains and readjusts the relationship between prophecy and event. Similarly, if one is familiar with the problematic one is aware that this process of interpretation will be resolved by the Final Image - that the progressive revelation of the poem will be perfected by its End. Equally, like the chiliast, one reads in expectation of that end; an expectation as sharp, because as sure of resolution. The tension generated by the unresolved antitheses of the problematic, like the antitheses of history, is relieved only by the End.

Just as important, because antecedent to this process, is the assumption that it is participatory. Just as the chiliast is required to understand and explicate prophecy - prophecy is otherwise useless as guidance - so the problematic requires of the reader a greater involvement in the "structuring" of a poem than is normal; for the problematic is, equally, useless as a key to the poem if the key is not utilised. Without it Marvell's poems display that mystery which has puzzled so many of their readers, and produced such varied interpretations. (As many as Revelation spawned, no doubt.)

The problematic is particularly demanding of this "participation" because it is an arcane procedure. But once its pattern is apprehended it operates as a key, and the poem is "revealed" so that 'nothing...is...hidden'. These features, of cryptogram and revelation, relate the problematic to prophecy on another level; for prophecy is a paradoxical quantity, at once secret and revelatory.<sup>13</sup>

For the chiliast who was also a poet, the relationship between poetry and prophecy could be founded upon several traditional ideas about the function of a poet. In many ways

The Puritans were heirs to the humanist tradition.... But the poets especially seized on the ancient notion that poetry had something of divinity in it too. Here conventions of artistic inspiration might be reconciled with the Calvinist idea of being called, and the belief that God could speak through man. Christian poets, with discipline and grace, might serve the revelation of the truth.<sup>14</sup>



Thus poetry of a prophetic type was itself a form of activism, directly related - as all such activism had to be - to the interpretation of God's revealed will. And a certain apocalyptic "secrecy" was proper to it, as an especial form of that religious decorum which Marvell celebrated in his poem on Paradise Lost - 'things divine thou treat'st of in such state/ As them preserves, and thee, inviolate' (33-34).

Moreover, the Renaissance idea that the poet imitated God in so far as he was a "creator", to which Marvell refers in the same poem,<sup>15</sup> had an especial emphasis for the chiliast; in that (as Bacon indicated above) God was the 'Author' of Revelation and thus the model for all prophetic poetry.

In an age when so many men - learned and otherwise - were attempting with urgency and enthusiasm to "reveal" the Revelation - under titles like Clavis Apocalyptica, The Key of the Revelation and A Revelation of the Revelation - it is understandable that Marvell should have appropriated the design of history in revelatio. It has been noted that the appeal of the Hebraic view of history, upon which Protestant eschatology was based, was that it 'showed an all-absorbing interest in the significance and place of each event within great patterns'.<sup>16</sup> This eschatological procedure - to retain the sense of a real, individual event within a grand supertemporal scheme - is the basis of the formal relationship of the problematic to the historical process; just as "expectation", the emotional relationship of men to the Last Day, has a counterpart in the poetic impetus towards the Final Image. The processes of revelation provide the prophetic structure of Marvell's poetry.

## ii. Renovation

The pattern of history in the Latter Days is of a quite specific kind. According to Revelation, it falls into two phases - 'desolation' and 'renovation'; and it is the purpose of this section to discuss

these phases, and to introduce the manner in which they appear in Marvell's poetry.

The phase of 'desolation' is itself realized in three stages. The first consists of the tribulations of the faithful while, in the Latter-Day period, the world labours under domination by Antichrist. The 'desolation' of the Latter Days was described by Christ in Matthew xxiv. 3-14:

The disciples came unto him, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered.... Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations...And then shall many...betray one another...And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many...iniquity shall abound...But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

At this point appears 'the abomination of desolation' (vs. 15) and 'great tribulation' (vs. 21), after which Christ will come (vs. 30). The second stage involves the destruction of Antichrist and of the Scarlet Whore, preliminary to the establishment of Christ's Kingdom (Rev. 17f). The third form of desolation concerns the destruction of the earth itself: detailed in Isaiah xxiv., where, as we have seen, the 'Lord maketh the earth empty' and turns it upside down. 'Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate...In the city is left desolation' (vs. 6, 12).<sup>17</sup>

But this desolation comes upon the earth only so that the earth may be "made new":

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I.... saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven....And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

(Revelation xxi. 1-5)



This renovation - the 'new heaven and new earth' - is the goal of history as chiliasts saw it. Before it can be attained 'the first heaven and the first earth' must 'pass away' in the purgation of all things at the Last Day. In this fashion the pattern of desolatio et renovatio emerges, for it is necessary that desolation - the process of purgation - should precede renovation. Therefore the Geneva Bible glosses the passage from Revelation xxi:

All things shalbe renued and restored into the most excellent and perfect estate, and therefore the day of resurrection is called, The day of restauration of all things, Act. 5.21....For all things shalbe purged from their corruption, and the faithful shall enter into heauen.

The 'desolation' of the earth is, then, a 'purgation', from which emerges that renovation whereby 'all things shalbe renued and restored.'

For this reason the desolatio is (like the Fortunate Fall) a fortunate process, because it produces the conditions necessary for renovatio.

This fortunate character of the desolatio is true even of its effects on the faithful. While the desolation was in progress - during the Latter Days - their sufferings were manifold, for during this period

there is nothing for true believers but to steel themselves for the steadily worsening blows to come, making sure that, whatever happens, they are not lured back into the fold of Antichrist. Thus by trials and persecutions the chosen people undergoes purification.<sup>18</sup>

Such was Luther's warning to the denizens of the "true religion", of their imminent trials: those which, during the Seventeenth Century, were believed to be already operative.<sup>19</sup> The consoling point, however, was that by this desolatio the true Church would 'undergo purification'. Hence both the true Church and the earth itself experience, as a result of desolation, that purgation which allows of their renovation.

The third kind of desolatio was Christ's extirpation of Antichrist at the Last Day, the necessary prelude to the establishment of His Kingdom. This was the moment eagerly awaited by His Saints:

come [O Lord] to blast Antichrist, and to consume that Man of Sinne and so make way for the other degree of thy comming....that there may be golden times indeed; as surely then they will be.<sup>20</sup>

This, the destruction of evil for all time and guarantee of the 'golden times' of renovation, was the most obviously fortunate aspect of desolation. Up to that moment the faithful suffered their own desolation under those Latter-Day misfortunes, which were grim indeed.

The general signs [of the End] are....false prophets, false Christs, wars, earthquakes, persecutions, pestilence, famine, and the gradual decay of faith and charity, down to the very day itself.<sup>21</sup>

It was these latter-day characteristics that inspired those descriptions, to which I referred in an earlier chapter, of contemporary history as a 'tragedy'. Nevertheless, these tribulations were borne with hope, since they were 'signs of the End' and therefore really promises of imminent renovatio. Desolation was, as it were, the forerunner of renovation.

The moralitas of this pattern was obvious: that without desolation there could be no renovation, and without destruction no possibility of perfection. It was this moralitas that impressed itself upon the minds of chiliasts, and had far-reaching repercussions.

Their constant call was for 'reformation': and Reformation - of both churches and nations - was in fact a form of the renovation-desolation pattern. For Parliamentary divines in the 1640s it was evident that the Civil War was fought to reform both the monarchy and the Anglican Church, corrupted as it was by the Laudian heresy of Arminianism. For radicals in the Army, it was fought to 'desolate' Antichrist in the person of 'that Man of Blood', the King, and his accomplices.<sup>22</sup> In both cases - and they tended to overlap - the goal was a renovatio of the Elect Nation; the renovation-desolation pattern was one with national significance at this time.



Consequently, a prominent Parliamentary divine, Stephen Marshall, chose to call one of his sermons of this period Reformation and Desolation: a sermon in which (like many of his colleagues) he called for the purging and purification of the Elect Nation by Parliament, her champion.<sup>23</sup> High on the list for this desolation was the source of the national sin, the episcopal establishment who had arrested reformation in the true Church.<sup>24</sup> And the same principle operated in the international sphere. John Owen, for example - a divine close to Cromwell's heart - called for the 'Shaking' or desolation of the nations, without which their renovation on truly Christian lines would be impossible.<sup>25</sup>

Since, in England, the renovatio of the nation was to be achieved by the Civil War, that conflict was viewed as a purging 'desolation' after which the Godly Nation might be built.<sup>26</sup> However, its desolating character was inevitably painful, falling into the category of a latter-day 'tribulation'. Therefore Marshall, speaking to the House of Commons in 1643, urged them to understand the War in its true context. Sometimes, he suggested,

all things are set as if there would be a lengthening out of these unnatural Wars [both here and on the Continent], untill the Cities and Countries are utterly spoiled, and the Land wasted without inhabitant.<sup>27</sup>

Marshall views the War as of a piece with the Thirty Years' War on the Continent, which was itself understood as an eschatological conflict.<sup>28</sup> Both were Latter-Day wars of the type prophesied in Matthew. But, as he explains, these ravaging wars are 'signs of the end', and their devastation is the effect of 'some one or more of these seven vialls' of Wrath (Rev. xv.): all of which contribute to the destruction of Antichrist, and thus foreshadow the happy End.<sup>29</sup> In this manner, the eschatological theme of desolatio et renovatio became the model for diagnoses of contemporary events. The pattern, indeed, was a habit of thought, and was brought to refer to various orders of things by a process of

analogy: of which more in a moment.

The national significance of this pattern is reflected in Marvell's Cromwell poems. In the Ode, the episcopal establishment (and the national sin it represented) was purged when Cromwell the destroyer its 'Temples rent'; there also Cromwell's 'ruine' of the kingdom 'cast it into another Mold', in which renovation could shape itself; similarly, a contemporary describing the dissolution and consequent renovation of the world said that the desolatio acted 'to purge out the dross.... and then cast the Mass again into a new and better Mould'.<sup>30</sup> Also in the Ode, the Caput of Charles' execution, horrible in itself, foreshadows England's 'happy Fate'. In the First Anniversary, however, the emphases are altered. Cromwell, a "ruiner" or desolator in the Ode, here becomes a builder, not only of a new Commonwealth, but also of the new 'Temple' (87f, 33). Thus Marvell celebrates the 'pulling down, and....erecting New' (247) - the desolating and renovating - of the State in England: the English 'rased and rebuilt their State' (352). In this fashion the First Anniversary reflects both the reformation of religion and the renovation of the state, which Marvell - amongst others - hoped that the Protectorate would achieve.

The culmination of this idea appears in the last couplet of the poem, where Cromwell is characterized as a 'healer'. He 'as the Angel of our Commonweal,/ Troubling the Waters, yearly mak'st them Heal'. In this Final Image Cromwell, having become in Marvell's eyes the 'great Captain' who 'Does with himself all that is good revive' (321-4), is the 'Angel' of renovation or 'healing' to the nation. So to do, he must of course first 'trouble' (purge and reform) it, in imitation of the fortunate desolation. Since this compound - of desolatio et renovatio - was characteristic of Puritan political thought at this time, it is not surprising to learn that here Marvell is recasting a phrase used by Cromwell himself.<sup>31</sup> Marvell's version, however, follows a biblical



source which clarifies his message:

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool,  
and troubled the water; whosoever then first, after the  
troubling of the water, stepped in was made whole of  
whatever disease he had.

(John v.4)

This 'troubled' water causes the renovation - restoration - of corrupted bodies, making them 'whole'; similarly, Cromwell's 'troubling' of the national waters would restore the corrupt "body politic" of England, riven as she was by faction.

Not only was it understood that 'God's people, as well as worldlings, have their time to fish in troubled waters',<sup>32</sup> to undergo purification by tribulation; but Marvell himself declared that

The Common Wealth doth by its losses grow;  
And, like its own Seas, only Ebbs to flow.  
Besides that very Agitation laves,  
And purges out the corruptible waves.

(The Character of Holland,  
131-4)

This is that renovation by purgation intimated by the First Anniversary, written in the following year; where the turbulence of faction described earlier in the poem is utilised by Cromwell in the fortunate process of renovatio.

As I have indicated earlier, the notion of renovation - like that of desolation - existed on several levels. At the End it possessed three aspects: the 'new heavens and new earth' referred to the renovation of the world, the resurrection of men's bodies, and their spiritual "recreation" into the Kingdom of Christ - which embraces also the perfection of men's knowledge of God.<sup>33</sup> All these aspects of renovation could be anticipated by the Saints before the Last Day, in active form<sup>34</sup> - not only in political, religious, and scientific attempts at renovatio,<sup>35</sup> but also in their own spiritual lives.

For man, like Nature, had been left by the Fall in a depraved state, and in order to become a true Saint an individual had to purge

that depravity by the process of 'Conversion'. This spiritual Conversion involved the "death" of the natural man and the "birth" of the 'new' man; the natural man must come to abhor his own sin and to loathe his own unworthiness, to the point where his personality lies in ruins. Only then does God vouchsafe His grace, and 're-create' him.<sup>36</sup> The transformation of the natural man into the new man, by means of destruction and re-creation, is analogous to the transformation of the old earth into the new by desolatio et renovatio. It is, in Milton's phrase, a 'paradise within',<sup>37</sup> attained by the combination of 'Mortification, or purging out corruption; and Vivification',<sup>38</sup> and in this sense it also anticipated the resurrection of the End.

This ontological experience of the desolatio-renovatio pattern defines the experience of Marvell's Coronet. First, it should be remembered that Marvell too believed in the corrupt nature of man, and also in the 'Conversion' which re-created that man into 'the new creature'.<sup>39</sup> In The Coronet Marvell imitates the process whereby the regenerated man constantly monitors his own spiritual condition,<sup>40</sup> guarding against the incursions of the 'natural man'. When Marvell the shepherd, or 'natural man', turns from profane to sacred poetry (from the natural to the spiritual), he attempts to re-create Christ's crown of thorns; to transform it into a chaplet of flowers by means of his poetry. Detecting in these flowers the natural man's desire for 'Fame and Interest', he proffers the corrupted garland to his Saviour: suggesting that He might renovate the garland by removing its 'serpent', or, if that proves impossible (sin being so recalcitrant), He might desolate it instead:

Or shatter too with him my curious frame:  
And let these wither, so that he may die,  
Though set with Skill and chosen out with Care.  
That they, while Thou on both their Spoils dost tread,  
May crown thy Feet, that could not crown thy Head.

(11.22-26)



Here Marvell's own "creation", the poetic garland produced by 'Skill' and 'Care', is offered up for destruction; and its 'curious frame' is also his own ingenious and corrupted nature, that which created it. This Final Image is eschatological, alluding to Christ in majestate as he treads upon the serpent-Dragon at the end of time. That iconography, of Christ treading the Dragon, symbolizes His victory in the eschaton over the principle of evil; it was derived ultimately from Genesis,<sup>41</sup> and was indeed a traditional image for centuries.<sup>42</sup> In this period, it was re-invoked with new vigour, that 'Christ shall reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet' (I. Cor. xv. 25);<sup>43</sup> for the triumph of His Kingdom was that 'of Crowning him, of putting all things under his feet'.<sup>44</sup> So, here, Christ 'treads' on the 'Serpent' of Marvell's sin and on his poem - they are 'put under his feet'; and, equally, they 'crown' His feet. Hereby Marvell recalls the 'treading' of evil and 'crowning' of good at the eschaton. Thus the desolation of evil at the eschaton is here related to Christ's extirpation of the serpent from another order of creation, the poem. So to extirpate the serpent from the garland may require, as the poet himself recognises, that He 'shatter too with him my curious frame' - that He desolate the garland itself for its purification; just as, at the End, the earth will be purged only by its destruction. Similarly, as the 'curious frame' refers also to his own person, the poet acknowledges also that he, the author of the garland, is the true culprit and that the natural man in him requires purgation at the same time; there is a direct relationship between the poem and the poet not only in creative terms, but in destruction also. Desolation is the only mode of transformation for the natural man, and so the poem too is submitted to the pattern of desolatio et renovatio.

Marvell's Final Image in this poem again invokes a correspondence between the end of the poem and the end of time: and that correspondence

is emphasized on several levels, which further relate the poet's inner experience to the renovatory pattern. First, in rejecting his own ingenious poem and replacing it by a traditional religious icon of majestas, Marvell thus abrogates his sin of pride in his individual achievement: an original poem is abandoned for a universal symbol. Moreover, in attempting to 'crown' Christ at all - the project of the poem - Marvell was obeying a chiliast injunction, which was 'to Crowne Christ in our owne hearts, to set up his Kingdome within our selves.'<sup>45</sup> For, as I noted above, the eschatological was an internal as well as an external struggle; and the Kingdom was both a spiritual reality within the believer and an external entity.<sup>46</sup> The renovation that occurred within the believer was thus the setting up of the eschatological kingdom within him - 'the Kingdome of God is within you, to set it up in our hearts.'<sup>47</sup> Here, Marvell finds that the true way to 'crown' Christ - to create His Kingdom within oneself - is to 'crown [His] feet'; thereby humiliating oneself, foreshadowing the eschaton, aiming for renovation, and putting oneself amongst the spoils that He treads at the End. In this manner Marvell obeys the internal moralitas of Christ's final victory, 'that [we may]....lay down our reason, lay down our goods, lay down all we have at the feet of God.'<sup>48</sup> By subjecting his poem and himself to this imperative, Marvell is applying to his own case the axiom that the believer's internal experience is an aspect of the eschatological struggle; and, in particular, that the individual undergoes the universal pattern of desolatio et renovatio.

This "internal" experience of the pattern is a feature of several other lyrics in Marvell's oeuvre, which I shall be discussing in subsequent chapters. It is for him, as for other chiliasts, a habit of mind. For the moment, I would like briefly to notice the appearance of this motif in Appleton House, in which - as I shall show in the next chapter - renovatio is a major theme.



As Marvell emerges from his 'sanctuary' in the wood, the desolation of War and flood has passed, and the landscape appears "renewed":

For now the Waves are fal'n and dried,  
 And now the Meadows fresher dyed,  
 Whose Grass, with moister colour dashed,  
 Seems as green Silks but newly washed,  
 No Serpent new or Crocodile  
 Remains behind our little Nile,  
 Unless itself you will mistake,  
 Among these Meads the only Snake.

(LXXIX)

Here everything is more vivid than before, and cleaner: 'fresher', 'moister', 'newly washed'. After the desolation has 'rased' the landscape (LVI-LVII) by the flood of Civil War and the depredation of faction, this little renovatio ensues upon the purged 'Table rase and pure' of England. For Marvell, as for many other Puritans, the Civil War had purged the land, even at the price of desolating England's 'Garden'.

Accordingly, there is 'No serpent new' here: as Marvell's nineteenth-century editor suggested, this line provides an implicit contrast with the 'old Serpent'.<sup>49</sup> In fact the significance of this line is eschatological, anticipating the greater renovatio when the 'old Serpent' (Satan) will be destroyed for ever. This stanza is a rehearsal for that consummation of renovation; for it corresponds to that moment in the eschaton when, as here, the Deluge recedes, and 'The sea.....shall.....thence descend into hollownesse': 'the Waves are fal'n and dried'. Then ensues 'a prodigious drought'<sup>50</sup> - the 'Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone' of stanza LXXXVI: when the world suffers its final desolation. The purgation of a nation represents only a minor renovatio. But, as we shall see, the theme of renovation is a pervasive one in this poem.

At this point it is sufficient to note that in the poetry of Marvell, as in contemporary thought, desolatio et renovatio was a salient trope. When one contemplated these, the Latter Days, one

saw in tribulation the figure of hope, in corruption the capacity for reformation, and in devastation the promise of renovation.

### iii. The Renovated World and the Golden Age

The world "made new" was the goal of history, the fulfilment of the eschatological design.

God goes by many steps to the performance of his great Promises....And the last and full performance shall be, when all things shall be new indeed, that is, when there shall be "a new Heaven, and a new Earth".<sup>51</sup>

The New Jerusalem and the renovation of the end are the perfecting of the providential plan, 'the last and full performance' of man's redemption. In Milton's words, it is when 'our bliss/ Full and perfect is'.

This 'new heaven and new earth' is the regnum Christi, more important than His Incarnation - just as His Coming at the end outweighs, as I mentioned, His first advent - because of its nature as the consummation of His salvatory role.

His kingdom of grace indeed, which is also called the kingdom of heaven, began with his first advent....but his kingdom of glory will not commence till his second advent.<sup>52</sup>

As Milton explains here, the regnum Christi reveals that aspect of His nature which is as yet unknown, His kingship and His 'glory'; it is the triumph of His Church, and the time when the Saints will inherit the earth.<sup>53</sup>

The most important aspect of this culmination was that it united heaven and earth, dissolving the former distinction. 'Earth be chang'd to heav'n, and heav'n to earth,/ One kingdom, joy and union without end' (PL. VII. 161-2). This union, the promise of Revelation xi. 15, is also that promised to Adam in Paradise Lost. For this paradise, Eden was well lost, since it is 'far happier': here God will



....reward  
 His faithful, and receive them into bliss,  
 Whether in heav'n or earth; for then the earth  
 Shall all be a Paradise, far happier place  
 Than this of Eden, and far happier days.

(PL. XII. 461f.)

This distinction between the first paradise and the last is based precisely upon the fact that there man will find his bliss 'whether in heav'n or earth'; since this is indeed a 'far happier' state than the original paradise, the final renovatio is not to be confused with the Edenic paradise. It is not a return, but a new establishment. It has been noted that such emphasis upon renovation is the basis of Milton's connection with the chiliastic attitude: and that indeed it is the "cornerstone" of all Christian prophecy.<sup>54</sup>

It was not lost on chiliasts of this period that this great renovatio had a counterpart in classical "prophecies" of the Golden Age. As I have already indicated, the classical concept of a Golden Age (past or future) possessed great similarity in emotional appeal to seventeenth-century hopes of the New Jerusalem: chiliasts themselves expressed the analogy. Richard Sibbes, for example, characterized the renovatio as 'golden times',<sup>55</sup> and Milton envisaged the time when

The World shall burn, and from her ashes spring  
 New heav'n and earth, wherein the just shall dwell,  
 And after all their tribulations long  
 See golden days.

(PL. III. 334f.)

Similarly, meditating upon the promise of 'perfect bliss' in his Nativity Ode, he recalled the 'age of gold' (135).

In an iron age of civil war, when yet one could - like Milton - live in hope of the rise of a new order from the ruins,<sup>56</sup> the concept of a golden age was especially potent. In emotional appeal, however, the New Jerusalem outstripped the classical golden age: for the latter was a temporary state, controlled by a cyclical pattern of improvement and degeneration, while the renovatio was to be a permanent haven for

man. Thus the Golden Age was a metaphor, not an equivalent, for the renovatio; a fact that had, as we shall see, certain literary consequences.

#### iv. The Revelatory Eclogue

For Christians from the Middle Ages onwards, the most influential classical statement of the Golden Age was Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. The nature of its influence, the form it assumed for the Reformation, and its effect upon the literature of this period, are the subjects of this section.

The fourth of Virgil's Eclogues is a poem written in expectation of the birth of a child to the Consul Pollio. The child - envisaged as a boy - is to be born into the age of Augustus, a time of peace and prosperity in the Roman Empire: and this timing prompts Virgil to speculate that this birth signals the return of the Golden Age, when Astraea - the goddess of Justice - will return to the earth. By the birth of the miraculous child, Virgil suggests, the earth will be inspired to lavish her bounty upon mankind, nature will be transformed to a paradisaal state, men will live in harmony and without the necessity for toil, and as the child grows to adulthood all sin will be eradicated. Hence the Fourth Eclogue was a prophecy, a vision of transformation.

It was a tenet, accepted early in the history of Christian thought, that the pagans had received intimations of the true faith, albeit in imperfect form, which the birth of Christ had confirmed and revealed: thus creating the true faith and displacing the "imperfect" religions.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, it was understood that these intimations of the truth were not confined to the pagan religions, but had been expressed by their literature also.<sup>58</sup> It was, then, inevitable that when the Fathers examined Virgil's prophecy of a Golden Age precipitated by the birth of a miraculous child - finding there parallels with Isaiah's Messianic statements - they interpreted the Fourth Eclogue as a pagan



prophecy of the Saviour, who had been born in the Augustan age.

There is none other at all, save the Lord Christ, to whom the human race can say: "Under Thy guidance, whatso traces remain of our old wickedness, once done away, shall free the earth of never- ceasing fear" [Ecl. iv. 13-14]. Virgil confessed to adopting this thought from the Cumaean, that is, the Sibylline, prophecy, and perhaps that seer too had had some message to her spirit about the only Saviour, which she had of necessity to confess.<sup>59</sup>

As pagan glimpses of the true God, the Sibylline prophecies possessed some standing with the Fathers:<sup>60</sup> so when Virgil referred to 'Ultima Cumaei....carminis aetas' (Ecl. iv. 4) he had placed his prophecy within an authoritative pagan tradition, which was also acceptable to Christian thought. The christianization of Virgil (embracing also his Aeneid) took such hold that by the Middle Ages the Fourth Eclogue was generally assumed to <sup>be</sup> a prophecy of the Messiah.<sup>61</sup> The appeal of this tradition was doubtless due to the fact that it brought the foremost Latin poet,<sup>62</sup> a holy pagan, into the Christian fold - he could be admired with good conscience.

Another strong tradition confirmed this christianization of the Eclogue; for it was understood that the Augustan Pax had created those conditions on earth proper to the advent of the 'Prince of Peace'.<sup>63</sup>

The tradition ran that Rome had performed a providential role

as a historical preparation for the birth of Christ, a tradition....which had been elaborated....in adaptations by Christian apologists, particularly Eusebius and Lactantius, of pagan imperial themes. The age of Augustus was the supreme example of a world united and at peace under the Roman Empire, and to that age had also belonged the supreme honour of witnessing the birth of Christ....Virgil's Aeneid, with its glorification of Augustus, thus became a semi-sacred poem glorifying the historical framework of the Saviour's birth.<sup>64</sup>

This Christian reputation of Virgil, as the poet who had celebrated the Augustan Pax, underpinned the Messianic interpretation of the Fourth Eclogue, and raised Virgil to the status of the pre-eminent classical prophetic poet.

By this means his description of the Golden Age was assimilated to Christian purposes: an assimilation on the basis of which the Golden Age was to become a motif of some importance in the English Reformation.<sup>65</sup> The influence of Virgil's Eclogue, as elaborated by mediaeval thinkers, upon European imperialism and the age of Elizabeth has been traced by Frances Yates.<sup>66</sup> As her study reveals, the theme of the classical Golden Age provided a political mythology for the Tudor regime: the heroine of which was Elizabeth I, in the guise of Virgil's Astraea.

For my present purpose, the most important point of this relationship is the Elizabethan use of Astraea as a figure of Protestant Reformation. Astraea and Elizabeth were likened because Astraea was an appropriate figure for Elizabeth's role as the 'Christian emperor', a role which Foxe affixed to the English Reformation and the Latter Days (cf. Ch. II, supra.) 'Elizabethan Protestantism claim(ed) to have restored a golden age of pure imperial religion',<sup>67</sup> a claim substantiated by Foxe's account of eschatology.<sup>68</sup> Through his characterization of the Protestant 'Christian Emperor' in the Latter Days, this cluster of ideas influenced the theocratic thought of the Seventeenth Century. By this complicated progression - from the Fathers to Elizabethan propaganda and Foxe's influential vision of latter-day Reformation - Virgil's Fourth Eclogue became in this period a "prophecy" of the Golden Age of reformed religion in England.

By the 1640s, however, the Stuarts had (in the eyes of most Puritans concerned with political theory) discredited the notion of a Christian Emperor; it was enshrined in the memory of Elizabeth, never more to be.<sup>69</sup> But this modification in Puritan thought did not see the demise of Virgil's influence - it simply redefined that influence. It was acknowledged by Puritan thinkers that the pagans had received intimations of Christian truth,<sup>70</sup> and Virgil was still amongst the most respected of them:<sup>71</sup> retaining his reputation as a witness of the Saviour and



the classical "Prophet".<sup>72</sup> But his golden age could no longer be understood as a reflection of the Reformed England, since - as far as Puritans were concerned - that Reformation remained incomplete as long as the episcopal power remained to vitiate it. On the other hand, what Virgil's golden age could suitably reflect was that moment of universal renovation which was their expectation.

This identification of Virgil's golden age with the 'new earth' had also received patristic sanction. A Father who had surveyed and explicated the pagan 'revelation' of Christian truth, Lactantius, had also exerted his influence upon the Christian imperial tradition and the consequent formulation of Elizabeth as Astraea, the Protestant Emperor.<sup>73</sup> His Divine Institutes were well-known in the Seventeenth Century, and frequently quoted by Milton.<sup>74</sup> In this work, Lactantius had interpreted Virgil's Eclogue as a prophecy of not (or not primarily) the First Advent, but of the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>75</sup> He based this interpretation upon a comparison between Virgil and his source, the Sibyl:

The Son of the Most High and Mighty God will come, therefore, to judge the living and the dead. The Sibyl bears witness to this....  
When He shall have destroyed injustice and made the great judgment and restored to life those who were just from the beginning, He will stay among men for a thousand years and will rule them with most just dominion.  
Another Sibyl in her rage and incantation proclaims this....<sup>76</sup>

Describing here Sibylline predictions of the Judgement, Lactantius emphasizes the role of Christ as the just Judge, who 'destroys injustice' and brings to earth that pure quality of Justice which it has never known before. His rule is the 'just dominion'. Of course, Christ as the Sun of Righteousness or Sol Iustitiae (Malachi iv. 2) was his especial role at the Second Coming; Justice was God's gift to man at the Last Day, the moment when He revealed the nature and triumph of His plan - justifying, as it were, Himself.

This is the day [the Last Day] that must make good that

great attribute of God, his Justice; that must reconcile those unanswerable doubts which torment the wisest understandings, and reduce those seeming inequalities, and respective distributions in this world, to an equality and recompensive Justice in the next.<sup>77</sup>

Thus the Kingdom of Christ is one of Justice, and the New Jerusalem is the habitation of the just. Returning to Lactantius, it is necessary to understand that he labours this point because it is the vital connection between the Second Coming and the Astraeian motif in Virgil's Eclogue; Astraea is the goddess of Justice. When she left the earth, Justice went with her, and when she returns, the earth regains that quality of Justice which is an attribute of the golden age. This was the significance of Virgil's statement, that with the birth of the miraculous child the world sees the return of Astraea - 'Iam redit Virgo'.

Justice is not the sole connection between the return of Astraea and the Second Coming. Of the latter Psalm lxxxv. was understood to prophesy,<sup>78</sup> foretelling that 'righteousness and peace have kissed each other....and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.' (10-11). Here the Coming was characterized by the four virtues of God; the paramount pair was 'righteousness (Justice) and peace', as a related prophecy in Isaiah shows:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called....The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end....upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. (ix. 6-7)

Christ at the Judgement was not only the Sol Iustitiae but also the Prince of Peace; and it was to this combination that Psalm lxxxv referred. Similarly, in the Eclogue the return of Astraea brings peace to the war-torn world (the Augustan Pax, in effect); signifying the same combination of 'righteousness and peace'. By this means she



establishes the golden age on earth; by the same means Christ inaugurates the 'new earth'. Virgil's golden age and the 'new earth' thus correspond not only in concept, but also in the means whereby the age of glory is brought into being.

Therefore Lactantius cites, as a description of the 'new earth', Virgil's vision of the golden age in the Eclogue. Looking forward to the time when 'the earth is subjected to God', he quotes lines 38-41 of the poem, noting that 'The poet spoke these things according to the songs of the Cumaean Sibyl.'<sup>79</sup> For him Virgil's Eclogue was a vision of the renovated world after the Second Coming.

He does, of course, mention that to Virgil this golden age was a recrudescence of the past, but he argues that this idea was the product of pagan ignorance concerning Christian truth. It is, he says, only at the Second Coming that the 'golden age' will appear:

Then, there will take place those things which the poets said happened in the golden times when Saturn was reigning. Their error arose from this, because the prophets [like the Sibyl] generally give out and pronounce the happenings of the future as though they were already finished. Visions were presented to their eyes by the Divine Spirit, and they saw those as though they were happening and taking place within the bounds of their sight, as it were. When rumour had carried their prophecies abroad little by little, since those who were not initiated to the revelation did not know to what purpose they were spoken, they thought that all those things had been completed in past ages; but, certainly, these things could not have taken place and been completed under the reign of man.<sup>80</sup>

This is the rationale behind Lactantius' interpretation of Virgil's Eclogue, as a vision of the 'new earth': in the service of which he quotes almost the whole poem as if it were a graphic record of the final renovation. In conclusion, what we gather from Lactantius is what Christian thought took up with enthusiasm at the appropriate point: that the golden age is the renovation; that Virgil's prophecy is not only Messianic but should be transposed into the future, to refer to the Second Coming; that the End is distinguished by the quality of

Justice, Astraea's attribute; and that, although Virgil himself did not understand the true import of what he was saying, he was nevertheless a valid prophet for Christians.

At this point, it is possible to understand the way in which the Eclogue became a model for a certain type of poem in the Seventeenth Century. The influence of Lactantius' interpretation upon the Puritan consciousness is evident in the work of Milton, who was familiar with Lactantius' work and who adopted the latter's reading of the Eclogue.<sup>81</sup>

It has long been recognised that his Nativity Ode is indebted to Virgil's Eclogue, and that it overtly "redefines" Virgil's golden age to refer to man's 'full and perfect bliss' after the Second Coming. This quite self-conscious evocation of Virgil was noted first by E.K. Rand, who explains its motive:

An age of peace has dawned, yet not the Golden Age; it is not the time for Virgil's prophecy....[that] must wait until the Judgment Day....We have here a rare and beautiful kind of imitation. The poet starts with a classical model; he means us to see this; his act is a challenge. To match the Pagan's Messianic prophecy, he<sup>82</sup> has written a pastoral Birth Song for the real Messiah.

Milton has recast Virgil's Eclogue as a model for his Ode; but, more important, he has transposed the golden age which Virgil associates with the child's birth into the renovation achieved by the Second Coming. He has put distance between the birth and the renovation because of the tradition that, although Christ's birth brought a better dispensation, only His return will achieve the renovation. Milton distinguishes between these two orders in the orthodox fashion: the Incarnation represents amelioration and the order of grace, and the Second Coming inaugurates the permanently blissful state which is the consummation of grace.<sup>83</sup>

Milton makes the distinction very deliberately in the Ode itself.

Time will run back and fetch the age of gold,  
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mold,  
....



Yea, Truth and Justice then  
Will down return to men.

(Nativity Ode, xiv, xv)

Here Milton indicates his 'golden age' model, and recalls Psalm lxxxv ('Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.'),<sup>84</sup> proclaiming the return of 'Justice'. Then he explicitly retrieves this vision from the time of Incarnation, and redispenses it at the time of the Second Advent.

But wisest Fate says no,  
This must not yet be so;  
....first, to those ychained in sleep,  
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.

(xvi)

Here, as one critic has noted, 'the fancy conceives [the age of Peace] not as Time turned back but Time turned forward.'<sup>85</sup> Milton's celebration of the Incarnation looks to its fulfilment in the true age of gold, the 'new earth' that follows Judgement. Moreover, in the Nativity Ode Milton imitates the Augustan Pax in terms of the reign of the Prince of Peace, Christ:<sup>86</sup> thus rendering the combination of Peace and Justice proper to this vision.

The same Puritan version of these ideas can be found elsewhere in Milton's work. Since, as I have suggested, the 'golden age' of renovation was a vision which acted upon the national life, it is not surprising to find that the return of Justice or 'righteousness' figures also in his metrical versions of the Psalms. As I remarked in an earlier chapter (V), these versions related the experience of the Old Israel to current events in the New Israel, in her time of Civil War. Amongst these versions is one of Psalm lxxxv, that which foretells the return of 'righteousness' of Justice. Here the New Israel is said to have suffered the 'fierce wrath' of the Lord, 'which we had proved/ Far worse than fire to burn'. But God has ended this punitive desolatio by releasing England from 'the hard captivity' of

Stuart rule, and He has forgiven the national sin:

Th' iniquity thou didst forgive  
That wrought thy people woe,  
And all their sin that did thee grieve  
Hast hid....  
Thine anger all thou hadst removed.  
(2-3)

This refers to England's release from Charles' "tyranny" by the agency of Parliament. However, from the following verses (4-5) it becomes clear that His wrath has returned: meaning the resurgence of the Royalists and the Second Civil War, at the time when Milton was versifying these psalms. At this point Milton invokes God's mercy (vs. 7), entreating a renovatio from this second desolation: 'Thy saving health to us afford,/ And life in us renew.' (All the italicised passages - as here - are Milton's additions to the original: thus the motif of 'renewal' is his own.) His prayer is answered:

And now what God the Lord will speak  
I will go straight and hear  
For to his people he speaks peace,  
And to his saints full dear;  
To his dear saints he will speak peace.  
(8)

Here the renovation required is that of 'peace': the topical situation of Civil War, and England's desperate need for peace, here coincides with the Psalm's original subject, the return of Peace to earth (10). Specifically, this return was to be accomplished in the Second Coming, of which this psalm was a prophecy. Therefore Milton, speaking in the time of desolation, must prophesy that Peace: it is still a future event, 'he will speak peace'.

Surely to such as do him fear  
Salvation is at hand,  
And glory shall ere long appear  
To dwell within our land.  
(9)

This 'glory' is the regnum Christi, what one influential chiliast had called 'the latter-day glory';<sup>87</sup> Milton's interpolation, that it would 'ere long appear', refers to hopes of the imminence of the



Coming that would establish this glory (as I noted in Chapter V). For Milton, as for others, it was a datum that the 'new earth' would appear in England before long: Christ would come 'To dwell within our land.' As I have observed, Milton expresses through this psalm the thought that when peace comes the time will be ripe for renovation; and Christ, the agent of renovation, is here seen as the only one who can rescue His Chosen People from their desolation. He must 'Come' before it will end; the promise of renovatio is here especially its 'Peace' (8.).

Renovatio, the 'glory (which) shall ere long appear', is therefore characterized by the return of Peace and Righteousness:

Mercy and Truth, that long were missed,  
Now joyfully are met;  
Sweet Peace and Righteousness have kissed,  
And hand in hand are set.

(10)

It is natural, in view of the topical situation and his own constant desire for peace and reconstruction, that Milton should here single out 'Peace' for adjectival emphasis ('Sweet Peace'); similarly, the nation's peace is here made to correspond with that 'Peace and Righteousness' which were understood to characterize the regnum Christi.

Under the eye of 'Justice', the renovation appears:

Truth from the earth like to a flow'r  
Shall bud and blossom then,  
And Justice from her heavenly bow'r  
Look down on mortal men.

(11)

This is the 'new earth':

The Lord will also then bestow  
Whatever thing is good;  
Our land shall forth in plenty throw  
Her fruits to be our food.

(12)

The interpolation 'to be our food' refers to an idea Milton adumbrated elsewhere, that everything in the 'new earth' subserves the comfort of man:

Our glorification will be accompanied by the renovation  
of heaven and earth, and of all things therein adapted  
to our service or delight, to be possessed by us in perpetuity. 88

This 'renovation' is man's 'glorification' - that 'glory' mentioned  
in his psalm: and for this reason it provides 'all things therein  
adapted to our service or delight.'

After this vision of the renovatio, the psalm ends by recalling  
the promise that it will 'surely' appear.

Before him [Christ] Righteousness shall go,  
His royal harbinger;  
Then will he come, and not be slow;  
His footsteps cannot err.

(13)

To the psalm's vision of the Second Coming, Milton adds his own  
characterization of Righteousness as 'His royal harbinger': forerunner,  
that is, of the regnum Christi. Righteousness and Peace, we remember,  
go 'hand in hand' (10); thus, in the Nativity Ode, Christ's 'ready  
harginger' is 'meek-eyed Peace' (iii). In both of Milton's poems  
'Righteousness' and 'Peace' are seen as Christ's forerunners because  
that is the character of Astraea, the figure of Peace and Justice who  
heralds the miraculous child. The Ode recalled this psalm in its  
vision of 'Peace and Righteousness' on the Virgilian model: and here,  
in his version of the psalm itself, Milton simply "reads back" into  
it the Astraeian idea.

Thus Milton's poems reveal the way in which the classical formula  
of Virgil's Eclogue could be used in expectation of the Second Coming:  
and, in his psalm, could be brought to refer to the fortunes of the  
nation in the Latter Days. For the Puritan chiliast the Fourth Eclogue  
could become a "revelatory Eclogue", a classical formula for the  
prophetic poem.



v. Marvell and the Revelatory Eclogue

Virgil's classical formula, which I shall call the "Revelatory Eclogue", influenced not only Milton but also his friend, Marvell. Whether or not their friendship had begun at this date,<sup>89</sup> we know that Marvell was already reading Milton's poetry;<sup>90</sup> moreover, Marvell may have adopted the Revelatory Eclogue as a result of perceiving Milton's use of it in the Nativity Ode, which he had certainly read.<sup>91</sup> Not only was Marvell a classicist, but his acquaintance with Virgil's Fourth Eclogue is attested by his parody of its first line in A Letter to Dr. Ingelo (83), and another reminiscence in Illustrissimo Viro (33-5).

As this section is concerned to show, this acquaintance with the Eclogue was the basis of Marvell's use, on several occasions, of Revelatory Eclogue. In the next chapter, I shall be considering its use in Appleton House; for the present, I am concerned with Marvell's Latin Revelatory Eclogues. These are Illustrissimo Viro Domino Lanceloto Josepho do Maniban Grammatomanti and - more important - A Letter to Dr. Ingelo: the very poems, that is, in which Marvell's explicit references to the Fourth Eclogue appear.

There is an affinity between Marvell's preoccupations in his English poems, and those manifested in the Latin verses. In both languages, Marvell's poetry shows equally the importance of his eschatological theme and the structural preoccupations that accompany it. (See Appendix 3.)

Having remarked this community of interest in the English and the Latin poetry, I would like now to consider Marvell's use of the Revelatory Eclogue to mediate his eschatological theme in two Latin poems: Illustrissimo Viro and A Letter to Dr. Ingelo. The latter is a "public" poem, treating contemporary international politics, while

the former discusses a personal occasion. As we shall see, the Revelatory Eclogue has its function in both realms; and, in the case of Illustrissimo Viro, it contributes to the "generalization" of the personal occasion: allowing Marvell to distinguish prophecy from unworthy contenders for its power. This poem will be only briefly discussed, as an introduction for Ingelo.

In Illustrissimo Viro there is a direct allusion to Virgil's Fourth Eclogue (lines 33-35). This reference has been the cause of some puzzlement as to 'the significance of the passage in relation to Marvell's comments on Maniban.'<sup>92</sup> In fact, its significance is due to the character of Revelatory Eclogue: which in this poem is juxtaposed with the minor mode of "prediction" as practised by the graphologist Maniban. This juxtaposition forms the problematic of the poem.

Illustrissimo Viro is really a poetic rebuke to Maniban, but this rebuke is raised to a more dignified level by its concomitant - that distinction between human prediction and sacred prophecy which is its true subject.

To explicate this distinction in the poem, it is necessary first to recall the incident which provoked Marvell's rebuke. Joseph de Maniban was a graphologist: it becomes clear that he had access to one of Marvell's letters (l.9) and from the handwriting was able to describe Marvell's character and even to predict his future (l. 25). From a reference to this occasion in another of Marvell's letters, the poem has been dated at 1676,<sup>93</sup> thus locating it as a late work from Marvell's so-called "satirical period". It is quite evident that the poem is 'hyperbolical....(with) a mocking intent':<sup>94</sup> indeed, one critic has understood Illustrissimo Viro as heir to a Renaissance tradition (after Martial) of epigrams which satirize the activities of astrologers.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Marvell's Latin editor has interpreted the comparison in



line 26, 'Astrologus certior Astronomo', as an ironic use of the then current distinction between astrology (superstition) and astronomy (science):<sup>96</sup> Maniban, an astrologus, being the butt of the remark. Such irony characterizes the poem from its mockingly superlative title to its last line.

The motive for this mockery is in fact related to the Virgilian allusion that puzzled Marvell's editors: its 'significance' is the opposition between true prophecy - as represented by Virgil's - and mere 'astrology' (Maniban's 'rationes....futuri'). It is in this context that the Virgilian allusion functions.

Therefore, to describe Maniban's personalized level of prediction, Marvell resorts to hyperbole:

Distribuit totum nostris eventibus orbem,  
Et quo me rapiat cardine Sphaera docet.  
Quae Sol oppositus, quae Mars adversa minetur,  
Jupiter aut ubi me, Luna, Venusque juvent.  
Ut trucis intentet mihi vulnera Cauda Draconis;  
Vipereo levet ut vulnera more Caput. (19-24)  
(He divides the whole zodiac into my fortunes  
And teaches with what constellations I am carried around,  
What misfortunes the Sun in opposition, or Mars may threaten,  
Or when Jupiter, the Moon, and Venus may aid me,  
How the tail of the malignant dragon threatens wounds to me,  
And how his head, like a viper's, may assuage the wounds.)

Marvell here indicates his mocking wonderment, that the 'totem orbem' could be narrowed just to refer to his own life: it is the inevitable outcome of Maniban's personalized genre of prediction that the 'whole world' and the heavens too - the subjects of true prophecy - should be brought to this reductio ad absurdum.

Similarly, the reference here to the constellation Draco recalls the prophetic genre appropriate to the 'totum....orbem'. On one level it alludes to astrological interpretation of the constellation - the tail being a sign of misfortune, whereas the head signifies a good fortune.<sup>97</sup> On another level, however, a contemporary reader would be alert to that 'trucis....Cauda Draconis', the tail of the Red Dragon which culls the stars in Revelation xii. 3-4; and which was recalled

by Marvell is his First Anniversary as 'the Dragons Tail'/(which) Swinges the Volumes of its horrid Flail.' Whereas the astrological Dragon's tail indicates an individual's misfortune, this Dragon is universally malignant; whereas Draco's head implies healing and good fortune to one man, good fortune and healing redemption will be afforded to all men when Christ - according to Genesis' promise - 'bruises' the head of 'the great dragon....that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan' (Rev. xii. 9).<sup>98</sup> The correspondence of ideas is complete; with the important distinction that Draco refers merely to an individual's fate, while the great Dragon is involved in the destiny of mankind. The reference here to a 'vipereo', or 'serpent', allows this implicit contrast with the 'old Serpent' who is also the Dragon of Revelation; which maintains the submerged debate between sacred prophecy and the predictions practised by Maniban.

The prophetic meaning of the Dragon links with the allusions, in the following lines, to sacred prophecies. With a reference to the Sibyl who inspired Virgil<sup>99</sup>, Marvell introduces the Eclogue as an example of the true prophetic order.

Scilicet & toti subsunt Oracula mundo,  
 Dummodo tot foliis una Sibylla foret.  
 Partum, Fortunae mater Natura, propinquum  
 Mille modis monstrat mille per indicia:  
 Ingentemque Uterum qua mole Puerpera solvat; (31-35)  
 (And no doubt all things in the world are subject to prophecies,  
 Provided that one Sibyl be in so many leaves.  
 An approaching birth, Nature, the mother of Fortune,  
 Shows in a thousand ways, through a thousand signs,  
 By which child-bearing labour she may ease her vast womb;)

In his allusion to the Sibyl, whose prophecies were recorded in patterns of leaves, Marvell seems to imply that Maniban's 'foliis' (of paper) may be equally susceptible to the confusion that the Sibyl's leaves caused in those votaries who attempted to read them: the wind constantly disarrayed them, garbling their message. Moreover, the second line here seems to indicate that all those things to which prophecy should relate



('toti....mundo') are not fully comprehended in Maniban's predictions.<sup>100</sup>

The Sibylline reference logically introduces that long-recognised - and hitherto puzzling - reference to the Fourth Eclogue in lines 33-35.

The allusion is to lines 4-9 of the Eclogue:

Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;  
magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.  
iam redit Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;  
iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto  
tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum  
desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo....

In these lines Virgil recalls the Sibylline prophecies, and describes the birth of a child who will bring the Golden Age to men; that which was interpreted as the Second Coming and renovatio. In Marvell's poem this birth is described as imminent, 'Partum....propinquum': a reference to the imminence of Christ's Coming. The 'birth'/Coming is Nature's, in her capacity as 'Fortunae mater', because this is the 'Fate' of mankind in general. This eschatological reference is extended by the next line, where Marvell states that the whole creation portends the event: for it was understood that many portents, 'violences to the....constitution of Nature', would announce the Coming.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, these portents are to be counted in thousands, 'Mille modis monstrat mille per indicia:' referring to the millennium<sup>102</sup> which the Coming would inaugurate. This is the counterpart of Virgil's 'gens aurea', of Golden Age.

As I indicated in an earlier chapter, the Last Day was described as a 'birth':<sup>103</sup> with special reference to the childbirth of the 'Woman Clothed with the Sun' in Revelation xii. As the birth approaches, she is menaced by the Red Dragon,

a great red dragon....[whose] tail drew the third part  
of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth;  
and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to  
be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born.

(Rev. xii. 3-4)

This Woman was usually interpreted as the true Church,<sup>104</sup> threatened by the Dragon, an aspect of Antichrist, with his fearsome tail; thus the 'birth' of the Last Day in these lines of the poem refers back to that 'Draco' of line 23. This miraculous birth was one of two in the Revelation, the second and more significant of which is the general re-birth of mankind at the Resurrection: a major part of the general renovation at the Last Day.<sup>105</sup> This birth 'Ingentem....Uterum (Naturae)....solvat', because the earth will be relieved of her burden of corpses: she will 'deliver' them for resurrection (Rev. xx. 13). Thus the metaphor of birth reflects not only the miraculous birth in Virgil's Eclogue - which was itself understood to refer to the Second Coming - but also the universal rebirth.

This universal 'nativity' ('Puerpera') is here in opposition to that single 'Genitura' which is Maniban's concern; and the concomitant juxtaposition of the universal and the personal fates corresponds to the difference in scale between sacred prophecy (which looks to the Puerpera of the End) and Maniban's predictions (which follow the 'natal star'). And Marvell points another moral of this opposition. For if, as he indicates, the moment of mankind's rebirth is imminent, 'propinquum', Maniban's parochial predictions appear ridiculously unimportant.

In this passage the evocation of Revelatory Eclogue operates as a representative of the true prophetic mode. Eschatological prophecy, and in especial Virgil, are pitted against Maniban the mere 'Astrologus'.

Maniban's neglect of the approaching eschaton is, like Revelatory Eclogue, generalized by Marvell: Maniban is representative of those who ignore the eschatological context, the Partum....propinquum': 'Vivit at in praesens maxima pars hominum' (36). This same reflection prompted an angry outburst from him in the First Anniversary:



Fore-shortned Time its useless Course would stay,  
 And soon precipitate the latest Day....  
 But Men, alas, as if they nothing car'd,  
 Look on, all unconcern'd, or unprepar'd.

(139-50)

Careless of the End, these men live 'in praesens' when they ought to live in expectation - for the 'latest Day'. Maniban is one of these, ignoring the Day in service of his minor predictions.

Illustrissimo Viro is another witness, by its late date, to the continuing significance of eschatology for Marvell: in 1676 he was still convinced of the 'Partum....propinquum', the imminence of the Last Day. Moreover, his statement of this expectation in Illustrissimo Viro is formulated by allusion to Virgil's Revelatory Eclogue.

vi. Marvell's Revelatory Eclogue: 'A Letter to Dr. Ingelo'.

At this point I want to turn to 'A Letter to Dr. Ingelo', a poem written two decades before Illustrissimo Viro. Despite this gap in time between the two poems, they share the Virgilian influence. There is a difference only in the degree of that influence: whereas Illustrissimo Viro invoked Virgilian prophecy as an element of the problematic, Ingelo is actually modelled throughout as a Revelatory Eclogue.

In this poem the Revelatory Eclogue is cast into a topical epistle. (It must be remembered that here the term 'eclogue' refers only to the model, not to the form, of the poem). In order to understand the operation of this model, it is necessary first to amplify my description of the characteristic features of what I have called Revelatory Eclogue.

As I have indicated, Milton's Nativity Ode has long been recognized as indebted to Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. One of several critics to discuss this fact was Patrick Cullen, in an article on what he calls the 'Golden-Age Eclogue':<sup>106</sup> by which he means a poem reflecting Virgil's Eclogue. He includes in this "genre" certain Renaissance

"golden" features - mainly to do with free love, etc. - which are not strictly related to Virgil. Moreover, he understands the term 'Eclogue' in this case as generically absolute, describing Milton's Nativity Ode as formally eclogic. As others have noted, this formal description is inapplicable to the Ode.<sup>107</sup> (Cullen is on safer ground when he treats Spenser's 'April' Eclogue in the Shepheardes Calendar, since this is unarguably formally eclogic.) Cullen and I disagree on several points and in our emphases - especially in the case of Astraea - which distinguish what he calls 'Golden-Age Eclogue' from what I have analyzed as 'Revelatory Eclogue'. We disagree, in the case of Marvell, most of all: Cullen sees in Little T.C. a 'Golden-Age Eclogue', the only one he finds in Marvell's canon. In an answering article, Pierre Legouis argued against Cullen's interpretation of Little T.C.<sup>108</sup> The justice of his objections is evident, especially in the case of Cullen's arguments about "free love", and I would agree with Legouis that Little T.C. cannot be so described. Cullen's 'Golden-Age Eclogue' is largely secular in its emphases. Moreover, I would disagree with his premise that poems displaying this sort of influence (less specific in the case of his 'Golden Age') are necessarily eclogic in form; I also disagree with Cullen when he insists that the age and sex of the protagonist is immaterial: for instance, he would see Elizabeth in Spenser's 'April' Eclogue as a version of Pollio's son. Therefore, in my account of something rather different - the Revelatory Eclogue - I shall indeed be concerned with the age and sex of the protagonist, as this is not only part of the Reformation redefinition of Virgil's Eclogue, but one of its central features.

To describe this model one must return to Virgil himself. In his Eclogue the return of the Golden Age is heralded by that of the goddess Astraea, the virgin Justice, to the world that - because of its sin - she had abandoned so long before: 'iam redit et Virgo' (6).



Astraea was associated with the constellation Virgo, the astrological Virgin; and Virgo was associated with Spring. Paradoxically, despite her virginity, she was also associated with Autumn (her month is that of harvest) and fertility.<sup>109</sup> Naturally, that Virgo's month was August provides another relationship between Astraea and the concept of Augustan Pax. Conflated with Astraea, Virgo was related both to the 'perpetual Spring' (ver aeternum) of the Golden Age and to its natural fecundity. All these aspects of Astraea were assimilated into the mythology of Elizabeth I.<sup>110</sup> As the Virgin Queen and the Prince of Protestant reform, she supervised England's 'Golden Age' of true religion. In this context, Marvell himself alludes to the Elizabethan Astraea in the RT.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, by the Seventeenth Century, the characteristics of Astraea could be summarized thus: her virginity, her association with Virgo, her Justice, her piety, her status as a goddess, her "royalty", her association with Spring and with golden-age harmony, and her 'inspiritive fecundity'. Moreover, through Virgo Astraea was possessed of wisdom, linked with the capacity for learning.<sup>112</sup> All these aspects of Virgo-Astraea transformed her into a classical figure for Reformation and renovatio.

The protagonist of Virgil's poem - whom Astraea heralds - is the son of the Consul Pollio: the Eclogue prophesies the Golden Age which will be gradually realized in his lifetime. This prophecy has several features which may be regarded as characteristic. The first two of these are both aspects of degeneration redeemed: first, the counterpointing of the Iron Age and the Golden Age which will renovate it - 'tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum/ desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo' (8-9). Secondly, the eradication of sin - in this case, the Roman national sin of Civil War which preceded Augustus' rule - 'sceleris vestigia nostri' (13-14): and hence the gradual reformation of man (31-39). (It is, of course, the return of Justice

which establishes the appropriate conditions for this Reformation.) Like Astraea, the child is semi-divine (48), and consorts with gods (15). Analogously, on the human plane, he inherits the virtues of his distinguished lineage ('patriis virtutibus', 17). In addition - and again like Astraea - he is himself capable of acquiring wisdom, and virtù (16). 'By means of these and his inherited qualities 'pacatum....reget orbem' (17), he guides and inspires the world. The world is 'pacatam' in two senses: not only is there now peace and harmony amongst men, but nature too is harmonious and beneficent (18f.): not only is she no longer hostile or grudging to men, but animals too no longer prey upon one another. The earth displays her bounty, paying tribute in this manner to the child (18-20) who is the object of her adoring care. Thus Nature is a participant in a universal establishment of order; men need no longer toil to subsist (37-45). This process of renovation in both man and Nature is a gradual (31f., 37f.) but inevitable one (46-7). The creation exhibits all the signs of its imminent realization: 'aspice venturo laetantur ut omnia saeclo!' (52). Finally, Virgil addresses the child himself, closing on an intimate note.

What made this Eclogue most suitable as a model for Revelatory Eclogue was the theme of renovation, both of men and of nature: for a seventeenth-century Puritan poet the prophecy of Astraea and the golden child could reflect the eschatological process of Reformation leading to the millennial renovatio. In this pattern - as is evidently the case in the mythology of Elizabeth I - Astraea could represent the first phase: Reformation. As she was the harbinger of the golden age, so Reformation was the prerequisite of renovatio.

The mythology of Elizabeth I, although Astraeian, was not purely so. In fact she represented not only the combination of Astraea-Virgo with the Protestant Prince (the combination with which Yates is concerned), but also the simpler conflation of Astraea and the golden child.



A distinction must be made, here, between conflation and identification, since Astraea is the herald of the child; rather, in Elizabethan guise Astraea assumes the child's offices. The distinction remains that her reformation is a prelude to his renovatio: reflecting the fact that the Protestant Christian Emperor is a reformer in the service of Christ's ultimate renovatio. One may still describe Astraea (or Elizabeth) as inspiring a renovatio, but only in consciousness that the 'full and perfect' renovation is yet to come, and that her renovatio/reformatio is merely a prelude to it. As in Virgil's Eclogue, the process is gradual but sure: the true golden age is the 'new heaven and new earth'. In this context Astraea's sex and age certainly matter - she is a woman, not a little boy: she is in this relation not the golden boy, who is Christ, but the herald of His Coming, presaging the features of His renovation. It is this carefully defined figure whom I shall call the "Reformation Astraea".

I have emphasized equally the conflation of, and the distinction between, Astraea and the golden child because this Reformation Astraea is the figure who appears in Marvell's poetry. Both in Ingelo and in Appleton House, the features of the Reformation Astraea are closely detailed, and her character as harbinger is precise. I will be discussing Appleton House in the next chapter: for the moment I am concerned with the Astraeian figure in Ingelo's Revelatory Eclogue. Although Ingelo has suffered from critical neglect, I would suggest that it has an important place in Marvell's poetry - precisely, as I shall show, because it represents the Revelatory Eclogue, that fusion of Virgil's prophetic model and Marvell's eschatological theme.

The occasion of the poem shows how this model became appropriate to Marvell's concerns in this verse epistle. As I have mentioned in an earlier chapter (III), one of the practical attempts to implement England's reforming role in Europe was the negotiation, in the 1650s, of an alliance between England and Sweden. Sweden was a Protestant

protagonist in the Thirty Years' War, and thus a current example of Protestant militancy in the European theatre.<sup>113</sup> This was especially true because the Thirty Years' War was itself understood as an eschatological conflict,<sup>114</sup> part of the long Latter-Day struggle with the powers of Antichrist in Europe. Sweden's current monarch, Christina, was the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus (killed in that war), who had been regarded in England as a warrior-hero in the battle against Catholicism:<sup>115</sup> he had represented the successful implementation of militant international Protestantism. In this context, alliance with Sweden had impeccable recommendations for England.

In the 1650s Cromwell pressed for such an alliance, in view of England's present war against the Dutch. (The Dutch, of course, were Protestants, but a complicated relationship with England and with certain Continental powers created an antagonism:<sup>116</sup> of which Marvell himself provided examples in The Character of Holland, In Legationem, and several late satires.) It was, however, understood that this alliance had broader purposes in which the two Protestant nations might co-operate: as Marvell himself makes clear in Ingelo. Accordingly, in September 1653 Bulstrode Whitlocke was despatched to Christina's court as England's representative, and in the following year a treaty was duly signed: aided by the cordial relations between Christina and Cromwell himself.<sup>117</sup> In Whitlocke's embassy a man named Nathaniel Ingelo had acted as chaplain - Marvell may in fact have known him at Eton while the poet was acting as tutor there to Cromwell's ward.<sup>118</sup> At any rate, when Whitlocke and Ingelo departed for Sweden they took with them Marvell's poem, which - although addressed to Ingelo - was almost certainly intended for the Queen's perusal.<sup>119</sup> (Whitlocke himself may have shown it to her,<sup>120</sup> and recent evidence indicates that it was probably transcribed by a member of her entourage.)<sup>121</sup> The poem is in fact a eulogy of Christina, urging the Protestant alliance



with England: and, like the other poems written by Marvell in the service of this alliance - In Effigiem and In Eandem - it may have been commissioned by Cromwell himself.<sup>122</sup>

The one problem which Marvell had to deal with when recommending Cromwell's government to Christina was that she was a queen and Cromwell was a regicide. In In Eandem /effigiem Oliveri Cromwell/ Reginae Sueciae transmissam, Marvell manages to convert this fact into a compliment: that while Cromwell cannot be said to favour monarchy, Christina's is the exception to this rule. 'At tibi submittit frontem reverentior Umbra,/ Nec sunt hi Vultus Regibus usque trucis.' (7-8) In Ingelo, he chooses - suitably - to emphasise their common religious interest: 'Dicitur et nostros moerens audisse Labores,/Fortis et ingenuam Gentis amasse Fidem.' (119-120) (Here, I myself would be inclined to translate the English 'ingenuam....Fidem' as something like 'the primitive (or true) Religion'; which corresponds more closely to the sense intended than does the translation by Marvell's Latin editors.)<sup>123</sup> This religious emphasis - which is, of course, a political stance also - is true of the poem as a whole.

In fact Christina's reputation ran high in England: and Milton himself - that prophet of wrath against kings - eulogised this Queen in his Second Defence of the People of England, published in the year following Marvell's own tribute, 1654. Milton's encomium is of interest here because it both reflects Christina's contemporary reputation, and provides an analogue to Marvell's attitude towards her in Ingelo. Milton describes her as 'so fair a heroine, so bright a pattern of all the royal virtues';<sup>124</sup> and recalls her father, the great Gustavus Adolphus.<sup>125</sup> He absolves her of any similarities to 'the kings of the earth', noting that 'the whole tenor of your conduct sufficiently proves, that you are no tyrant':<sup>126</sup> she is an example of what all monarchs ought to be, both in government and in religion.<sup>127</sup> There-

fore, he concludes, 'her reign has proved, that she is fit to govern, not only Sweden, but the world'.<sup>128</sup> Although this is extravagant praise, it may recall - indeed, Milton may even have intended that it should recall - the mythology of Elizabeth as the Christian Emperor: for the imperium Christianum was, ideally, a universal government.

Milton celebrates also Christina's prodigious learning, which indeed was famous throughout Europe, drawing such men as Descartes to her Court.<sup>129</sup> Her intellect, he says, has not been dulled by Sweden's bleak climate; and he counterpoints the 'iron' nature of this country to her own 'golden' character:

that country so rich in metallic ore, which appears like a cruel step-mother to others, seems to have been a fostering parent to you; and after the most strenuous attempts to have at last produced a progeny of pure gold.<sup>130</sup>

Milton recalls here, by the contrast of the ore-laden land and 'golden' Christina, the familiar counterpointing of the Iron and Golden Ages. Moreover, Christina is 'a progeny of pure gold', a Golden Child; recalling that golden child who sprang from Rome's iron age in the Virgilian Eclogue that Milton himself had imitated some years before. And the Augustan ethos - peace, prosperity, a providential age - is recalled not only in Milton's description of Sweden under Christina, but also when he apostrophizes her as 'Augusta': a monarch of 'magnanimity ....irradiated by the glorious beams of wisdom and of virtue', one with 'greatness of soul'.<sup>131</sup>

The same 'Augustan' ambience, the locale of Virgil's Eclogue, appears in Marvell's Ingelo. Describing Christina's 'Augustam....frontem/ [et] Majestas' (27-8), Marvell is pursuing an eponymous pun: thus endowing Christina with the epithet chosen by Milton also. Further, in Marvell's poem the Augustan allusion is supported by explicit evocation of Virgil's celebration of the Augustan age in the Fourth Eclogue.



'Upsalides Musae nunc et majora canemus' (83) echoes Virgil's 'sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus', the opening line of the Fourth Eclogue. This moment in Marvell's poem is that at which the model of Revelatory Eclogue becomes explicit: Marvell is signalling to his audience that his poem is in a great tradition, appropriate to the gravity of the occasion and also to the learned audience, Christina herself. By recognizing this signal the reader is intended to appreciate Marvell's exploit, which is to evoke the pre-eminent classical prophet in the context of a topical historical situation. Just as Milton proclaimed his Virgilian model in the Nativity Ode, so Marvell here announces the Revelatory Eclogue. His motive for this announcement (beyond its appropriateness), and for his use of the model, is at once to assume the mantle of the prophetic poet and to redefine the Virgilian prophecy in eschatological terms. This project reflects an ambition, for to imitate Virgil was to identify with a prophetic tradition.

Marvell's ambition in this direction was stated in a poem written in the following year, when he "prophesied" his own prophetic role as a poet: which was to harry the 'kings of the earth' in poetry, just as Cromwell persecuted them with arms.

If gracious Heaven to my Life give length,  
Leisure to Time, and to my Weakness Strength,  
Then shall I once with graver Accents shake  
Your Regal sloth....

(First Anniversary, 119-22)

This vision of a poetry active in the eschaton reveals that, although he may never have fulfilled his promise of 'graver Accents', Marvell believed in 1654 at least that he could achieve this prophetic role. It is instructive to note that Virgil - unaware of the impact even his Eclogue would exert upon the prophetic imagination - says precisely the same thing in Eclogue IV itself.

o mihi tum longae maneat pars ultima vitae,  
spiritus et, quantum sat erit tua dicere facta:  
non me carminibus vincat....Thracius Orpheus. (53-55)

Just as Virgil here "waits upon" the deeds of Pollio's son ('tua.... facta'), so in his First Anniversary Marvell waits upon the acts of Cromwell ('Till then my Muse shall hollow far behind/ Angelic Cromwell'). And just as Virgil desires a longer life with 'spiritus', so Marvell desires length of life and 'Strength'. In these passages even the rhythms echo one another - 'Leisure to Time,....', 'spiritus et,....'. Both are statements of poetic purpose, of grander themes and forms. Therefore I would suggest that Marvell's lines are inspired by Virgil; the difference is that Marvell never wrote his Aeneid, the Cromwelliad. Perhaps that was because, unlike Virgil, he was not fortunate enough to see his political hopes realized.

However, Marvell did write his equivalent of Eclogue IV, in Ingelo; and the protagonist of this Revelatory Eclogue is Christina in the guise of Astraea. Like Elizabeth I - to whom she is compared in the poem (23-24) - Christina's character in Ingelo is a result of the conflation of Astraea with the attributes of the Golden Child, the Reformation Astraea.

Ingelo begins with a direct address which is proper to the format of the epistle. Marvell rebukes Ingelo for abandoning England for the sake of the 'Arctor coeli' (1-2), and asks him to describe Sweden. 'Quae Gentes Hominum, quae sit Natura Locorum?' (5). To enquire about the nature of the people and about their country, as he does here, is natural enough: but it is also appropriate to the Revelatory Eclogue, for the characters of men and of Nature are the elements of renovatio. For this reason the word 'Natura' is used, punning upon "nature". That this question is an introduction to the themes of Revelatory Eclogue is confirmed when Marvell begins to speculate upon what Ingelo will reply on these heads; for he asks, in effect, whether Sweden is an iron-age or a golden-age land.



Num gravis horrissono Polus obruit omnia lapsu,  
 Jungitur & praeceps Mundus utraque nive?  
 An melius canis horrescit Campus Aristis,  
 Amnuus Agricolis & redit Orbe labor? (7-10)  
 (Does the heavy pole overwhelm all with the awful  
 sound of its motion,/ And does the precipitous earth  
 blend one winter's snow with the next?/ Or does the  
 field ripen fairer with the spikes of grain/ And is the  
 farmer's seasonal toil better repaid?)

In the first couplet Sweden is envisaged as a land with a harsh climate, a land which the Pole 'horrescit'. In the second couplet Marvell imagines the alternative, a land of relative plenty. These alternatives are not too serious, and Marvell is prepared to answer his own question:

Incolit, ut fertur, saevam Gens mitior Oram,  
 Pace vigil, Bello strenua, justa Foro.  
 Quin ibi sunt Urbes, atque alta Palatia Regum  
Musarumque domus, et sua Templa Deo. (11-14)  
 (A milder race, it is said, inhabits the harsh region,/ Vigilant in peace, vigorous in war, just in trade./ Indeed there are cities there, and a high palace of kings,/ A home of the Muses, and temples for God.)

Marvell's answer to his own question suggests that Sweden, climatically at least, is 'saevam': 'harsh', with a pun on 'savage'. In contrast, the 'Gens' is civilized, 'mitior': it has all the virtues of strength and fairness (12), with cities, a monarchy, piety ('Templa Deo') and culture ('Musarum....domus'), That is, the 'Natura Locorum' is unregenerate, 'savage', but the people is civilized. Sweden is thus a mixture of 'iron' and 'golden' characteristics. Moreover, if there are any doubts about the counterpointing of 'iron' and 'gold' characteristics in these lines, Marvell dispels them by turning to Christina in the guise of Astraea.

Nam regit Imperio populum Christina ferocem,  
 Et dare jura potest regia Virgo viris.  
 Utque trahit rigidum Magnes Aquilone Metallum,  
 Gaudet eam Soboles ferrea sponte sequi. (15-18)  
 (For it is Christina who rules this rugged people,/ A royal virgin who gives laws to men./ As a magnet swings the stubborn metal to the north,/ That iron race delights to follow her.)

Marvell suggests that Christina is the source of her people's civilized aspect: they are indeed an iron ('ferrea') people, but she leads them into this civilized order. Why? Because she is a 'regia Virgo' - a royal virgin like Astraea<sup>132</sup> - and like Astraea she dispenses Justice to men: 'dare jura potest regia Virgo viris.' Their response to her is unforced, 'sponte sequi', just as it should be in this "golden" context. (Further, it is interesting to note that Marvell's introduction of Christina, 'Nam regit', involves a reminiscence both phonetically and in terms of its position, of Virgil's introduction of Astraea: 'Iam redit'.)

Having assumed the Astraean motif, Marvell elaborates upon it.

At, si vera fides, mundi melioris ab ortu,  
 Saecula Christinae nulla tulere parem.  
 Ipsa licet redeat (nostra decus orbis) Eliza,  
 Qualis nostra tamen quantaque Eliza fuit. (21-24)  
 (But, if the report is true, since a better world began/  
 No age has borne the equal of Christina./  
 Though Eliza herself (the glory of our world) should return,/   
 Yet our Eliza was just such as she and as great.)

Here the conceptual and verbal similarities with the Fourth Eclogue abound. The motif of a returning virgin is echoed in Marvell's recollection of Elizabeth; the 'Saecula' echo Virgil's 'saeculorum.... ordo' (5); 'redeat....Eliza' recalls Virgil's 'redeunt Saturnia regna' (6). The general tenor of these lines matches Virgil's introduction of his Astraea.

Moreover, here the poem is set in the context 'Mundi melioris ab ortu', that is, in the 'better world' inaugurated by Christ's first Advent.<sup>133</sup> In the history of this ameliorated world, which lives in the promise of Christ's return, Christina is outstanding ('nulla....parem'): the only comparison that Marvell can draw is that of Elizabeth I, the English Astraea (23-24). Here Marvell recalls the 'regia Virgo' of English reform, that Elizabeth who was remembered, in the 1600s, almost as the angel of England's eschatological role.<sup>134</sup> To compare



Christina to this native Queen was to apply this great reputation for 'Reform' to the Swedish monarch, and to imply that she was a similar 'nostri decus orbis' in this pre-millennial world. Thus Christina is not only Astraea, but a Reformation Astraea on the Elizabethan pattern.

Like Elizabeth, and Astraea, Christina is a 'regia Virgo' (16). Here the Latin language proves its usefulness<sup>135</sup>, since 'Virgo' is readily evocative of the constellation as well. In the description of Christina as Virgo-Astraea Marvell positively insists upon her virginity: not only is Christina compared to England's Virgin Queen, but she has a 'virgineo....ore'; she is compared at some length to Diana, goddess of Chastity (32-48); she is 'perpetuae Virginitatis Honos' - an enduring emblem of virginity - like the constellatory Virgo. (In fact Marvell does liken her to a star, line 31). Further, he emphasizes that she has no truck with Venus (60), and compares her to Philomel, the chaste nightingale. Her only feelings of love, it seems, are for Christ Himself (88-89), whose name she bears: only he can inspire her 'virgineas....Medullas'. In this manner the virginity of the Astraeon figure is linked to her piety, underpinning Marvell's characterization of Christina as a Reformation Astraea.

This characterization includes the traditional motif of Astraea's divinity. Not only is Christina compared to the goddess Diana, but Marvell refers to the Queen as 'Dea' three times (26, 80, 111). Suitably, he stresses Christina-Astraea's personification of Justice: 'dare jura potest regia Virgo viris', and her Justice is also self-directed, 'Scilicet ut nemo est illa reverentior aequi;/ Haud ipsas igitur fert sine Lege Comas' (39-40). She is a law-giver both to herself and to others.

Since the Reformation Astraea must issue from a distinguished line, Marvell accordingly recalls Christina's famous parent, the Protestant hero. 'Ingens Virgineo spirat Gustavus in ore:/ Agnoscas animos,

fulmineumque Patrem' (29-30). Her father's virtues shine out in her also, the inherited virtues of a golden child. These are, of course, the virtues of militant Protestantism, for of these her father was representative. And it is not surprising to find that Gustavus, like Cromwell in the Ode, is 'fulmineum', characterized by thunder and lightning as the scourge of God. As such, these virtues implicitly compare with the evocation of England's Protestant warrior, Cromwell, later in this poem (97ff.)

One especial virtue of the Reformation Astraea is her wisdom. Thus, although Christina despises the rewards of Venus, she possesses the attributes of Juno and Minerva, the goddesses of Power and Wisdom. In this relation Marvell recalls the Judgement of Paris (57-60),<sup>136</sup> and portrays Christina as rescinding that foolish choice: 'Junonis properans et clara Trophaea Minervae.' One may observe, here, that Christina's 'Justice' extends even to the gods; by making her reverse the most famous of ill-judged decisions, Marvell shows her Astraeian role in action.

Herself wise, the Reformation Astraea also (as we saw) readily acquires the wisdom of others.

Hinc neque consuluit fugitivae prodiga Formae,  
Nec timuit seris invigilasse Libris.  
In somnem quoties Nymphae monuere sequaces  
Decedet roseis heu color ille Genis.

....

Acrior illa tamen pergit, Curasque fatigat:  
Tanti est doctorum volvere scripta Virum.  
Et liciti quae sint moderamina discere Regni,  
Quid fuerit, quid sit, noscere quicquid erit. (61-70)  
(Hence she, prodigal, has not given a thought to fleeting beauty,/ Nor feared to wake late hours with books./ How often the attendant maidens have warned her, sleepless,/ That colour, alas, will depart from rosy cheeks..../ Yet she continues, more vigorous, and wears out her cares:/ That is the price of perusing the writings of many learned men,/ And learning what acts of kings are lawful,/ Of knowing what has been, what is, and whatever will be.)<sup>137</sup>

Christina's is a single-minded pursuit of wisdom, that Astraeian attribute. Moreover, her especial study 'liciti quae sint moderamina discere Regni',



the understanding of Justice in a ruler, and of lawful government; and 'Quid fuerit, quid sit, noscere quicquid erit', the understanding of history and of prophecy.

These golden-age properties of Christina enable her to redress - as Astraea does - iron-age wrongs; she represents a new age in the history of the 'Goths', who once were warlike ravagers. 'Sic quod in ingenuas Gothus peccaverit Artes/ Vindicat, & studiis expiat Una suis.' As she alone redresses such crimes, she 'expiat' a national sin: just as the golden child removes the Roman 'vestigia....sceleris.' Similarly, Marvell's capitalization and italicisation of 'Una', transforming it into a proper name, indicates a paronomasiac allusion to Spenser's 'Una', the counterpart in his poem of Elizabeth as the royal virgin of Reformation. Moreover, Elizabeth herself had been more generally described as 'Una', in the sense of the 'One Virgo': which itself referred to the universal imperium of Astraea.<sup>138</sup> Thus, by her comparison to Sweden's monarch, the characterization of Christina as the Reformation Astraea is maintained.

Just as Christina removes the national scelus, so her beneficent character as Astraea irradiates the whole nation. 'Gloria sylvarum pariter communis utrique/ Est' (41-42). The pastoral note of 'sylvarum' recalls Virgil, while the national reference of 'communis' shows the extent of Christina's significance: by means of her own learning she inspires her people with poetry and a love of high culture.

Exemplum dociles imitantur nobile Gentes,  
Et geminis Infans imbuit Ora sonis.  
Transpositos Suecis credas migrasse Latinos,  
Carminis Romuleo sic strepit omne Nemus.  
Upsala nec priscis impar memoratur Athenis,  
Aegidae & Currus hic sua Pallas habet.  
Illinc O quales liceat sperasse Liquores,  
Quum Dea praesideat fontibus ipsa sacris!  
Illic Lacte ruant illic & flumina Melle,  
Fulvaque inauratam tingat Arena Salam. (73-81)  
(The people, eager to be taught, follow her noble example,  
And the infant fills his mouth with double sounds.)

You would think the Latins, transposed, to have changed to  
 Swedes,  
 So does every grove resound with Roman song.  
 Upsala is thought not unequal to ancient Athens,  
 Here Pallas has both her aegis and chariot.  
 O what streams one might expect from there,  
 Since the goddess herself presides over the sacred fountains!  
 There the rivers may run with milk and honey,  
 And golden sand dyes golden Sala.)

The reference to 'Pallas' here recalls the current reputation of Christina, who was known in Europe as 'the Pallas of the North'.<sup>139</sup> Christina's effect is inspiritive, creating a paradisal atmosphere. 'Illic Lacte ruant illic & flumina Melle' is a recollection of the biblical Promised Land (Exodus iii.8), which contributes to the golden-age atmosphere of these lines. The land is indeed 'inauratum', made gold; and this golden age is characterized as a Christian renovatio by the biblical reference. Quite properly, this renovation affects both men and nature - 'Suecis' and 'Fulva'.

This classical formula for renovation is emphasized by Marvell's observation that Sweden seems to be a new Rome, evincing as it does the rebirth of classical culture: 'Transpositos Suecis credas migrasse Latinos,/ Carminis Romuleo sic stripit omne Nemus.' This 'transposition' of Rome into Sweden imitates the poem's own transposition of the Virgilian Eclogue into this Revelatory Eclogue. Marvell is piquantly observing his own handiwork here.

Having portrayed Christina as Astraea, ruling this golden land, Marvell now brings his model to the surface. 'Upsalides Musae nunc et majora canemus,/ Quaequae mihi Famae non levis Aura tulit' (83-84). This parody of Eclogue IV's exordium is used to introduce 'majora', "more solemn matters". These grander themes are (as they were in Virgil's case) prophetic: from this point (85ff.) Marvell relates Christina's nature to her function in eschatological history, on the international scene. The kingpin of her eschatological activism is to be alliance with England.



This eschatological theme, taking flight from the Virgilian parody, distinguishes the Revelatory Eclogue from its classical original. For this reason Virgil's exordium occurs halfway through Marvell's Revelatory Eclogue: the 'higher theme' is not Sweden's renovatio under Christina, although this is a necessary prelude to it. The 'higher theme' is Christina's, and Sweden's, role in the universal reformatio et renovatio. This emphasis, which is also the distinction between the classical and the Revelatory Eclogue, is the motive for Marvell's positioning of the Virgilian exordium.

The first element in Marvell's description of Christina's eschatological role establishes her nature as one of the Elect who fight for Christ. In Revelation this group is identified by the seals of God upon their foreheads (the Antichristian camp carries a different mark): 'Hurt not the earth....till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads' (Rev. vii. 3). Christina bears this seal: 'Creditur haud ulli Christus signasse suorum/ Occultam gemma de meliore Notam' (85-6). She is, therefore, one of Christ's servants in the battle against Antichrist. The 'occultam gemma' is a conflation of Rev. vii.3 with Rev. ii.17:<sup>140</sup> 'To him [the Saint] that overcometh will I give.....a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it' - an image which is further developed in the next couplet. 'Quemque tenet charo descriptum Nomine semper,/ Non minus exculptum Pectora fida refert' (87-88). So Christina is portrayed, by evocation of Rev. ii.17, as one that 'overcometh' in the battle against Antichrist.

As a paragon of piety, she is likened to a Saint, and recommended as an example to other monarchs:

Tu quoque Sanctorum fastos Christina Sacrabis,  
Unica nec Virgo Volsiniensis erit.  
Discite nunc Reges (Majestas proxima coelo)  
Discite proh magnos hinc coluisse Deos. (91-4)

(You too will consecrate the calendar of saints, Christina,  
 The virgin of Bolsena shall not be alone.  
 Learn now, kings, (majesty nearest to heaven),  
 Ah, learn from this source to worship the great gods.)

The kings upon whom Christina's example is pressed are to learn from her 'magnos coluisse Deos'; if they do not yet worship Christ as she does (89), then these must be 'the kings of the earth' - with whom Milton too contrasted Christina:<sup>141</sup> those who by omission or even complicity serve the Scarlet Whore. The next couplet reveals that they are indeed worldly princes. 'Ah pudeat Tantos puerilia fingere coepta,/ Nugas nescio quas, & male quaerere Opes' (95-6). These are the monarchs savaged by Marvell in the following year as 'Unhappy Princes, ignorantly bred,/ By Malice some, by Errour more misled;' there, they dressed and dined while Cromwell conquered (350f.) - here they dally with 'foolish projects' while Christina worships. They are the denizens of 'Regal Sloth'. In the First Anniversary they are contrasted to the active Saint, Cromwell, and the same comparison occurs here:

Acer Equo cunctos dum praeterit ille Britanno,  
 Et pecoris spoliū nescit inerme sequi.  
 Ast Aquilam poscit Germano pellere Nido,  
 Deque Palatino Monte fugare Lupam. (97-100)  
 (While one man, zealous, surpasses all with the British horse,  
 And scorns to seek an undefended prize.  
 But he desires to drive the Eagle from its German nest,  
 And to rout the she-wolf from the Palatine.)

Thus Cromwell, the "zealous" ('Acer') eschatological actor, is contrasted with the 'kings of the earth': his aim to liberate Europe from the powers of Antichrist, particularly the beleaguered nation of Germany - which was considered by English Protestants to be a victim of the ravaging power of Catholicism in its temporal aspect.<sup>142</sup> Here that temporal Antichrist is represented by the Catholic antagonist in Europe, the Holy Roman Empire ('Aquilam'). The spiritual aspect of Antichrist in Europe is the Catholic Church itself, the wolf ('Lupam') of John x. 12:<sup>143</sup> female, here, because of its character as the Scarlet Whore (100).



Having contrasted Cromwell's aims with the attitudes of the majority of princes, Marvell turns to Christina, who is herself a Protestant prince.

Vos etiam latos in preadam jungite Campos,  
 Impiaque arctatis cingite Lustra Plagis.  
Victor Oliverus nudum Caput exerit Armis,  
 Ducere sive sequi nobile laetus Iter.  
 Qualis jam Senior Solymae Godfredus ad Arces,  
 Spina cui canis floruit alba Comis. (101-106)  
 (You two should join your broad fields in hope of booty,  
 And surround the dens of iniquity with tightened nets.  
 Victorious Oliver exposes his bare head in battle,  
 Glad to lead or to follow a noble course,  
 Just as once to the citadel of Jerusalem went Godfrey, the Elder,  
 On whose gray hairs flowered the white thorn.)

Here Marvell postulates the alliance of England and Sweden in the cause of the Latter-Day struggle: that Christina should join with Cromwell to extirpate the 'Impia....Lustra' of Popery. She, like Cromwell, can cast her eschatological activism into the form of war - 'Victor Oliverus nudum Caput exerit Armis'. Like the Crusader Godfrey of Buillogne.<sup>144</sup> Cromwell seeks to free the 'Holy City': in this case, God's Church.

Marvell envisages Christina, in alliance with him, as a veritable 'goddess' of war:

Et Lappos Christina potest & solvere Finnos,  
 Ultima quos Boreae carcere Claustra premunt.  
Aeoliis quales Venti fremuere sub antris,  
 Et tentant Montis corripuisse moras.  
 Hanc Dea si summa demiserit Arce procellam  
 Quam gravis Austriacis Hesperisque cadat! (107-112)  
 (Christina can loose both the Lapps and the Finns,  
 Whom the distant barriers of Boreas hold in prison,  
 Just as the winds roared in Aeolian caves,  
 And tried to sweep away the mountain barriers.  
 If the goddess should send this tempest down from her high  
 citadel,  
 How heavy it would fall on the Austrians and the Spanish!)

These lines suggest that Christina's power is like a force of nature, 'Aeoliis quales Venti fremuere sub antris'. Since it is warlike, it is a desolating power to the enemies of God: 'tentant Montis corripuisse moras', a 'procellam' which would lay waste both the Spanish and the Austrians. These two Hapsburg, Catholic powers are properly

the target of desolatio in the Latter Days. Marvell's expressed hope is that the 'divine' Christina (III) will be the agent of this desolation.

For she is still a supernatural being, the 'dea' Astraea who turns the iron-age of Winter into golden Spring, her own season:

Non ibi lenta pigro stringuntur frigore Verba,  
Solibus, & tandem Vere liquanda novo.  
Sed radiis hyemem Regina potentior urit;  
Haecque magis solvit, quam ligat illa Polum (115-118)  
(Slow words are not bound there with sluggish cold,  
Finally to be melted by the sun and the new spring.  
For the Queen, more potent, scorches Winter with her beams,  
And thaws more than winter binds the pole.)

Christina's supernatural power over the climate of Sweden, allaying the effects of its location in the extreme North, is a reflex of her character as Astraea, the goddess who bestows 'eternal spring' upon the earth. 'Slow words' are in fact swift and liquid in the North because of her presence: meaning that her commands (forecast in the previous passage) are instantly transformed into actions. This thought relates her 'Spring'-like commands to her reforming activism in Europe, reformation being the true form of 'Spring'. She releases Northern Europe from its 'Winter' under Antichrist - that is, she will relieve Protestant Germany of its oppressors.

Thus the prophetic vision of her eschatological role is framed by Astraeian reference: the opening of the vision signalled by an imitation of Virgil's exordium, and its close (114) blending into the supernatural character of Astraea as Spring (115-118). War is seen in the light of ultimate renovatio: Christina as the agent of desolation to the Antichristian powers - a 'Dea' of war - is here set in the context of her character as the Reformation Astraea, 'Dea' of renovatio.

For, to complete his prophetic purpose, Marvell must place desolatio in the light of renovatio, to which it is a necessary prelude. The devastation of Catholic Europe is a means, not an end, with the aim of reformation; and the fortunate issue of reformation has already been evidenced in Ingelo by the golden age of Sweden. Christina, although



a militant agent of reformation, is still Astraeon, since it is Astraea's function to realize reformation. Thus what seems, here, to be merely eulogistic extravagance is in fact a functional idea in the pattern of Revelatory Eclogue. Christina will dissolve the Winter of the iron age, not only in her own land, but in Europe also. Like her father, she will become a salient figure for international Protestantism.

Accordingly, Marvell sounds the note of Protestant community between Sweden and England. 'Dicitur & nostros moerens audisse Labores,/ Fortis & ingenuam Gentis amasse Fidem' (119-20). Christina understands, he says, the tribulations of England in reformation, and 'loves' their 'ingenuam....Fidem' - their true and "primitive" religion. Like Milton, Marvell sees no political barrier to sympathy between these two Protestant nations; for 'Libertatem quae dominatur amat' (124).

With a final bow at Christina's wisdom (125-6), Marvell compares her to Solomon, the prince who built God's Temple. 'Digna cui Solomon meritos retulisset honores' (125). It may be recalled that in the First Anniversary Marvell asserted that Cromwell built 'the Temple in [his] dayes': that, in effect, he "reformed" the Elect Nation. The function of the reference, in Ingelo, to the builder of the Temple has similar ramifications: Christina's wisdom, like Solomon's, is a holy wisdom, which enables her to pursue the construction of the Temple in an as yet Antichristian Europe. Again, what appears to be conventional praise is a functional allusion.

The whole poem is integrated in this covert manner, and what appear to be discrete or digressive moments are actually variations on the theme of Revelatory Eclogue. The apostrophe to Ingelo, the description of Sweden, the portrait of the Queen, the classical comparisons to Diana and other goddesses, Christina's pursuit of learning, Sweden's culture, Christina's piety, Cromwell's zeal, war in Europe, Christina's magnanimity - all these form a narrative in which what might have been conventional

praise is transformed into a Revelatory Eclogue. The purpose of the poem - the alliance which will reform Europe - is embedded in the theme of desolatio et renovatio, and centred in the portrayal of Christina as the Reformation Astraea.

The poem's close is similarly cohesive, although at first sight its intimate pastoralism might seem out of place.

Hanc tua, sed melius celebraverit, Ingele, Musa;  
 Et labor est vestrae debitus ille Lyrae.  
 Nos sine te frustra Thamisis saliceta subimus,  
 Sparsaque per steriles Turba vagamur Agros.  
 Et male tentanti querulum respondet Avena:  
 Quin & Rogério dissiluire fides.  
 Haec tamen absenti memores dictamus Amico,  
 Grataque speramus qualiacumque fore. (127-134)  
 (But your must might proclaim her better, Ingelo,  
 And that labour is owed to your lyre.  
 Without you, we go in vain under the willows of the Thames;  
 A scattered band, we wander through barren fields,  
 And the pipe responds mournfully to those attempting it  
 unskilfully.  
 And, indeed, Roger's strings have burst asunder.  
 Nevertheless, we write these remembrances to an absent friend,  
 And we hope that, whatever their merit, they will be pleasing.)

Here Marvell portrays himself and Ingelo's other accustomed companions as shepherd-poets; the pastoral ethos here, the poet-shepherds, even the thoughts, are characteristic of Virgil's Eclogues: Marvell indicates here that his poem originates in that world.

Moreover, it is, as I mentioned above, a characteristic feature for the Revelatory Eclogue to close upon an intimate note - to "return" from the world of prophecy and 'grander themes' to the current moment. In Virgil's Eclogue IV this is achieved by an admonition to the golden child that he smile at his mother (60f.). Closing Ingelo, Marvell returns to the banks of 'Thamisis' from the European theatre: and expresses a similarly affectionate thought, that Ingelo's friends are inconsolable till his return. In this fashion the epistle's valediction becomes part of the pattern of Revelatory Eclogue.

This exit also reflects the major theme of Ingelo, although in a suitably "diminished" manner. For the band of poets, deprived of



Ingelo's presence, 'frustra subimus', and experience 'steriles.... Agros.' Even their poetry suffers from this state of deprivation (131-2). Hence both the inhabitants and the landscape of this pastoral world are "desolate": a state which reflects the 'grander theme' of the poem - desolatio et renovatio. Their minor renovation will be effected when Ingelo returns. By its variation upon the theme, and its imitation of the Virgilian model, this close is appropriate to the structure of Revelatory Eclogue in Ingelo.

### vii. Revelatory Eclogue and the Latter Days.

In Ingelo, Marvell places the Anglo-Swedish alliance in its eschatological context, as part of the Latter-Day extirpation of the Scarlet Whore. This Latter-day project was understood to be already in progress:

But now it is manifest and apparent everywhere, how the Horns of this Beast [the kings of the earth], wherein this Arch-Whore drunk in Saints blood sitteth, I mean the Forces and Armies that are abroad in all parts do begin to persecute this great confounded Whore, devouring her flesh and laying her desolate, as it is put into their hearts, untill the words of God shall be fulfilled upon her.<sup>145</sup>

This contemporary phenomenon was, then, the fulfilment of Revelation xvii. 16: that 'the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh.' This project is that which Marvell celebrates in the First Anniversary, where Cromwell pursues the Whore to her Roman den. As one of the princes who execute this desolatio, Christina - like Cromwell - is an eschatological actor. To make war for this purpose was to forward the Kingdom, as Cromwell does in the Ode; as Marvell remarked elsewhere, wars have a function in God's providential plan and sometimes, therefore, he orders them 'out of Complacency'.<sup>146</sup>

In Christina's case, as in that of the 'great Captain', martial activism 'puts Armes into Religions hand';<sup>147</sup> and is the duty of a Protestant prince, as long as the world labours under the Beast. Thus Christina is addressed in Marvell's In Eandem as 'Bellipotens Virgo'.<sup>148</sup> The Reformation Astraea pursues war in the service of the final peace of mankind; as a Protestant prince Christina 'labentis sustulit Orbis Onus' (Ingelo, 49). Until the desolatio has been completed the true Virgilian Pax cannot be realized. As Virgil intimated in Eclogue IV, the realization of the golden age (as of the Kingdom Age) is gradual, and for some time 'pauca tamen suberunt priscae vestigia fraudis' (31). This period of realization - which for the chiliast is towards the end of the Latter Days - is related by Revelatory Eclogue to the desolation which precedes the renovation. In Ingelo Marvell appropriates the Virgilian prophetic persona to the contemporary prophecy of victory over Antichrist.

For his Reformation Astraea Marvell was fortunate to address so suitable a contemporary prince: or perhaps Christina's character itself suggested a Revelatory Eclogue to him. At any rate, there was a wealth of similarity between her and England's own version of the Astraeon figure, Elizabeth - as Marvell himself notes; and Christina was as conscious of this fact as anyone, having displayed a fascination with Elizabeth (who was not long dead) from her childhood.<sup>149</sup> They were both virgin queens of Protestant nations, both learned, and both encouraged the flowering of learning in their countries. Much of what Marvell details here was true. Christina was indeed an insomniac who worked through the night: and the comparison with Diana is particularly apt, not only because Christina was adamantly celibate, but also because she possessed a passion for hunting.<sup>150</sup> Marvell was, therefore, fortunate to observe so close an analogue to Elizabeth, a Reformation Astraea for his own time; and when he glances at Spenser's



Una he records this fact - that what Elizabeth was to his great predecessor, Christina could be to Marvell. Spenser, indeed, both in his Faerie Queene and his eclogic Calender, was a figure in that Virgilian prophetic tradition<sup>151</sup> to which Marvell lays claim here.

The immediate occasion of the poem also had some personal importance for him. That he was convinced of the benefit of an Anglo-Swedish alliance is evident from his longest extant autograph manuscript: a translation of a political tract probably written by the Swedish envoy in England. Dated to 1658, and entitled 'The Justice of the Swedish Cause and the danger of the Protestant Cause therein', it was intended to urge upon the Protectorate an alliance with Sweden against Holland and Spain.<sup>152</sup> Marvell's interest in this tract, four years after his Christina poems had encouraged the Swedish alliance, manifests his continuing concern with Sweden's role in the struggle to forward the cause of Protestantism in Europe.

By this date his Reformation Astraea had abdicated (in 1654) and defected to 'Popery'. His later references to her, in the Rehearsal Transpros'd, reveal the bitterness of that defection.<sup>153</sup> In 1653 Christina's purpose was a secret, and she still looked like a new Elizabeth. On this foundation Marvell built his "public" Revelatory Eclogue, one in which the Virgilian formula could mesh with current events in Europe. He had, as I shall show in the next chapter, already written a "private" poem that contained the classical formula; and this vision was not lost in 1654: the hope of a happy desolatio animates also The First Anniversary of 1654 and the evocation of Virgilian prophecy in Illustrissimo Viro, two decades later. The Virgilian formula thus possessed for Marvell an enduring significance within his eschatological preoccupation.

### Appendix III

#### Progressive Revelation in 'In Legationem'

I mentioned, above, that Marvell's Latin poems display a community of interest and of procedure with his English lyrics. Of this reciprocity between Marvell's poems in the two languages, and of the prophetic uses of the problematic, In Legationem is an example.

First, it should be noted that the Latin poems manifest the same habit of thought that characterizes the English. They evince a delight in overt antitheses,<sup>1</sup> both of meaning and of syntax, and a concern for emphatic closure which reflects Marvell's general preoccupation with Endings. The operation of simple antithesis in the Latin poetry is well illustrated by Marvell's epigram on Bilboro, where the whole poem turns upon the opposition of two hills, each of which represents an aspect of Fairfax's character.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, it has been noted that the Latin poems favour that resource of the Latin language, a parallelism of syntax which plays against an opposition in sense.<sup>3</sup> (An obvious example is 'Scilicet hoc Martis, sed Pacis Nuntius' in In Legationem - but such examples are legion.) These devices are simple enough, and by no means imitate the complexities of the problematic: but they do illustrate that habit of mind which informed it. Moreover, I would suggest that in some at least of the Latin poems the problematic operates, in a manner similar to that of the English poems.

A useful example of Marvell's "habit of mind", as well as of his eschatological preoccupation, is In Legationem....Oliveri St. John. Very little critical attention has been vouchsafed to this poem - doubtless it does not appeal to those who feel that Marvell's Latin poetry is merely an aberration - but I would suggest that this poem



forges an important link in the relationship between the English and the Latin poetry.

It reflects, most directly, two important things: first, that habit of mind which produced the problematic - the 'Amphibious' or 'double....mind' that I suggested, in an earlier chapter, was the psychological motive of the problematic. The poem is pervaded by this "doubleness", and the ambiguities in which it delights. Secondly, it demonstrates the arcane nature of prophecy: examining that "interval" of doubt that precedes the fulfilment (or 'revealing') of a prophecy. And it does this in a manner which directly relates the secret nature of prophecy to the "hidden" quality of the problematic itself. In Legationem is "progressive revelation" in action.

The occasion of the poem was the mission of Oliver St. John and Walter Strickland, envoys of Parliament, to negotiate an alliance with the Dutch in February 1651. The mission was abortive, but, as the poem shows, at the time of composition its issue was as yet unknown.<sup>4</sup> This fact - an unknown issue - allows Marvell to play games of prediction on the basis of St. John's name: games, in effect, of "prophecy".

Ingeniosa Viriscontingunt Nomina magnis,  
 Ut dubites Casu vel Ratione data.  
 Nam Sors, caeca licet, tamen est praesaga futuri;  
 E sub fatidico Nomine vera premit. (1-4)  
 (Such apt names befall great men  
 That one doubts whether they are given by chance or reason.  
 For Fortune, although blind, yet presages the future,  
 And under a prophetic name covers the truth.)

At the very outset, then, Marvell states the premise of his poem, which will consist of an extended play on St. John's name: that this name is 'fatidico Nomine', a prophecy. But this prophetic name is wrapped in secrecy: Fate is itself blind or 'unseeing', unable to know its own effects, and it also 'blinds' men to the nature of the future by "covering" it with a cryptic prophecy (4). Thus the nature of prophecy is both disclosure ('vera') and concealment ('sub....Nomine').

This was, of course, the accepted nature of prophecy, and of apocalyptic in particular: that it at once concealed (in cryptic language) and revealed. In this manner the lines provide a statement of that theory of revelatio.

The whole poem turns upon this 'prophetic Name', its nature and its potential meaning: it is 'fatidico Nomine' (4), 'ancipiti Nomine' (8), and 'Legatio Nomen' (13). A name identifies a man, just as a prophecy identifies an event; the witty "problem" to which Marvell addresses himself in this poem is that here the name is Protean and prophetic too. It refers not only to St. John himself, but to his mission and the unknown outcome of that mission.

Et Tu, cui soli voluit Respublica credi,  
Foedera seu Belgis seu nova bella feras;  
Haud frustra cecidit tibi Compellatio fallax,  
Ast Scriptum ancipiti Nomine Munus erat,  
Scilicet hoc Martis, sed Pacis Nuntius illo: (5-9)  
(And you, to whom alone the Republic wished to be entrusted,  
May bear to the Dutch either a treaty or a new war.  
Not without cause did the captious meeting fall to you,  
For your office was written in your double name:  
In the last, a messenger of war, but in the first, of peace.)

The name is a "double" one, because the purpose of St. John's mission is two-fold: an ambivalent brief for either alliance or hostilities.

'Foedera seu Belgis seu nova bella feras'. The construction here ('seu....seu') imitates the antithetical possibilities of Peace and War; St. John is an ambiguous legate. Of this ambiguity, this "doubleness", his name is a prophetic sign, for 'Oliver' - the olive - promises peace,<sup>5</sup> whereas 'St. John' speaks of war.

Quite in what way 'St. John' signifies war has been a matter for editors' disputes, but I would side with McQueen and Donno, both of whom understand by this 'Martis....Nuntius' the author of Revelation.<sup>6</sup> (Margoliouth, on the other hand, argued that this was a reference to the Apostle John:<sup>7</sup> this distinction is irrelevant, since it was thought in this period that the same John wrote the Gospel, the Epistles, and the Revelation.)<sup>8</sup> The identification of St. John here is proper



to the context on several levels. First, the Revelation is a prophecy of the latter-day times of 'wars and rumours of wars',<sup>9</sup> and St. John was an eminent prophet of war.<sup>10</sup> Marvell's 'Martis....Nuntius' is also a prophet of war; and by recalling the author of Revelation he is invoking a prophet par excellence (one for all times), even as he locates this potential war as a feature of the contemporary Latter Days.

'Ast scriptum ancipiti Nomine Munus erat': St. John's name is an ambiguous crypto of his "double mission", compounding two opposites - 'Oliver' and 'St. John' have an antithetical relationship. Each of these two names provides a potential key to the ambiguous prophecy: 'Clavibus his Jani ferrea Claustra regis' (10). The doors of Janus are "double" because they symbolize either peace or war<sup>11</sup> (like the "name" itself), conveying an ambiguous meaning. As Marvell described them in another poem, they are 'geminae....portae' because of their ambiguity.<sup>12</sup> (Since they provide, as here, an image of "doubleness", it is not surprising that Marvell's poetry supplies allusions to the doors of Janus: which provide a crystallization of his preoccupation with "doubleness" or ambiguity.)

In this manner St. John's symbolic nomines are described as the 'keys' to another symbol, Janus' gates: an abstruse notion which compounds the mystery of whether 'Peace or War' is to be the issue. They are keys to a 'sign' of historical events while being themselves prophetic signs. The mystery to which they refer is properly symbolized by the doors of Janus, since Janus himself was understood to be the god of mysteries.<sup>13</sup>

This particular mystery, of course, revolves around the meaning of the prophecy in the nomen. It was axiomatic that prophecy required a 'Key' to its cryptic intent, as I indicated in Section i. The seminal Clavis Apocalyptica of Joseph Mede was only one of many such works aiming to provide the 'key' that would unlock the secrets of

Revelation. And the keys that controlled prophecy could also, like St. John's nominal 'Clavibus', control the doors of Janus; because Revelation's prophecies of war and peace were historically reliable. To combine the keys of prophecy with the keys of Janus, as Marvell does here, is to relate prophecy to one of its major subjects - the alternation of peace and war. In this fashion the current situation, of possible conflict with the Dutch, is related by Marvell to the process of history as revealed by prophecy. For the response of the Dutch to St. John's mission will confirm and fulfil the prophecy inherent in his name; their response, that is, will clarify the meaning of the name. This poem considers the interval between that prophecy and its fulfilment - the "progressive revelation" of history by prophecy to men, and of prophecy by history.

The image of Janus' gates at the centre of the poem can thus be seen to "crystallize" the motif of prophetic "doubleness"; that ambiguity of meaning in prophecy that corresponds to the problematic of Marvell's poetry. It was famous as an image of the "double" nature of man and of the ambiguities of his experience,<sup>14</sup> and to relate it to the nature of prophecy was merely to extend its message of 'mystery'.

From this inclusive image Marvell returns to the political reality that "bodies out" historical prophecy: the embassy itself.

Non opus Arcanos Chartis committere Sensus,  
 Et varia licitos condere Fraude Dolos.  
Tu quoque si traceas tamen est Legatio Nomen  
Et velut in Scytale publica verba refert. (11-14)  
 (Nor is it necessary to commit secret meanings to paper,  
 And to hide allowed deceptions with shifting guile.  
 Even if you are silent, yet your name is an embassy,  
 And, just as in secret writing, it bears official words.)

Marvell is here satirizing the diplomacy of hidden motives and the ciphers of secret intelligence: in such a forum St. John is a highly unsuitable ambassador, since his future intentions are not "hidden" but revealed - 'Tu quoque si taceas tamen est Legatio Nomen'. Revealed,



in the sense that the alternatives at least are known; and yet still in a sense concealed, because it is like 'Scytale', a secret despatch. Hence this double nature is not only part of the character of prophecy, but also in character for secret political communications: cipher, like prophecy, is a cryptic medium. However, even this twist of the logical screw is not sufficient for Marvell's satisfaction: he adds yet another, that both cypher and the 'fatidico Nomine' are disclosures, in the sense that they are 'publica verba'. They are 'official' words and also 'words in the public domain', available to all who wish to divine them. (As, indeed, all prophecy is: it needs to be divined.) In these lines senses of "concealment" and "disclosure" undergo several realignments, \* all of which turn upon the nature of prophecy as represented by the Nomen.

Having juggled, here, with the 'Arcanos....Sensus' of nomenclature, prophecy, and cipher, Marvell might well have been describing the nature of his own poetry: it, too, was secret, requiring 'revelatio' and engaging with the nature of prophecy in the explication of events.

At this point, however, he moves from speculation to the nub of the matter:

Vultis Oliverum, Batavi, Sanctumve Johannem?  
 Antiochus gyro non brevior stetit. (15-16)  
 (Dutchmen, do you wish Oliver or St. John?  
 Antiochus stood not in a shorter circle.)

To end this poem on nomenclature, Marvell recites a list of names which, like "signs", summarize the situation. The alternatives for the 'Batavi' are 'Oliverum' or 'Johannem', and they like 'Antiochus' must give him a firm answer.<sup>15</sup> The circle in which Antiochus stood - on the spot, as it were - is here composed of names, line 15 being almost purely a catalogue of them. Moreover, placed between 'Oliverum' and 'Sanctum Johannem', the 'Batavi' are suitably crowded by St. John's nomen. The whole construction of this line enacts the absolute power of the "sign": for the Dutch there is no escape from the nomen's prophecy,

but then prophecy is by nature inescapable. The moment of truth - the Dutch choice that will decide the event - has arrived, and the "interval" between prophecy and fulfilment is about to end.

This finale is no less witty than the rest of the poem. For whichever alternative the Dutch choose - peace or war, John or Oliver - they merely fulfil the nomen; Oliver St. John's name is a "double" prophecy, and therefore the event cannot fail to match it, since it embraces both alternatives. This "circle" in logic is the submerged meaning of the 'gyro....breviore', and is the reason why the Dutch cannot escape the prophetic character of the nomen.

As I said, the prophecy cannot fail, because (as it was understood) prophecy never does; only men fail, by being 'mistook' in its interpretation. Thus, in this line, the veritable triumph of "doubleness" in its prophetic form provides the culmination of this motif.

It also provides, as its poetic analogy, a Final Image: for In Legationem, Latin or not, manifests a problematic. The ambiguity of St. John's name provides the framework of the whole poem, and its own "double" significance has produced the poem's antithetical fancies. Just as prophecy is related to the problematic, so here it provides the materials of problematic; reinforced by a multiple play upon the nature of "doubleness" or ambiguity itself. The Final Image, postulating that the ambiguity of the prophetic 'Nomen' guarantees its appropriateness and its fulfilment, thus resolves the "doubleness" of the poem. At this point "doubleness" ceases to represent doubt or tension, and becomes the source of certainty.

Moreover, it may be noted that the Latin language can not only encase this Final Image, but ratify it in a way not possible in English. For the construction 'Oliverum, Batavi, Sanctumve Johannem' conceals the "either....or" formula in a suffix, '-ve', which has been incorporated into the nomen. The element of choice is thus elided syntactically: depriving the Dutch of any status in the fulfilment of the prophecy,



which has forestalled their choice by comprising the alternatives within itself. The succession of names thus remains an intact series, imitating the absolute power of the nomen. By thus affirming the integrity of the nomen - its determining power - this linguistic element confirms the sense of the Final Image.

In this manner In Legationem demonstrates the affinity between Marvell's Latin and English works, both in structure and in theme. By its use of prophecy in conjunction with the problematic, it evinces his eschatological preoccupation; clarifying also the relationship between 'progressive revelation' and his own poetry.