

THE RELIGION OF OLIVER CROMWELL  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS  
CONCEPTION OF PROVIDENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

Countless biographies and other works have treated Oliver Cromwell as a political figure. Some few have dealt sketchily with his personal religious life as seen in his private letters and the testimony of his contemporaries. Few have considered his impact on his times in the light of his religious experience.

This study is an attempt to trace the development of Cromwell's central religious convictions, using especially his conception of Providence as a key to an understanding of his life and work.

For three centuries historians have been engaged in exhaustive studies of Cromwell, the general; Cromwell, the statesman; or Cromwell, the diplomat. Each generation, according to its fears or hopes, has seen in him its particular saint or tyrant. He has been castigated unmercifully or praised indiscriminately according to men's party, church, or nationality. In recent years he has been seen as the prototype of the modern dictator.<sup>1</sup> At the same time a school of Marxist historians who have rediscovered the seventeenth century as a phase of the perennial class struggle have branded him an "exploiting bourgeois."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice P. Ashley, Oliver Cromwell: The Conservative Dictator (London: J. Cape, 1937).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Eduard Bernstein, Cromwell and Communism, trans. H. J. Stenning (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1930); D. W. Petegorsky, Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War (London: V. Gollancz, 1940).

But among the significant trends in the recent study of the seventeenth century, there has also come to be a new interest in, and understanding of the religious movements of the time. Puritanism in all its forms has been subjected to more intensive study in the past generation than in all the intervening years combined. The result is that it is now possible, and necessary, to understand Cromwell, the Puritan--his religious conviction and motivations, his relation to the Puritan cause, and his sense of divine mission in defending and extending that cause.

This study endeavors to discover how far Cromwell's sense of Providence--that is, God working through events to lead men--called him in his time to a special work as the leader of an army, the protector of "the people of God," and the defender of the faith in troubled times. It further seeks to discover how far his conviction of providential calling, through providing an important key to his character, throws light on the larger events of the Puritan Revolutionary period.

No student who approaches this period can do so without a deep sense of obligation to the great nineteenth century contributions of Thomas Carlyle, Samuel Rawson Gardiner, and Charles Harding Firth. In this generation, the tireless efforts of Wilbur C. Abbott of Harvard have now made available a definitive collection of Cromwell's works, together with an invaluable bibliography of the man and his times. A host of other scholars, including many recent students of Puritanism, have helped immeasurably to give the writer a keener appreciation of the timeless nature of the problems of the Puritan era and a lasting interest in the human figures who wrestled so valiantly with those problems.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY LIFE AND RELIGION

#### Background and Early Influences

Family background.--On the 25th of April, 1599, there was born to Robert and Elizabeth Cromwell a son who was four days later baptized "Oliver" in the church of St. John the Baptist in Huntingdon.

Robert Cromwell was a descendant of Richard Cromwell, who was a favorite nephew of the one-time minister of Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell. Despite the latter's eventual loss of royal favor, he managed to retain possession of most of the church lands deeded to him by his lavish sovereign, so that these were handed down through the nephew to succeeding generations until the property came in much diminished extent to the hand of Sir Oliver Cromwell, Robert's elder brother. From Tudor times the Cromwell family in Huntingdonshire increased in numbers until by the seventeenth century it represented, with the Montagues of Kimbolton, one of the two leading families of that county, though their very numbers had in time considerably split up the original fortune of Richard Cromwell-Williams. As a younger son, Robert's own share of the inheritance was comparatively small, consisting mainly of the friary farms and tithes of the nearby parish of Hartford. Nevertheless, as a member of such a recognized family,

his social position among the established gentry was secure, and his income, while modest in comparison with his brother's at Hinchinbrook, was adequate for the maintenance of his position in life.

While it is unnecessary for our purposes to go further into the ancestry of Oliver Cromwell, it should be noted that on both his father's and mother's sides, the inheritance had derived in large part from a loyalty to the Tudor conception of crown interests, whose material rewards had been at the expense of the church, but whose loyalty to the established church was itself unquestioned. Like the Tudors themselves, they had moved from Catholic to Protestant as the national interests and their personal interests had coincided. Thus the great-uncle of Oliver's mother, Robert Steward, had been the last Catholic prior of Ely, and when the Tudor revolution in the church came, had been so convinced by Sir Richard Cromwell of the direction in which destiny pointed that he became the first Protestant dean of Ely cathedral under the new regime. Both her father, William, and then her brother, Thomas Steward, had farmed cathedral lands, which were in time to play an important role in the material fortunes of Oliver himself.

Outwardly, Oliver Cromwell was born into a home where the religious background was one of loyalty to the established church with whose interests the family had become so closely involved. The house he was born in was a part of the ancient Hospital of St. John, and like much of the land his father farmed, was rented from the church authorities and thus subject to their control.



Beyond this, not much is known of the home in which he was reared. His father, who had like his father before him, matriculated at Queen's College, Cambridge, then spent some time at Lincoln's Inn, has left no evidence of any particular Puritan tendencies there acquired, though there may well have been such, if we may judge from the temper of the times and the subsequent education of Oliver. Certainly his father had been subject to most of the manifold influences which made Puritans of so many of the gentry of the eastern counties during the reign of James I. For the most part, his life followed the general pattern: a bailiff and a justice of the peace, a trustee of the Free School of Huntingdon, and even a member of Parliament in 1593.<sup>1</sup>

When Oliver was only four, Queen Elizabeth died. What must have made an even deeper impression on the child was the visit of the new king, James I, who was lavishly entertained at his Uncle Oliver's Hinchinbrook estate on his journey southward to assume the throne of the two kingdoms. Whatever the impression on James I, which seems in view of his repeated later visits to Hinchinbrook to have been not unfavorable, the elaborate preparations and general extravagance of the royal entertainment cannot have failed to impress a child of four, accustomed as his own branch of the family was to more sober living and moderation in all things.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilbur Cortez Abbott, Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell (4 vols.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1937-47), is the most complete collection of Cromwell's works. See ibid., I, 1-20, for detailed treatment of Cromwell's family.

Dr. Beard and the Huntingdon School.--An event of less glamor but of more far-reaching consequence followed in 1604, when a new schoolmaster, Thomas Beard, was installed in the Free School of Huntingdon, and the young Cromwell was soon after put under his tutelage. As we shall see, the influence of this Puritan cleric and teacher may well have been one of the most formative in the entire life of Cromwell.

A member of Jesus College, Cambridge, Beard had received his M.A. in 1588, and being ordained had served as rector at Aythorp in Essex, and of Kimbolton, the seat of the nearby Montagues before coming to Huntingdon. While not one of the most radical Puritans, Beard seems to have been one of the younger clerics who was thoroughly steeped in the Calvinistic theology then prominent at Cambridge, and also shared a Puritan concern over such outward reforms as the position of the communion table, bowing at the name of Jesus, and the use of the cross in worship. Whether or not he also objected in principle to pluralism as did many Puritans, he is known to have succumbed to its financial allurements later, becoming prebend<sup>1</sup> of Lincoln in addition to his Huntingdon living.<sup>1</sup> Because of the formative power of his early influence but even more because this Puritan divine continues to reappear in Cromwell's life and political career, a closer look at his character and beliefs may be rewarding.

Even before his coming to Huntingdon, Beard was known as the author of The Theatre of God's Judgements, originally published

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<sup>1</sup>A. B. Grosart, "Thomas Beard," Dictionary of National Biography, ed. by Leslie Stephen (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1885), IV, 14-15.

in 1597. Its popularity as a Puritan tract is attested by the fact that it went through a second edition in 1612, and a third in 1631. In dedicating this latter edition to the mayor, aldermen and burgesses of Huntingdon, Beard expresses his thanks to "all those that stood faithfully for me in the late business of the lecture," commending also the patience of a people to whom for thirty years he had "painfully preached the Word of God."<sup>1</sup> The content of that preaching and teaching can be judged from a brief perusal of his famous work. However little or much Cromwell must have read in his lifetime, it would seem almost inconceivable that he failed to read this little volume by his schoolmaster. Moreover, its contents must have formed the substance of much of Beard's teaching and preaching, and its viewpoint must have been absorbed by Cromwell in the very air he breathed.

But first a further word should be interjected about Beard's personal relationship with Cromwell. He was pastor and teaching in the community for thirty years. Whereas for a long time before he had become master, it was said in a grateful tribute from his parishioners in afteryears, "all the said parishes and town of Huntingdon were utterly destitute of a learned preacher to teach and instruct them in the Word of God," Beard not only taught and preached but later became prominent in Huntingdon's civil affairs as well.<sup>2</sup> In this capacity he contributed to the young Cromwell's rise in local politics, all the while being intimately related to the spiritual life of the Cromwell family as their pastor. In his first recorded speech in Parliament, we are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

to hear Cromwell refer to his former mentor, citing that divine's opinion of the popish beliefs of his diocesan bishop in the perennial debate on the power of the episcopacy<sup>te</sup>. What then may Cromwell have learned from his schoolmaster, pastor, and lifelong friend?

The Theatre of God's Judgements in both its erudition and its popular appeal is typical of much Puritan writing in early seventeenth-century England. Its theme as stated in the preface is "That nothing in the world cometh to pass by chance or accident, but only and always by the prescription of His will."<sup>1</sup> The over-arching divine supremacy over all the affairs of men, both public and private, means in practice that any violation of the laws by which the world is governed is sure to bring divine punishment upon the offender, whether of high or low estate. If the Divine Lawgiver seems to "use oftener negative prohibitions than affirmative commandments in his law," this also has its purpose-- "to the end above all things to distract and turn us from evil."<sup>2</sup> The main body of the work then, according to the practice of the times, consists in an exhaustive recitation of supposedly historical instances of how divine retribution has fallen inexorably upon the violator of God's laws. "Vengeance is mine" might well be the text for the entire work, for with every breach of divine law, punishment follows swift and sure, usually in the form of sudden death to the sinner.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Beard, The Theatre of God's Judgments (4th ed.; London: S. I. and M. H., 1648), preface, no pagination.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Beard draws evidence from an amazing variety of sources, from Old Testament story to contemporary observation, from ancient to modern history, from sacred and secular writings. Despite the author's credulity in accepting indiscriminately much that was only hearsay, or at best only folk tale, he was at one with his age in thus supporting his theological arguments by fable as well as fact.<sup>1</sup> Even in his undue emphasis upon the terrible aspects of divine punishment, Beard was at one with most current conceptions of religion, whether Protestant or Catholic, in his day. Men differed in their ideas as to what might save them from such catastrophe but few doubted that God might strike a man dead for breaking one of his explicit commandments.<sup>2</sup> Even so, Beard's work has more than its share of such preoccupation with the divine wrath against evildoers. He constantly presses home that "the wages of sin is death"--whether the sin be great or small. In his eyes, the Almighty may punish just as dreadfully the children who disobey their parents as the Catholic ruler who persecutes his Protestant subjects; the divine wrath may fall as heavily

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<sup>1</sup>Speaking of the mind of the seventeenth century, Bishop Sprat says of that age: "In the modern ages these Fantastical Forms were revived and possessed Christendom, in the very height of the Scholemen's time: An infinit number of Fairies haunted every house; all Churches were filled with Apparitions; men began to be frighted from their Cradles, which fright continued to their Graves, and their Names also were made the causes of scaring others." Thomas Sprat, The History of the Royal Society of London (London: Scot, 1667), p. 340.

<sup>2</sup>Sprat says again: "There have been 'tis true, some peculiar occasions, wherein God was pleas' to convince the World from Heaven, in a visible manner. . . . Isuch asI when God has taken to himself, the exemplary Punishment of some haynous Sin. From this indeed our Age is no more exempted, than it is free from those vices that are wont to provoke the Divine Vengeance." Ibid., p. 363.

upon idle pleasure-seekers who gather for a bear-baiting on a Sabbath as upon the atheist who is stricken dead for blaspheming the holy name.<sup>1</sup> While much of this seems to the modern mind to be Calvinism carried to almost a sadistic extreme, much of what seems most offensive now was representative of the medieval superstition still prevalent in the church at this time. Strangely enough, though Beard cites the Reformers often enough, Calvin himself is seldom cited in his work. Beza is referred to, and Luther several times especially where devils and witchcraft are dealt with, but any debt to Calvin is largely unacknowledged. Two inferences may be drawn from this: First, that Beard like many another Calvinist of seventeenth-century England had been more influenced by the Geneva reformer than he ever realized. Second and more likely, much of what we are wont to consider Calvinism was perhaps common to all of the more rigorous churchmen of that day.

Beard's book does reveal him in several aspects which are illuminating because of his particular influence upon the young Oliver. First, we see here the type of Puritan thinking about minor sins which was to become a part of Cromwell's conception of religion, as a boy at least. The rigidness of the sanctions upon such sins as sabbath-breaking, gambling, and cursing, as well as on the grosser sins of the flesh must have been indelibly impressed upon the boy at an early age. We may well suppose that with advanced youth and young manhood his ideas of the consequences of such sins were considerably relaxed. Still this Puritan code of

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<sup>1</sup>Beard, preface.

personal conduct was almost certainly involved in a profound way in his later conversion experience. Whether or not he seriously departed as a youth from the stern moral path of his childhood, the certainty of the divine wrath must in some respects have been vividly real to him both as a child and during his later religious experience. Under a legalistic moral code like Dr. Beard's, the penalty could be just as great a condemnation just as certain for gambling as for taking a human life. The mental anguish would likewise be as great or greater for the minor offender if that sin, however trivial to the world, merited death at the hands of an avenging God.

Second, the book reveals Beard's ecclesiastical position as a mixture of Established Church and Presbyterian elements, not uncommon in a large segment of the early Stuart church. On the one side, he can speak like a convinced reformer:

Now seeing that God hath set down a certain form of doctrine and instruction, according to which he would have us to serve him, and established a kind of discipline and policy to be observed of every man inviolably, it behooveth therefore every Christian to conform himself unto this order; and not to be guided by every fickle imagination of his own brain or every rash presumption that ariseth in himself, but only by the direct rule of God's word, which only we ought to follow.<sup>1</sup>

"The direct rule of God's word" in the language of that day meant to most Puritans the Presbyterian system. Though Beard was not one of the more forward spirits in urging that reform, he was obviously dissatisfied with the established system, yet took out most of his criticism on such surface abuses as "vain and pernicious ceremonies and strange superstitions" which he believed had been "brought in" of late.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

On the other hand, he conformed to the establishment, not only to the extent of remaining within it, but as noted, by benefiting from an extra living--a reward seldom reserved to outspoken nonconformist Puritans. That he was not always so docile, however, is clearly proved by the incident concerning his controversy with Bishop Neile, already referred to, which Cromwell brought out in his first parliamentary speech.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, Beard may be said to have been a fair example of the Puritanism of his time--anti-Roman, anti-Episcopal, strongly Calvinist in doctrine, and moderately Presbyterian in church polity.

Third, as regards his political ethics, he combined a conventional belief in political subordination with a definitely Calvinist emphasis upon the ruler's subordination to the divine will. It was part of the ominous drift of history that many Puritans were soon to find justification for rebellion on the grounds that the king had overstepped his divinely-drawn limits of power, and thus was no longer to be obeyed when his commands thus went contrary to the divine will. Beard unquestionably believed that as a general rule all are subject to the higher powers--the servant to his master, the subject to his king. To rebel ordinarily brings one of the many swift judgments of divine wrath.<sup>2</sup> But every king in turn should subject himself to the Higher Power. And if he refuses such obedience and seeks to do whatever he pleases, he may be subject to two forms of judgment. Presumably, in the long run such a king will so incur the displeasure of God that by the sum and weight of his iniquities he

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 62.

<sup>2</sup>Beard, p. 226.



will sink himself into ruin and destruction. But pending this long-term destruction, what may the subject do? Here Beard suggests radical measures:

It is necessary that we essay by all means to bring these men (if it be possible) to some modesty and fear of God which if it cannot be done by willing and gentle means, force and violence must be used to pluck them out of the fire of God's wrath.<sup>1</sup>

Though these words would have been incomprehensible to the young Cromwell at this time, they were prophetic of things to come. Nor were they isolated words, for by 1644 other Calvinists as orthodox as Samuel Rutherford were prepared to go far beyond the limits set by the Geneva Reformer in spelling out the right of resistance to a monarch who fails to recognize his duty of obedience toward God.<sup>2</sup> That right, according to Calvin, lies not with individuals but with the lower magistrates. This doctrine, becoming more and more timely as Charles I pressed his father's "divine right of kings" ever nearer to the breaking point, was to become a potent weapon to rationalize that resistance of Parliament which was now being variously termed "the rights of subjects," "salus populi," or "the final sovereignty of the divine will over the ruler." Even though Cromwell himself was not to appeal to this higher power until 1648 when two civil wars had already been fought against the king, it may not be wholly fanciful to see at this early date his teacher's theory of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Rutherford, Lex, Rex: The Law and the Prince (London: John Field, 1644). Cf. G. P. Gooch, English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century (2d ed.; Cambridge: The University Press, 1927), pp. 98-99.

resistance being planted, however long was to be the period of germination. In Beard's doctrine he was given religious grounds for belief in the responsibility of monarchs to a higher law than themselves. This theory easily became merged with the political doctrine of republicanism--the crown's responsibility to the people as represented by Parliament, when that came to be the crucial issue of Charles I's reign.

However much or little we may suppose Cromwell to have been directly influenced by Beard's writing, the fact remains that he more than anyone else represented Puritanism to the young Huntingdon grammar school pupil, and introduced ideas and influences that were common currency in Puritan circles into the consciousness of the young Cromwell.

#### Early Manhood

Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.--We may well suppose that the learned Dr. Beard had something to do with the fact that on April 23, 1616 (the very day of Shakespeare's death), the seventeen-year-old Oliver is found registering in the halls of a newly-founded Puritan college in Cambridge University. His university experience lies nearly in total darkness with only a few flickering facts at all visible. First of these is that the total experience was extremely short, cut off at the end of the first year by the sudden death of his father. Second, that Oliver then as later was not to distinguish himself as a student, but so far as he was remembered later, was known to have been more interested in sport than in studies. While there is no definite evidence one way or the other, whatever youthful excesses may

have been committed during these college days, later to plague his conscience, must have occurred in an atmosphere of rigid moral and spiritual standards. The stern Dr. Samuel Ward was then head of Sidney Sussex and has left us his diary as evidence of the strict moral regimen which must have prevailed in that Puritan college.<sup>1</sup> However, we may be safe in assuming that young Cromwell was a great deal less troubled than was Master Ward on some matters which seemed to have most disturbed the conscience of that venerable divine. Nevertheless, Sidney Sussex was regarded by Archbishop Laud and other high churchmen in after years as "a nursery of Puritanism," and it may be supposed that during his year in such surroundings the young Oliver might have been further confirmed in certain Puritan principles and prejudices of his childhood in Huntingdon.

Inns of Court, London.--The young Cromwell was now called upon as the only living son to take his father's place in Huntingdon, and to embark at once upon the practical duties of a country squire. Despite the unfortunate obscurity of the period that follows, most biographers have assumed that Oliver must have proceeded to London in the ensuing year to gain some knowledge of law in the Inns of Court. Curiously, there is absolutely no record of his having been registered at any one of these. His earliest biographer asserts that he entered Lincoln's Inn.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>M. M. Knappen (ed.), Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries, by Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward (Chicago: American Society of Church History, 1933).

<sup>2</sup>The Perfect Politician: Or A Full View of the Life and Actions, Military and Civil, of Oliver Cromwell, Whereunto Is Added His Character (London: J. Cottrel for W. Raybound, 1660).

Abbott, after a thorough examination of the records, suggests that there is a striking majority of those who later became Cromwell's parliamentary friends and associates who were then enrolled at Gray's Inn.<sup>1</sup> Actually the evidence is so scanty, it is probably futile to speculate further, until something more definite is uncovered.

However, it is probable that in either of these famous Inns of Court he would have made acquaintance with bright young lawyers who were soon to become the nucleus of a Puritan party in Parliament. It is further probable that the young Cromwell heard preaching by some eminent Puritan divines, such as Richard Sibbes, whose sermons at Gray's Inn were one of the powerful influences in determining the religious and political convictions of many a young Puritan lawyer.<sup>2</sup>

Marriage.--The only indubitable fact of this London experience is that on August 22, 1620, Oliver Cromwell is listed on the records of St. Giles Church, Cripplegate, as marrying Elizabeth Bourcher (or Bouchier), the daughter of a London merchant.<sup>3</sup> They soon returned to his house in Huntingdon, where his mother still lived, there to spend the next ten years in the usual manner of a country gentleman, farming lands, attending to his civil duties, and rearing a family. Their first child was born here in

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 33.

<sup>2</sup>James Maclear, "The Puritan Party, 1603-43: A Study in the Lost Reformation" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1947).

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, I, 35.

October, 1621--a son, Robert, who was baptized at St. John's church on the thirteenth of that month, and who was to die in his eighteenth year, while still a schoolboy. A second child, Oliver, was baptized on February 6, 1623, later to be an officer in the army, and to die a casualty of the war near Knaresborough.<sup>1</sup>

At home again Cromwell may have taken an increasing interest in the Puritan protests against the religious and political policies of James I. In October, 1623, all England rejoiced in the return of Prince Charles from Spain without the hated Spanish Infanta, for which match his father had already paid a high price in loss of public support for his policies. The flames of anti-Catholic feeling had been fanned by the prolonged negotiations for the Spanish marriage almost to the point of an open parliamentary break. The incident had served only to drive the forces of national and religious discontent into the formidable coalition which was to forge the ultimate destruction of the Stuart cause in the coming reign of Charles I.

Melancholy and darkness.--During this period of his Huntingdon residence and continuing perhaps also into his St. Ives years (1631-36) we find Cromwell undergoing a profound inner experience of mental disturbance, which for lack of clear evidence is still difficult to analyze today. When it began to manifest itself is not known, nor until very much later is there positive indication that he had finally found the inner peace which was to come with that transformation which may be termed his conversion.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

We have the testimony of Sir Philip Warwick years afterward that he once had the word of Dr. Simcott, Cromwell's family physician in Huntingdon, that Cromwell acted very strangely at this time in his life.

After the rendition of Oxford, I living some time with the Lady Beadle (my wife's sister) near Huntingdon, had occasion to converse with Mr. Cromwell's physician, Dr. Simcott, who assured me that for many years his patient was a most splenetic man, and had fancies about the cross in that town, and that he had been called up to him at midnight, and such unseasonable hours, very many times, upon a strong fancy, which made him believe he was then dying. . . .<sup>1</sup>

More definitely, we have the record of a visit Cromwell made in 1628 to one Dr. Maherne, a prominent London physician (later the physician to the Queen) who seems to have had some reputation as an early-day specialist in mental disorders, who diagnosed Cromwell's condition as "valde melancholicus." Since the term "melancholy" had certain contemporary connotations, we may pause for a moment to look at them.

In Robert Burton's mammoth work of that period, The Anatomy of Melancholy which appeared in its second edition in this very year of 1628, that scholar catalogues with infinite thoroughness the innumerable types of "melancholy" which he found prevalent, together with a complete documentation of all the amazing array of authorities known to that pre-scientific age. Many a keen insight into human nature is buried in the bushels of ancient philosophic writing and folklore which Burton cites. He rightly discerns that so-called melancholy, which is roughly equivalent to most modern neuroticism, may be due to any one of a hundred

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Philip Warwick, Memoirs of the Reign of Charles I (London: R. Chiswell, 1701), p. 249.

causes, physical or mental. When he ambitiously attempts to classify these causes, they range literally all the way from diet to deity, from digestive to religious disturbances, and of the latter he gives an analysis that would compare not unfavorably with many of the insights of modern religious psychotherapy. For instance, had the Huntingdon squire consulted the perceptive wisdom of this little-known Oxford divine, he might have been advised in his distress that:

Spiritual diseases are spiritually to be cured. Ordinary means in such cases will not avail: we must not wrestle with God.<sup>1</sup>

One is constrained to agree that Cromwell's basic insecurity at this time probably was spiritual. This is not to rule out entirely certain more mundane factors. Probably his farming of the family land was not prospering too well, for by 1631 he was ready to sell out his inheritance and move to rented land near St. Ives. Nevertheless, there seems no plausible external reason for this period of melancholy. His family was growing, he was active in civic affairs, and his material interests, if not abounding, were not suffering unduly. Yet these strange moods of melancholy seem to recur, until he took them seriously enough to consult a London specialist in 1628.

The only way we can possibly understand this crisis period in Cromwell's life, considering the lack of any but the barest facts about it, is to see it in relation to his total religious

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. by Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1938), p. 157.

experience. Some few general observations may be noted in the broader perspective of his changing spiritual condition in these times.

For one thing, as John Buchan rightly observes, Cromwell was to be subject to these fits of depression recurrently throughout his life. Usually they seem not to have resulted from physical illness so much as they were its cause. It can safely be said that these spells of depression did not result from general overwork in a sort of so-called nervous breakdown. Cromwell was the sort of person who ordinarily seems to have been happiest when busiest. He thrived on action. For instance there is never any intimation of his having suffered any serious nervous difficulties during any of his later military campaigns, though he did have periods of illness. It might easily be maintained that in this early period he was reacting to the enforced dullness of the routine life of a country squire, when with all his ambition and tremendous vitality, he unconsciously sought a wider and more exciting field of action in the political and military drama of his time. This may help partially to describe his frame of mind at the time, but only by taking full account of the religious dimension do we come to any real understanding of this crisis. Certainly if we are to take seriously Cromwell's own testimony on the matter, the spiritual aspect of the crisis cannot safely be ignored.

There is no doubt that from the vantage point of his letter to Mrs. St. John (October 13, 1638), our most direct insight into his conversion experience, however much later it was



written, he believed that then he had passed the crisis, though lingering shadows still remain, and life had apparently taken on a new meaning for him. Since this is ten full years after his London consultation, one naturally wonders just when in that interval this transformation of his outlook took place. External evidence gives little indication, though Abbott is inclined to place the conversion rather near to the London visit, suggesting that it must have been between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-two, thus from 1627-31, during the Huntingdon years.<sup>1</sup>

On the assumption that his melancholy was only overcome with the conversion experience and the new peace of mind that came with it, discussion of that experience will be postponed for consideration during his St. Ives and Ely periods when his acquaintance with sectarian religion is really made, as there seem good grounds for supposing that his conversion, unless it was a gradual change going on for nearly a decade, might have occurred rather later than has been suggested by Abbott, possibly as late as 1638.

### Early Political Career

Entrance into political life.--Cromwell's election to the Parliament of 1628 was to mark his formal entry upon the stage of national political life, a momentous event in the life of the nation as well as to him personally. However humble may have been the contributions of the member from Huntingdon to his first Parliament, he came from the outset through ties of blood

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 79-80.

and common interest into informal membership in a group that was destined to form the nucleus of the party of radical parliamentarians whose insistence upon limiting the royal prerogative was in thirteen years to result in civil war. Of Cromwell's relatives by marriage then or thereafter, no less than six had been imprisoned for refusal to subscribe to the forced loan of 1627.<sup>1</sup> Besides relatives he found friends from Cambridge days in that new Parliament, and one may suppose, a considerable number of lawyers who had been members of the Inns of Court during his earlier London sojourn. Among these, the prominence of his two cousins, Oliver St. John and John Hampden, was to grow steadily as leaders of that parliamentary opposition in which his own star was in time to rise as he himself came increasingly to find his place in the ranks of this Puritan-Parliamentary party whose radicalism, both political and religious, was to earn the lasting enmity of Charles I.

Already in 1627, the divine right of kings doctrine enunciated first by James I was being pushed by such ecclesiastical favorites as Laud to the point of sanctioning such innovations of royal financial policy as the forced loans and writs of the privy seal, while such preachers as the royal chaplain, Manwaring, further incensed parliamentary as well as Puritan feelings by insisting that any man who refused to pay such tributes could not "defend his conscience from that heavy prejudice of resisting

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Francis Barrington, Sir William Masham, John Hampden, Sir Edmund Hampden, Richard Knightley, and Sir John Trevor.

the ordinance of God and receiving to himself damnation."<sup>1</sup> By such identification of the royal prerogative with the rising high church party of Laud, an opposition was being formed with such able Puritans as John Pym, St. John, and Hampden at its center, and fired by the passionate eloquence of the recently-released John Eliot, whose imprisonment and later death were to become powerful rallying-cries for the dissident party. Aid was also forthcoming from such non-Puritan opponents of unlimited royal prerogative as the jurist, Sir Edward Coke, whose personal ambition, mixed with zeal for the prestige of the common law, had already brought him in conflict with the crown. All these and others united in the Petition of Right (June 5, 1628) outlawing forced loans, martial law, and billeting on the people without parliamentary consent.

Turning after the assassination of Buckingham to debate on the church issue, Parliament had in the meantime been defied openly by the promotion of Laud to the bishopric of London and by the King's Declaration on Religion which in November, 1628, stated in the most uncompromising terms his intention of rigidly enforcing uniformity and putting down all debate upon the articles of religion. In heated reaction, the committee on religion of the House of Commons attacked the King's clerical advisors, charged "the extraordinary growth of Popery" on every hand, and condemned Manwaring outright, demanding that his incendiary sermon be withdrawn.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 55, quoting Manwaring, Sermons (1627).

During the investigations of that committee into the alleged popery of royal church policy, Cromwell took an active interest, and on February 11, 1629, is heard in the first recorded fragment of a speech. In the course of his remarks already mentioned, he cited his old schoolmaster's testimony that such popery, far from being censured, was actually encouraged in high places by such bishops as Neale, Dr. Beard's former diocesan, and now bishop of Winchester. This glimpse of Cromwell reveals not only his Puritan hatred of "popery" in the church, but his early participation in that parliamentary movement that was presently to link this issue with the manifold political grievances of Parliament in a joint denunciation of anyone who favored levies of "tonnage and poundage" with anyone who should favor extension of "popery or Arminianism." A week later, Charles dissolved the Parliament. The lines were drawn for all subsequent conflict between that body and the King. Thus Cromwell had definitely found his place among those Puritans of the committee on religion who were to hold this issue uppermost through all the years of personal rule and were to return in 1640 with fresh determination to the task of bringing royal policy with regard to both church and finances under closer Parliamentary scrutiny, if not actual subservience to that body.

Local politics.--As Cromwell now returned to Huntingdon after this brief but exciting parliamentary experience involving the central issues of his nation's history, the local affairs of Huntingdon must have seemed dull by comparison had it not been that his newly released political energy soon found an unexpected

outlet. He had come to be the acknowledged leader of a local party, Puritan in complexion, in which Dr. Beard seems to have been one who carried some influence, and which supported Cromwell's election to Parliament in 1628. Now occurs an event of obscure meaning, seemingly illustrating Cromwell's impetuosity and certainly showing greater zeal than wisdom in political matters.

The issue revolved around a change in the form of borough government from the traditional form with two bailiffs and a common council of twenty-four, freely elected annually, to a council of twelve aldermen chosen for life. Whatever the reasons for this change, Cromwell seems at first to have acquiesced in it, far enough to be named one of three new justices of the peace, together with Dr. Beard and Robert Barnard, his political opponent. But soon after, Cromwell and William Kilborne, the postmaster, had reacted so violently against the new charter that the borough council felt it necessary to appeal the whole dispute to the higher authority of the Privy Council. A formal hearing was held, the matter was referred for arbitration to the Lord Privy Seal (Henry Montagu, Earl of Manchester) who finally decided in favor of the borough with sharp censure to the defendants for their "disgraceful and unseemly speeches" during the case. Cromwell's temper had apparently got the better of his judgment, though he later confessed his rashness and agreed to be reconciled. With the new charter upheld and the loss of political "face" he sustained, it was easier for him to sell his land soon after and move to St. Ives in May of 1631.

The idea has often been advanced that at one time or another, Cromwell contemplated emigration to New England. If he was ever so inclined, this would have seemed a most appropriate time for the move. There is no actual evidence that in selling his property and putting his wealth in more portable form, he ever went so far at this time as to make definite plans to emigrate. But he had of course been intimately associated with a party of Puritans in Parliament--Pym, Hampden, Lords Saye and Sele and Brooke--who all had definite interests in the colonial projects of the New World as one of their common bonds, so it is certain that the thought had at least occurred to Cromwell. This was also later indicated in a remark attributed to him by Hyde during the heat of the battle in Parliament in 1641 over the Grand Remonstrance. Hyde heard Cromwell tell Falkland after that stormy session concluded "that if the Remonstrance had been rejected he would have sold all he had the next morning and never have seen England more."<sup>1</sup> However there is no shred of proof that Cromwell seriously contemplated such a move in the selling of his land in 1631. As we have seen, he sought a new community wherein to make a fresh start, nearby enough to retain most of his old friendships, but far enough away to be unhampered by old political feuds.

Shortly before this move, one further grievance was added to those which he already shared with other middle-class folk, when he, along with other citizens, was summoned to appear before

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England begun in the Year 1641 (6 vols.: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), II, 43-44.

the Court of Exchequer to pay a fine for failing to pay the "distrainment" of knighthood fine levied on those who merely by the fact that their incomes exceeded 40 pounds had qualified for this dubious award. Though Cromwell ignored the summons, he apparently somehow escaped the penalty, though the petty incident did nothing to increase his love for the personal government of Charles I.

### Spiritual Crisis

St. Ives residence.--Moving to St. Ives, Cromwell now became the tenant of a rented farm owned by Henry Lawrence, who was later to become prominent as a member of the Upper House and President of Cromwell's Council while he was Protector. Now a cattle farmer, the new tenant lived a life apparently apart from politics, but if the sole letter of this period is any indication, more active than ever in Puritan circles. In fact it is difficult to escape the impression that it was during these St. Ives years that the change came over his life which we have termed his conversion. The fact that this coincides with a definite missionary enthusiasm for Puritan religion suggests something of the possible setting for this experience.

Many questions naturally arise about the nature of this central experience. Was it entirely a solitary one, worked out in his own soul without outward stimulus of any kind? Was any other person intimately involved in bringing it about, or aware of it after it happened?

One naturally wonders about the possible role of the good Dr. Beard who until now has played such a part in Cromwell's life. If he had been at all instrumental in guiding Cromwell through

this experience to a new faith, Oliver might later in some way have acknowledged that fact, though here again the absence of evidence cannot be cited as any proof necessarily. Does his new beginning at St. Ives in 1631 suggest that perhaps other changes in his life came at this time? We have that suggestion in a tale by the malicious Heath:

During his continuance here, he was grown (that is, he pretended to be) so just, and of so scrupulous a Conscience, that having some years before won thirty pounds of one Mr Calton at play, meeting him accidentally, he desired him to come home with him and to receive his money, telling him that he had got it by indirect and unlawful means, and that it would be a sin in him to detain it any longer; and did really pay the gentleman the said thirty pounds back again.<sup>1</sup>

While little faith can be placed in Heath's veracity, some such story must have circulated in the town with some foundation, and it is significant that other scraps of evidence point the same way. Warwick writes:

When he was thus civilized, he joyned himselfe to men of his own temper, who pretended unto transports and revelations.<sup>2</sup>

What is actually known of his religious affiliations at this time? We know that at Huntingdon<sup>n</sup> he had sat under the preaching of Dr. Beard for many years. The good doctor was known to have "painfully preached the Word of God" which his Puritan listeners wanted to hear. At St. Ives, Noble has preserved a description of Cromwell by an old clerk who knew people who had known him in those days when "he usually frequented divine service at church,

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<sup>1</sup>James Heath, Flagellum: Or the Life, and Death, Birth and Burial of Oliver Cromwell, the Late Usurper, Faithfully Described with an Exact Account of His Policies and Success (3d ed.; London, 1665), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Warwick, pp. 249-50.



and remembered that he generally wore a piece of red flannel round his neck, as he was subject to an inflammation of the throat."<sup>1</sup> But while he attended services at the parish church it seems sure that it was not here that he came for his real source of Biblical inspiration. For in his only known letter written in his last year at St. Ives (January 11, 1636), he is heard pleading support for a Puritan lecturer, Dr. Wells, from a London merchant whose contributions in times past had helped to sustain the work of this godly man. He testifies that since his coming "the Lord hath by him wrought much good amongst us," that "it were a piteous thing to see a lecture fall . . . in these times, wherein we see they are suppressed, with too much haste and violence by the enemies of God his truth."<sup>2</sup>

The truth was that by decree of Archbishop Laud such lectureships were outlawed from 1633 on. He was thus undertaking at some personal hazard to solicit the continuance of this proscribed lecturer. Is it possible that one of the "good things" which the Lord had wrought through Dr. Wells was the conversion of Oliver Cromwell? Or rather is it possible that in a conventicle of spiritual people, driven underground more or less by the decree of Laud, he had found a new spiritual freedom, an experience which, shared with others of Puritan persuasion, stimulated his own faith to a new height? Perhaps here he found the assurance

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<sup>1</sup>Mark Noble, Memoirs of the Protectoral-House of Cromwell, Deduced from an Early Period and Continued down to the Present Time (2 vols., 3d ed.; London: G. C. J. and J. Robinson, 1787), I, 105 n.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, I, 80 f.

of salvation for which he had so longed during those days of darkness and melancholy, whose clouds were hardly yet dispelled entirely two years later when he related to his cousin the new-found confidence and joy of his salvation. This letter in 1638 to Mrs. St. John seems to tell of an experience not too long past.

Little has been written which throws any light on Cromwell's personal relation to any Independent-type church prior to his war years when that preference becomes quite marked with him. Yet is it not reasonable to suppose that he had had some experience with the free worship and Bible-reading of those who met in homes and other so-called conventicles in these same years when he was promoting the lectureship of Puritan preaching outside the law? And may this not have played some part in his own transformed religious faith?

Further, in view of Cromwell's personality as it is seen later, it seems not at all unreasonable in any case to suppose that this momentous experience did not happen to him entirely apart from the similar experience of other Puritans. It was not his nature to wrestle through a vital problem entirely in solitude. Never primarily a meditative or reflective person, Cromwell always engaged with his whole being the historical forces impinging upon him, working through interaction with other persons to a solution that seemed to him to be the will of God. One may object that a man's inner salvation is too individual a matter for any such historical generalization, but there must have been a social aspect to the religious experience of Oliver Cromwell. The peculiar conditions of these St. Ives years point significantly to

this period as the time when Laud's policies had made the Puritans more conscious of their separateness. New inspiration was found in a forbidden way of worship, whether among Separating or Non-separating Puritans of this time. Surely it is possible that there is some deep relation between the experience of these years and Cromwell's life-long devotion to securing a greater measure of religious liberty than could be enjoyed under any strict uniformity of worship? If he in any sense owed his own conversion to such influences, or in any way associated it with the common experiences of worship and praise he here enjoyed, this might go far to explain his own growing enthusiasm for the Independent way, where those of "tender conscience" were saluted as brethren.

Inheritance at Ely.--Meanwhile a stroke of fortune was now to change Cromwell's residence once more and with it to revive his material prosperity. The death of his maternal uncle, Sir Thomas Steward, resulted in his inheriting the greatest part of a considerable estate. There is some mystery about this transaction, though we have mostly the word of hostile critics who relate back-fence gossip to the effect that there had been bad feeling between Cromwell and his uncle earlier. Dugdale, Bishop Hacket and Heath imply that Oliver had attempted to get control of the Steward estate by underhand means, possibly on grounds of the old man's incompetency to manage it. The significant fact is that after the death of Sir Thomas' wife in January, 1636, the old gentleman drew up his will on the 29th of the same month, leaving the estate to his nephew. How long before this any dispute might have taken place is unknown, but Sir Thomas seems to

have fully decided upon this course very soon following his wife's death. Curiously, Heath attributes the reconciliation to Cromwell's "reformation" of character, and the intervention of certain Puritan divines on his behalf.<sup>1</sup> While there is likely no substance to this, the charge does again underline his prominence among the Puritans at this time. Sir Thomas may have been impressed, as many of Oliver's neighbors were apparently, with his new-found faith and the salutary effect it may have had on his manners and living habits.

However this may have been, the estate was left to Cromwell, and in June, 1636, he moved to Ely, to enter upon a phase of his career that is at once more peaceful and more prosperous. He again takes an active role in the civic affairs of the community, becoming soon after a trustee of a philanthropic organization of the parish known as Parson's Charity, in which he had close relations with the cathedral authorities. His sons are now sent to school at Felsted in Essex, a substantial grammar school patronized also at this time by the Rich family of that vicinity, and drawing its clientele from that group of Puritans with whom Cromwell had become connected in Parliament.

In these years he watched the rising storm of protest against the levying of Ship-Money by the crown. He must have watched with intense interest also the trial of his cousin John Hampden, who was likewise defended by another cousin, Oliver St. John, in an historic case that had the eyes of the nation focussed upon it for months. The outcome of this trial was to

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<sup>1</sup>Heath, p. 14.

have profound effects upon all parties, for the moment giving Charles the legal sanction he needed for further exactions, but sharply stiffening the determination of that Parliamentary opposition to which Hampden together with Pym now gave renewed attention.

Yet however interested in these distant events in London, Cromwell was at this time even more concerned with religious matters. Heath indicates this by observing that Cromwell now took an even greater interest in "those of the Household, as they termed the people of the Separation." And he goes on to relate that after his move to Ely, "he more frequently and publicly owned himself a Teacher, and did preach in other men's as well as in his own house, according as the brotherhood agreed or appointed."<sup>1</sup> This increased activity among the saints seems not at all improbable, despite the hostile motives of the writer. Bishop Williams, who lived near Huntingdon at this time, was said to have told Charles I in later years that Oliver was "a common spokesman for the sectaries and maintained their part with great stubbornness."<sup>2</sup> But whatever the value of this indirect evidence, the suggestions gain some credence from the direct testimony of Cromwell himself in the letter to Mrs. St. John already referred to, and dated from Ely on October 13, 1638. Significant of Cromwell's real preoccupation of that moment, it deals not with the Ship-money trial but with his own spiritual life.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>John Hacket, Scrinia Reserata: A Memorial of the Life of John Williams, Archbishop of York (London: Edward Jones, for Samuel Lowndes, 1693), II, 212.

Spiritual rebirth.--This letter is of utmost importance for an understanding of Cromwell's religious experience not only because it is our earliest direct testimony to that change that came over him but because it is also one of the fullest and most intimate revelations of his inner life ever to come from his pen. In all, he wrote comparatively little about his own inner feelings throughout his life, though in his writings and speeches one will find enough occasional remarks and indirect testimony to get a fairly clear picture of his religion.

What is most striking about this letter is the spontaneity and enthusiasm of his new-found faith, poured out in a joyous stream to the honor of the God whose mercy has redeemed him from despair. In this there is a deep sense of gratitude and praise. It is a testimony to the power and mercy of God.

Yet to honor my God by declaring what He hath done for my soul, in this I am confident and I will be so.<sup>1</sup>

Not that he lives in a state of perfect light beyond all shadows. He has entered upon a long road, but he has some foretaste of the new meaning of life vouchsafed to him. Doubts may remain and minor fears annoy yet like St. Paul he is "perplexed yet not unto despair."<sup>2</sup>

Truly then, this I find: That he giveth springs in a dry and barren wilderness where no water is. I live (you know where) in Mesheck, which they say signifies Prolonging; in Kedar, which signifieth Blackness: yet the Lord forsaketh me not. Though he do prolong, yet He will (I trust) bring me to his tabernacle, to his resting-place. . . .<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 96.

<sup>2</sup>II Cor. 4: 8.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, I, 96.

Cromwell has experienced what so many Christian souls before him had: despite sin, unworthiness, and even rebellion, what Luther would have called justification by faith had come to him. This made his former way of life seem abhorrent to him, causing him to magnify his sins far out of all proportion to their apparent gravity, and to picture himself in St. Paul's words "the chief of sinners."

You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived in and loved darkness, and hated the light. I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true, I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me.<sup>1</sup>

This then is the chorus of praise to which he returns: "Yet God had mercy on me." With the redeemed of all ages, he could only describe his experience of release with a joyful "Hallelujah!"

O, the riches of his mercy! Praise Him for me, pray for me, that He who hath begun a good work would perfect it to the day of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

With that grateful cry of exultation, Cromwell joins a great company of Puritans who in that age were thus discovering anew a spiritual power reborn in them. It seemed to him, as it did to Morgan Llwyd, to come from above. Llwyd, the Welsh mystic, describes it thus:

When the true shepherd speaks, and a man hears him, the heart burns within, and the flesh quakes, and the mind lights up like a candle, and the conscience ferments like wine in a vessel, and the will bends to the truth: and that thin, heavenly mighty voice raises the dead to life, from the grave of himself to wear the crown, and wondrously renews the whole life to live like a lamb of God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience (London: Basil Blackwell, 1946), p. 140, citing M. Llwyd, Gweithiau, II, 236.

If Llwyd was more mystical, there was nevertheless an element of this in Cromwell, seen most clearly in his use of their favorite figure of speech:

The Lord accept me in His Son, and give me to walk in the light, and give us to walk in the light as He is in the light. He it is that enlighteneth our blackness, our darkness. I dare not say, He hideth his face from me. He giveth me to see light in His light. One beam in a dark place hath exceeding much refreshment in it. Blessed be his name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine!<sup>1</sup>

But though occasional mystical figures find their way into Cromwell's speech, he speaks more often of the saving gift of grace through Christ who has died for him. Acknowledging his unworthiness of this gift of grace, he nevertheless understands that such justification places him under an eternal debt. The free gift of grace can only find human response in the overflow of living works in the world--not to earn his salvation, but as the only possible fruits of the spirit which gratitude can show.

Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put forth himself in the cause of his God than I. I have had plentiful wages beforehand, and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. . . . My soul is with the congregation of the first-born, my body rests in hope, and if I may honour my God either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad.<sup>2</sup>

In all this we see a Puritan experience differing in certain marked respects from that which Weber and Tawney described with a later form of Puritanism in mind.<sup>3</sup> Instead of anxiety as to his election, there is fundamental assurance of that fact with Cromwell. Instead of being driven by a sense of having to demon-

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 97.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1930); R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (London, 1927).



strate that election in a calling, the dominant emphasis here as with Luther is on good works as the grateful fruits of the Spirit overflowing from a lively sense of gratitude for the unspeakable gift of God's mercy.<sup>1</sup> The motive power comes not essentially from the hope of proving an election whose reward lies ahead; but rather in a profound sense of joyful thanksgiving for a deliverance which has already been accomplished in the glorious gift of God's mercy.

In this and other ways, one is struck by the difference between Cromwell's religious experience and that of the more conservative Puritans of the Calvinist type. How much more he shares the language and the fervor of the sectarians. For example, one has only to compare this letter with the sort of experience reflected in the diaries of Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward,<sup>2</sup> or with Dr. Beard's own work, The Theatre of God's Judgments to see the difference in emphasis. Where Beard's entire system of theology is primarily based upon fear and punishment, Cromwell, as John Buchan rightly pointed out, was inspired not by fear but by love, "for fear had little place in his heart."<sup>3</sup> While this is

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<sup>1</sup>A distinction is drawn by Helmuth Kittel in his Oliver Cromwell: Seine Religion and Seine Sendung (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1928), pp. 87-93, between conversion (Bekehrung) in the Puritan and in the classical Reformation sense, holding that the former is a subject, the latter an objective change. It is difficult to see how the experience of Cromwell differs essentially from that of Luther in the Erfurt monastery even though we may be unable to designate the exact date of Cromwell's experience.

<sup>2</sup>Knappen.

<sup>3</sup>John Buchan, Oliver Cromwell (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), p. 68.

surely to exaggerate the point, it is true that Cromwell now discovers a God with an entirely new dimension. Instead of a deity swift to destroy the sinner who breaks one of his laws, and punish to the uttermost in the flame of his anger, he has discovered the gracious mercy of a God who not only forgives but redeems the sinner. "There is now no condemnation" is a word of St. Paul which he later quotes often, in recognizing the change which is wrought by divine grace in the sinner. There is little in common between this joyous assurance of Cromwell's and the anxious introspection of Samuel Ward over the state of his own soul, whether his offense was that of eating too many plums or that of snapping a harsh word to one of his more trying colleagues.

Just how great was Dr. Beard's responsibility for originally instilling in Cromwell the conception of the God of wrath cannot be ascertained though it must have been considerable. It was a powerful, though indeterminate, factor beneath the surface in the dark years of Cromwell's doubt and melancholy during which he felt, justly or unjustly, that condemnation weighing upon his spirit even to the point where it threatened his sanity. It is only against such a background of anxiety and fear for his salvation that one can understand the sense of joyful release that comes with his conversion. Where before he was most aware of God's penal power, he now came to trust in his abounding providence--ruling all, but with a benevolent and not a despotic hand. We shall see later that this reaction also could be one-sided for it neglected important aspects of judgment in a way that permanently blinded Cromwell to this essential side of any full-orbed

Christian faith. But for good or ill, he was to regard himself henceforth as "of the congregation of the first-born," one of God's chosen people. He had expressed his willingness to "honor my God either by doing or by suffering." While he was to know his share of suffering for the cause, the future now lay open for him to honor God "by doing" in His name such deeds as even "the godly" had scarcely dreamed of in this day.

Pen Drainage. -- In the busy months that followed in Crow-  
 well's life residence, his local reputation and popularity were  
 sharply increased by his active championing of the commoners'  
 rights in the ancient Pen Drainage. This highly contro-  
 versial issue had long been argued among the local aristocracy,  
 with the Crowwell family in general favoring the project. The  
 government early under James I had taken the matter in hand, but  
 after the accession of Charles I, the project had been turned  
 over to a company of "adventurers," headed by the Earl of Bedford.  
 Upon completion of the work in 1637, these had fallen out among  
 themselves as to the proper division of the drained land, and at  
 the same time had aroused some very violent reactions among the  
 deprived commoners when they attempted to enclose the land. mobs  
 gathered in the summer of 1638 to protest their ancient rights and  
 to tear down the offensive enclosures preventing their use of  
 traditional pasture-land.

As had Sir Thomas Storer before him, Crowwell himself  
 now entered the fray against the drainage company. Whether he  
 did so from one motive or another has been much disputed, but un-  
 doubtedly it was to the immediate interests of the commoners. He  
 is said to have undertaken "to hold the drainers in suit for five

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF THE INDEPENDENT PURITAN

#### From Local to National Crisis

Fen dispute.--In the busy months that followed in Cromwell's Ely residence, his local importance and popularity were sharply increased by his active championing of the commoners' rights in the ancient fen-drainage dispute. This highly controversial issue had long been argued among the local citizenry, with the Cromwell family in general favoring the project. The government early under James I had taken the matter in hand, but after the accession of Charles I, the project had been turned over to a company of "adventurers," headed by the Earl of Bedford. Upon completion of the work in 1637, these had fallen out among themselves as to the proper division of the drained land, and at the same time had aroused even more violent reactions among the deprived commoners when they attempted to enclose the land. Mobs gathered in the summer of 1638 to protect their ancient rights and to tear down the offensive enclosures preventing their use of traditional pasture-land.

As had Sir Thomas Steward before him, Cromwell himself now entered the fray against the drainage company. Whether he did so from one motive or another has been much disputed, but undeniably it was to the immediate interests of the commoners. He is said to have undertaken "to hold the drainers in suit for five

years," and in the meantime the commoners should enjoy every foot of their common," in return for payment of a groat per cow for these pasture rights.<sup>1</sup> When the whole disputed project was once again taken over by the King, Cromwell's popularity was much enhanced among the commoners and many of the landowners as well. His outspoken opposition was to earn for him the title "The Lord of the Fens."

Meanwhile from Scotland came rumblings of rebellion against the overzealous efforts of Charles I and Laud to impose not only their own hand-picked bishops but England's Prayer-Book as well upon Scotland. Riots followed in Edinburgh, and the entire nation was galvanized into resistance by this challenge to its religious and political liberties. All came to a head when in Glasgow, 1638, the National Covenant was signed by all the Scottish leaders, both clergy and nobility, while committees or "Tables" assumed the control of government and put the country in a posture of defense. In the ensuing showdown, the First Bishops' War, Scotland's firmness forced Charles to capitulate ignominiously at Berwick, his foreign policy breaking down both at home and on the continent, so that he was obliged to issue writs for a new Parliament early in 1640.

The Short Parliament. --To the circumstances surrounding Cromwell's election to what came to be known as the Short Parliament, marking as it did such a decisive turning-point in his life, some attention may now be given. It appears that he had not only gained considerable renown as a champion of the commoners in the

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 103.

fen dispute, but with the passing years in Ely had become widely known throughout that fenland area as a practicing Puritan, as well as a member of that influential group who in the last Parliament had registered such determined protest against both church and crown for the abuses of power which had only multiplied during the intervening eleven years of personal rule. We get some glimpse, however distorted, of the combination of Puritan religion and political interests that played so great a part in the election of Cromwell, in the partisan account of that event by Heath. He asserts that one Richard Tyms of Cambridge, later an alderman of that city and member of Parliament in 1653, was leader of those who persuaded Cromwell to enter the election as their candidate. He pictures Tyms attending a conventicle at Ely with his brother "where he heard this Oliver, with such admiration, that he thought there was not such a precious man in the Nation . . . and began to hammer in his head a project of getting him chosen a Burgess for Cambridge,"<sup>1</sup>--and thus elected to Parliament. Some such plan must have recommended itself to some of Cromwell's friends or relatives in that city, for he soon entered that hotly contested election. Together with Thomas Meautys he was returned as a member in that Parliament which convened on April 13, 1640, at Westminster. There he immediately found his place in that group of radical spirits who were now after eleven years of bitter waiting reunited around the leadership of his cousin Hampden, now known throughout the land as the daring challenger of the king on the ship-money issue. It is said that upon their convening, one

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<sup>1</sup>Heath, p. 24.

who did not know the carelessly dressed member from Cambridge asked John Hampden his identity: "That sloven," replied Hampden, "whom you see before you, hath no ornament in his speech; that sloven, I say, if we should ever come to a breach with the king (which God forbid), in such a case, I say, that sloven will be the greatest man in England."<sup>1</sup> Whether apocryphal or not, the story helps to picture the fenland squire of 1640 in the light of his destiny.

The Short Parliament lasted only until May 5, when Charles I., seeing that that body with Pym as their spokesman was more determined than before, not only to gain redress of all the old grievances, but to challenge the very supremacy of the crown in the name of parliamentary rights, dissolved them. While Charles I was then to carry on the futile efforts known to history as the Second Bishops' War, the Parliament members returned to their homes, until the King on his second ill-fated expedition to punish the Scots was brought once again to terms in the Treaty of Ripon and forced once more to call a Parliament.

The Long Parliament.--The Long Parliament met on November 3, 1640, with thunder on its brow. Both aroused and organized as never before, the opposition to Charles I had crystallized at the moment of his greatest weakness thus far--with a majority of Commons, a fair number of Lords, the power of the City behind them, and public opinion (so far as it was articulate) crying for a change. This accumulated wrath vented itself first upon one whose haughty power was then at its peak, the redoubtable Strafford.

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<sup>1</sup>Noble, I., 268.

recalled from Ireland and even now urging the King to strike swiftly at the leaders of Parliament with charges of treason before the entire royal cause should come tumbling down about their heads.

The story of the rest of that tumultuous Parliament from the impeachment of Strafford until the outbreak of the war in August, 1642, need not be covered in detail. Some notion of Cromwell's own part, however, briefly summarized, may help in understanding his development in this decisive period.

From the first, Cromwell played an essential part in the manifold programme of opposition which now was taking shape. While seldom taking a commanding lead in the pressing of the party's charges, he was frequently to be seen acting on important committees, and with his growing experience and concern, was gradually given assignments of commensurate importance. Before the end of their sitting his aggressive determination had earned him a formidable reputation in the House. As formerly, he attacked with greatest vigor on the issue of church reform, for he was one of those Puritans who had considered this from the outset the root of all the kingdom's troubles. As a member of the appropriate subcommittee of the grand committee on religion, he was directly concerned with the petitions on "scandalous abuses" in the Established church--the shortage of preachers, the corruptions of higher clergy, and especially the usurpation of powers by the bishops. In that capacity he was soon also to have a hand in the extraordinary proceedings against Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely, who was one of the chief targets, next to Laud, of the Puritan party's



denunciations. Not only was Wren a staunch Laudian himself, but he had been in a position as Bishop of Norwich to harry large numbers of Puritans in that diocese where he was accused of persecuting "passionately and furiously" the foreign nonconformist congregations which were especially numerous in the eastern counties. While there is no particular record of Cromwell's lead in the prosecution of Wren, the committee on which he sat brought in eventually nine articles of impeachment against the bishop, and on July 5, 1641, the Commons voted him unfit to hold any office in either church or state.

In similar vein, Cromwell was frequently to be heard speaking against episcopacy on the floor of the Commons, as for example on February 9, 1641, when he was very nearly called to the bar of the House to apologize for his intemperate language. According to D'Ewes' account, Cromwell's official apology only added insult to injury in his charge that the bishops "would not endure to have their condition to come to a trial."<sup>1</sup> Religion continued to be Cromwell's chief interest through the long debates of early 1641. Here too we first encounter his interest in the Scots' commissioners' demands for a "uniformity of religion" as a necessary term in the peace treaty then being so painfully negotiated. There was general apprehension and resentment towards this proposed extension of the Presbyterian system to England, both among the episcopal party and among those who were indifferent

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<sup>1</sup>Wallace Notestein (ed.), The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, from the Beginning of the Long Parliament to the Opening of the Trial of the Earl of Strafford (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), p. 340.

to the church but indignant at what they considered external interference in their affairs. Cromwell was among those interested in giving the proposal closer scrutiny. He thus writes to a certain George Willingham, a London merchant, for further information:

Sir,

I desire you to send me the reasons of the Scots to enforce their desire of Uniformity in Religion, expressed in their 8th Article; I mean that which I had before of you. I would peruse it against we fall upon that debate, which will be speedily.

Yours,  
Ol. Cromwell<sup>1</sup>

That he seems only to have been seeking information, not declaring himself a partisan of such uniformity is evident from Cromwell's later record. As a stick with which to threaten the bishops at this stage, the proposal had some interest, however. He could not know that it was also to prove the forerunner to the momentous plan of uniformity in the Solemn League and Covenant which was to play such a decisive role in the histories of both nations, and pose the crucial issue of whether England should permanently accept or reject the Presbyterian system of church government.

For the present, Cromwell enthusiastically supported every measure which promised to harass the enemies of Parliament. Not content merely with the general "Protestation" of Commons on May 3, 1641, summing up all the main objections to "popery" and illegal taxations, he was among the leading spirits in drawing up the famous "Root and Branch Bill," a radical attack upon the

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 125.

existing Establishment, soon to become the central issue in the disastrous cleavage between the radicals and the constitutional royalists in Parliament. The one party insisted that only by drastically reforming not only the episcopacy but the church as a whole could there be any true practice of religion, while men like Hyde and Falkland saw in this Root and Branch approach an attack not only on the temporal power of bishops but on the Prayer-Book and all they held dear in the traditional church of England.

While the Root and Branch bill was pinned down in committee, Cromwell was engaged in other administrative committees, including another involving the old fen controversy in which he apparently behaved in such "tempestuous" fashion that Hyde, the chairman, found it necessary to reprehend him sharply for his ill manners.<sup>1</sup>

Before the parliamentary recess in September, Cromwell once more arose to speak in the debate on "Innovations in the Worship of God," in which the lines between Anglican and Puritan in Parliament came to be most clearly drawn. In his attack on the Prayer-Book he attempted to "shew that there were many passages in it which divers learned and wise divines could not submit unto and practice."<sup>2</sup> In this he was echoing the Puritan criticism now familiar since the earliest days of the Reformation in England, but now in these circumstances appearing to his

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1827), I, 88-90.

<sup>2</sup>Notestein, p. 164.

opponents to threaten the very fabric of the church itself. The time was come when men who had been united in common opposition to absolutism must part company on how far this reform in the church should be pressed.

Oliver was prepared to press it to the limit. He not only favored the bills now adopted which reformed many of the external "popish" ceremonies and signs such as the position of the communion table, the sign of the cross, pictures and images, and the use of the Sabbath for sports, but he also moved on September 8 "that sermons should be in the afternoon in all parishes of England," where that privilege was not now enjoyed.<sup>1</sup> During the following recess, the show-down was only postponed between the majority in Commons who favored reform and that royalist party which had a majority in the Lords and refused to countenance such a reduction in the power of the episcopacy as they saw intended by Pym's party. When Parliament reconvened on October 20, further fears had been aroused on the royalist side by the demonstrations of sectaries in the City in the interim, while mistrust and suspicions of the King's political conspiracies in Scotland were being daily confirmed by Hampden and the others appointed to keep watch on his majesty. Thus the parliamentarians returned to the attack on the 21st of October with a new Bishop's Exclusion bill which was pushed through speedily and which now encountered the King's manifesto that he would support the Church of England until death if need be. Soon after, he defiantly appointed five new bishops

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<sup>1</sup>Great Britain, Parliament, Journals of the House of Commons (London, 1803), II, 279.

without consulting either Parliament or his own counselors. Cromwell was foremost in demanding an immediate conference with the Lords on this issue of bishops' exclusion, but before this could take place, news of the Irish rebellion reached Westminster on November 1. This spark set off the long-expected explosion in the Commons. Frantic measures for defense were now taken, while a final appeal to public opinion was prepared in the Grand Remonstrance, designed to recite all the grievances, both political and religious, since the beginning of Charles I's reign. Denying that they intended to loose completely the reins of church government or to "leave particular persons or congregations to take up what form of Divine service they please," the Remonstrance declared its determination to effect a reformation "according to the Word of God" and above all, "to reduce within bounds that exorbitant power which the prelates have assumed unto themselves. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

That Cromwell was both passionately aroused now by the urgency of passing this Remonstrance and to some degree unaware of the growing resistance to its implications within the royalist party is evidenced by his reported expostulation with Falkland when the latter, anticipating the lengthy debate that was to ensue, asked for time to consider the charges. Cromwell scoffed at this, according to Hyde "supposing few would oppose it."<sup>2</sup> When that extraordinary session actually ended in the morning hours, with candles

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Rawson Gardiner (ed.), The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1628-60 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), pp. 151 f.

<sup>2</sup>Clarendon, History, II, 42.

burnt low and tempers frayed, Cromwell was heard to admit to Falkland that the latter had been right about the length of the debate, but that if the bill had not passed "he would have sold all he had and never have seen England more. . . ." <sup>1</sup> It was to such fever pitch that the feelings of Parliament's parties had been enflamed and it remained now only for Charles I's impatient and ill-advised attempt on January 4 to seize and arrest five of the ringleaders of the opposition on the floor of the Commons, for the fatal step to be taken which could result only in civil war.

We have seen Cromwell's position moving steadily with that of the radical Puritan party in the course of the first fifteen months of the Long Parliament, from hopeful to hostile criticism, from occasional sniping to a sustained attack upon the episcopacy, from an assertion of Parliament's grievances to an ultimatum of her demands for full partnership in the business of government. What Cromwell's own conception of an acceptable plan of church government was at that moment can only be conjectured. Like most of the parliamentary majority, he had not yet been forced to formulate a constructive solution. While he followed Pym almost to the letter in his political ideas and activities, Pym was less concerned with working out a religious settlement than a constitutional vantage point at this time. Had Oliver been obliged to work out a settlement, it likely would have been a uniformity of Calvinistic flavor, supported by the civil power,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.

but, like the Elizabethan state, willing to use civil power mainly against civil disobedience rather than against spiritual nonconformity.

It might seem that Cromwell was more in sympathy with Lord Brooke's position, expressed in his Discourse on Episcopacy (1641) providing as it did for a national church surrounded by voluntary churches, so much like the Cromwellian state church that was later to be formed. Actually, both in terms of theory and practical approach, Cromwell was likely closer at this time to Sir Henry Vane the younger than to either Pym or Brooke. It will be remembered that they were together responsible for submitting that Root and Branch bill on May 21, 1641, which was to become the focus of most of the church controversy for these months in the Long Parliament before the final breach with the King. When the point was reached where some substitute form of church government had to be submitted by the reformers, it was Vane who proposed a clause providing that commissioners be appointed in each diocese to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction, these to be divided equally between clergy and laity, and giving Parliament a close supervision of the church.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that Cromwell supported some such solution at this time, believing as he did that Parliament must reassert its control over the church and wishing to remove that control as far as possible from the bishops. We can only be sure of the following facts in his attitude at this time: that he would have destroyed episcopal

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Rawson Gardiner, A History of England, from the Accession of James I, to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-42 (10 vols.; London: Longmans Green, 1884-86), IX, 390.



government; that he would have promoted preaching through such means as lectureships; and that he would probably have permitted sectaries some degree of toleration. His contact with the sects of London was still quite limited, and one may suppose he still shared some of the common fear of anarchy which was alleged would result from giving the more extreme sects complete freedom.

The eve of war.--Six months of fruitless negotiations and maneuvering for military advantage followed the King's departure from Whitehall on January 10. Parliament was able to force the acceptance of the Bishops' Exclusion Bill, but even this had become a meaningless measure, for most of the bishops were now imprisoned or otherwise rendered powerless. The crucial issue now that war seemed inevitable was how to get control of the militia and stores. Cromwell was now tirelessly engaged in helping to put Parliament in that posture of defense which was necessary. From the beginning he was clearly one of the leaders of the war party in Parliament. During these months on the eve of war, he is seen sitting late on committees, subscribing funds for the war in Ireland, always in the thick of the bustling activity that had Pym as its organizing genius and Hampden, Holles, Vane, Strode, and Marten as its leaders. As the frantic preparations for war went on, Cromwell came steadily to the fore as a reliable, energetic, decisive member who knew the business of Parliament thoroughly and whose instinctive love of action now found its arena in the cause for which he was to devote himself unstintingly through the coming years of struggle.



## Forming of the "Ironsides"

With the outbreak of hostilities on August 22, 1642, when Charles I raised the royal standard at Nottingham, the hasty preparations of the parliamentary leaders for the war they regarded as inevitable now came to a head. For Cromwell this is seen in two significant events of this month. As member from Cambridge, he had already been instructed to take all possible precautions to prevent the University's responding to the King's appeal of July 24 for its valuable plate to be sent to him at York. One shipment had already been convoyed to him when Cromwell and his colleagues marched upon the city and seized the remainder of the treasure, reported in the House of Commons on August 15 to have been worth some £20,000, in addition to the magazine of arms of the castle.

Likewise on August 29, Cromwell began in Huntingdon to raise his own troop of horse, as dozens of other gentlemen were doing all over England in that summer of 1642--whether for King or Parliament. He was voted a sum of £1,104 "mounting money" to equip them, and summoning his brother-in-law, John Desborough, as his quarter-master, he soon enlisted sixty men in Cambridge and Huntingdon. Almost from the first Cromwell made a point of recruiting men who both knew how to fight and knew what they fought for. If there was any question of the kind of men who would be needed to carry the day against the better equipped royal forces, it was seen clearly enough by Cromwell in the first major engagement at Edgehill. In some respects, the confusion

here was equally apparent on both sides. Yet Cromwell recalled many years later that after this humiliating defeat, he had approached his cousin John Hampden with a proposal for new regiments to be raised.

"Your troopers," said I, "are most of them old decayed serving-men and tapsters and such kind of fellows; and," said I, "their troopers are gentlemen's sons, younger sons and persons of quality; do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will be ever able to encounter gentlemen that have honor and courage and resolution in them? . . . You must get men of a spirit; and take it not ill what I say-- I know you will not--of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go, or else I am sure you will be beaten still."<sup>1</sup>

By the following spring, Cromwell had begun to follow these principles in transforming his troop into a regiment. His basis of selection was well understood by Baxter who described it in later years as he had himself observed the results in the quality of those troops. He wrote:

At his first entrance into the wars, being but a captain of horse, he had special care to get religious men into his troop. These men were of greater understanding than common soldiers and therefore more apprehensive of the importance and consequence of war, and making not money but that which they took for the public felicity to be their end, they were the more engaged to be valiant. . . . These things it's probable Cromwell understood, and that none would be such engaged valiant men as the religious. But yet I conjecture that at his first choosing such men into his troop, it was the very esteem and love of religious men that principally moved him; and the avoiding of those disorders, mutinies, plunderings and grievances of the country which debaist men in armies are commonly guilty of. By this means he indeed sped better than he expected. Aires, Desborough, Berry, Evanson and the rest of that troop did prove so valiant that as far as I could learn they never once ran away before an enemy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 204.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, or Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times (London: Parkhurst, J. Robinson, J. Lawrence, and F. Dunton, 1696), p. 98.

Similar testimony is given by Whitelocke who wrote of the men of this regiment that they were

most of them freeholders and freeholders' sons, and who upon a matter of conscience engaged in this quarrel, and under Cromwell. And thus being well armed within, by the satisfaction of their consciences, and without by good iron arms, they would as one man stand firmly and charge desperately.<sup>1</sup>

So by the summer of 1642, this regiment was nearly complete, with ten companies included. Entrusted with the defense of the eastern counties against the advances of Lord Newcastle's army from the north, still more parliamentary troops were desperately needed. This was evidenced by Cromwell's hearty response to a generous offer of certain Puritan "bachelors and maids" to raise and equip a new company for his regiment. To them he wrote:

I approve of the business; only I desire to advise you that your "foot company" may be turned into a troop of horse; which indeed wil, by God's blessing, far more advantage the Cause than two or three companies of foot; especially if your men be honest godly men, which by all means I desire.<sup>2</sup>

Cromwell was clearly among those who saw this conflict in both its military and its ideological aspect. The King could not be taught the limits of his power by an army inspired by the Word, fearing not kings but the righteous sovereign of all, who should use them as his instruments in executing judgment upon a reckless and determined monarch.

Dependable as these troops were, the forces of the Eastern Association were not enough to stem the onslaught from the west

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, Memorials of the English Affairs: Or, An Account of What Passed from the Beginning of the Reign of King Charles the First, to King Charles the Second, His Happy Restauration (London: Nathaniel Ponder, 1682), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, I, 248.

and north. By September, 1642, scarcely more than these six counties could any longer be counted as solidly behind the parliamentary cause. In this desperate situation, Pym's party renewed its efforts to enlist the aid of the Scots. Led by the younger Vane, a delegation of commissioners sent by Parliament to Edinburgh so successfully found their way into the good graces of their northern neighbors that a Solemn League and Covenant was agreed upon. It reached Westminster on August 26 and almost immediately was officially ratified there. The pact proved to be one of the last things Pym was to accomplish for the cause he had led so capably, for he had long been ill and on December 8 he died.

A new phase of the war was entered with the death of Pym and the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant. New leaders now came to the fore in the parliamentary ranks, principally Vane and St. John, while in the field Cromwell's successes in driving the Royalists from Lincoln were bringing him more into the public eye as Parliament's brightest military hope. By the end of January, 1644, the Scots army, wading through heavy snows, crossed the border to throw their weight with the parliamentary forces in what amounted to the addition of a fifth army to those of Essex, Waller, Fairfax, and Manchester. The two nations now joined in common cause, it was thought fitting that a central body should henceforth direct the military strategy of these combined forces. Thus was formed the so-called Committee of Both Kingdoms, on February 16, 1644--a joint board of strategy on which each nation had executive representation, and because of its meeting place, popularly known as the Committee at Derby House.

### The Rift between Independent and Presbyterian

In accordance with the new arrangement, Cromwell was now second in command of Manchester's army of the Eastern Association. With him was a Major General Laurence Crawford, who was one of the Scots of the new auxiliary army, and was next in command to Cromwell. Considering the growing tension between the two religious parties of the army, it is not strange that sooner or later an episode would occur to disturb the harmony of the Independent and Presbyterian factions within that army. Freedom of religious expression had steadily been stimulating the growth of a great variety of sects holding widely divergent religious beliefs. Cromwell as an Independent held that all these should have the right to interpret the Scriptures for themselves, and to worship without hindrance. It was natural that this should have shocked the Presbyterian elements of the army, who at the beginning of the war were undoubtedly in the majority. The alarm of these orthodox ones at the free and easy toleration accorded by Cromwell to the sectarians in the army soon earned Cromwell the reputation of coddling these sectaries. Up to this time, relations between Manchester, Presbyterian though he was, and Cromwell seem to have been entirely amicable. Actually, Manchester had been engaged for several months in the reformation of Cambridge University at the direction of Parliament, so it is probable that Cromwell had virtually free rein in his command during this time when the friction with Crawford was to develop.

Briefly, it seems that Crawford had taken offense at the

actions of one Lieutenant William Packer and while near Bedford had arrested and suspended him, sending him back to Cambridge until Manchester should be able to investigate the case. Packer's offense seemed to be not so much a military one as that he was a notorious Anabaptist. About this same time, while Packer appealed his case to Cromwell, Crawford also attempted to effect the dismissal of one Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Warner who was also an Anabaptist and for that reason had refused to sign the Covenant. Cromwell had likewise intervened in his behalf, addressing a letter to Crawford in the following blunt fashion:

Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions; if they be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies. I advised you formerly to bear with men of different minds from yourself: if you had done it when I advised you to it, I think you would not have had so many stumbling-blocks in your way. . . . Take heed of being sharp, or too easily sharpened by others, against those to whom you can object little but that they square not with you in every opinion concerning matters of religion.<sup>1</sup>

The extent to which Crawford's hostility was aroused by this and similar frictions is only seen fully in the startling testimony later introduced into the parliamentary investigation when the issue grew to involve Manchester and Cromwell in public controversy. Crawford, for example, cited a petition which was alleged to have circulated in the army, sponsored by favorite officers of Cromwell. He charged that pressure had been brought to bear upon all to sign it. This, among other more serious charges that Cromwell was negligent to his duty, treacherous, and in short, responsible for nearly every disaster that had befallen the

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 277 f.

parliament armies in recent months, shows how far Crawford had been embittered in the few months he served with Cromwell.

### Sects and the Toleration Issue

It was apparent to many by this time that the split between the Presbyterian and Independent factions was more fundamental than had been supposed. When the five Independent members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines in January, 1644, published their famous Apologetical Narration<sup>1</sup> they were not only declaring their intention to fight the propositions of the Presbyterian majority on behalf of a limited toleration for those of their own persuasion, but their proclamation itself gave impetus to a rising tide of pamphlet controversy on the whole subject of toleration.

In fact the year 1644 was to prove a momentous one in the continuing struggle for recognition of the rights of conscience. The pamphlet warfare of the time provides a clear indication that the conflict between Presbyterians and Independents in the army was but part of a highly articulate struggle in press and pulpit throughout England between the Presbyterians who were violently opposed to any form or degree of toleration, and the whole array of Tolerationists, who ranged all the way from the highly respected Independent divines of the Assembly to the revolutionary swarms of Anabaptists, Familists, Ranters, Seekers, and Millenarians who all united in claiming a right to conscience in religious beliefs and practices. They differed widely in doctrinal beliefs,

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<sup>1</sup>David Masson, The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time (7 vols.; Cambridge: Macmillan, 1859-94), III, 128.

needless to say. They would also themselves have permitted varying degrees of toleration, from the most unlimited freedom of the Baptists, without establishment of any church, to the most circumscribed toleration of dissent with a National church allowing Congregational autonomy of organization, as the Independent divines in the Assembly sought. Yet because the Presbyterians believed that to admit of any degree of dissent whatever would open the door to every kind of error, they remained unalterably opposed to even the opening wedge of toleration, thus welding together against them every shade of opposition, which was to grow in strength as the army of Cromwell grew steadily more successful in the field.

Sure evidence of the heightened feeling on this issue was the flood of literature on the subject in the year 1644. Among the pamphlets were these:

May, 1644--John Goodwin's M. S. to A. S. (possibly by a disciple of his).

June, 1644--William Walwyn's Compassionate Samaritan.

June, 1644--Roger Williams' Bloody Tenent of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience.

July, 1644--Thomas Edwards' Antapologia.<sup>1</sup>

These are only a few of the dozens of pamphlets that poured from the presses of London in that crisis year of Marston Moor. Each reveals in some measure the religious and political ferment of the time. The issue of toleration was to be kept burning all through 1645 as well, so long as the Assembly sat deliberating on the ecclesiastical settlement of a nation that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 112-31.



was fast coming to repudiate the very purpose for which they sat.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, such sectarian opinions as were abroad in the nation at large were unquestionably made welcome in Cromwell's army, to the growing alarm of the Presbyterians in Parliament and the Assembly. None was more disturbed by these developments than the Scottish commissioner, Robert Baillie, who had already been informed of his compatriot's misfortune in the Crawford incident, and who kept a close watch on the trend of events in the capital. On April 2, 1644, Baillie notes the fact that the army contains many Independents, adding that "sundry officers and soldiers" of that way of thinking had gone beyond it into "Antinomianism and Anabaptism." Later that month he writes again:

The Independents have so managed their affairs that of the officers and sojourns in Manchester's army, certainly also in the General's [Essex's] and, as I hear, in Waller's likewise, more than the two parts [two-thirds] are for them, and these of the far most resolute and confident men for the Parliament party.<sup>2</sup>

While this was a great exaggeration as regards the armies of Essex and Waller, he was perhaps not far wrong concerning Manchester's.

While Cromwell at this time had signed the Solemn League and Covenant, agreeing to work for a church reformation along the Scottish lines, he was far from admitting that such a system should be adopted without definite guarantees for those of "tender

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. William Haller (ed.), Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-47 (3 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), for other examples of this literature.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Baillie, The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, ed. by David Laing (3 vols.; Edinburgh: Robert Ogle, 1841), II, 146, 170.

conscience." Not only was he an avowed Independent, working closely with the parliament party of that view, but he was turning more and more to favor the sectarians as well as the more conservative Independents in his army. Such intolerance as that of Crawford in the Packer and Warner incidents only made him the more determined to encourage the kind of zealous officers with whom he was surrounding himself.

With the fall of York and the brilliant victory of Marston Moor, the friction between the Presbyterians and Independents in disputing credit for that victory grew even more acrimonious. The Presbyterians were exceedingly anxious for a good report from the Scots forces, while they claimed that the Independents, on the other hand, were trying to arrogate all glory to Cromwell. Crawford, still bitter, had spread rumors calculated to detract from Cromwell's reputation in the whole campaign, which, incidentally, came with poor grace from one who was himself at the time in some shadow of disrepute as a result of a rash decision during the siege of York. Nevertheless, enjoying the confidence of Manchester, he had continued to stir up trouble in the days following Marston Moor.

During this time, Cromwell became increasingly impatient with Manchester's strategic handling of the campaign, especially when his dilatory pursuit following that victory allowed Rupert to escape with a large part of his army intact. Likewise, the Committee of Both Kingdoms was becoming so disturbed by Manchester's inaction that their correspondence and advice grew sharp even to the point of insult. Meanwhile, the feud between Cromwell

and Manchester had reached a head, and the committee summoned both parties to London to account for their differences. In the ensuing investigation, Baillie wrote:

Our labour to reconcile them was vain: Cromwell was peremptor; notwithstanding the kingdom's evident hazard, and the evident displeasure of our [the Scottish] nation, yet, if Crawford were not cashiered, his [Cromwell's] would lay down their commissions.<sup>1</sup>

The bitterness of this controversy is illustrated also in the testimony of an anonymous opponent of Cromwell, who was apparently a Presbyterian colonel or captain. A former neighbor near Ely, he takes Cromwell to task for having inveigled him into raising a troop of horse in 1642, only to find himself actually paying those troopers himself for ten weeks "which to this day I never received a penny." He likewise charges Cromwell with packing his regiment with sectarians:

If you look up his own regiment of horse, see what a swarm there is of those that call themselves the godly; some of them profess they have seen visions and had revelations. Look on Col. Fleetwood's regiment with his Maj. Harrison, what a cluster of preaching officers and troopers there is. Look what a company of troopers are thrust into other regiments by the head and shoulders, most of them Independents, whom they call godly pretious men; nay, indeed, to say the truth, almost all our horse be made of that faction.<sup>2</sup>

He goes on to relate some alleged excesses of Henry Ireton, who had as Cromwell's son-in-law and governor of Ely, turned it, according to him, into a veritable Amsterdam:

. . . for in the chiefest churches on the Sabbath day the soldiers have gone up into the pulpits both in the forenoon and the afternoon and preached to the whole parish, and our

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 229 f.

<sup>2</sup>John Bruce (ed.), Manchester's Quarrel with Cromwell: An Episode of the English Civil War, annotated and completed by David Masson (London: Camden Society, 1875), p. 72.

ministers have sat in their seat in the church, and durst not attempt to preach, it being a common thing to preach in private houses day and night, they having got whole families as Independents into that Ile from London and other places under their command, likewise having made poor men of that Ile captains only as I conceive because they profess themselves Independents, and such as have filled dung carts both before they were captains and since.<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell's own part in the long hearings of the Manchester affair is brief and pointed. Having given his own testimony in bold terms as to Manchester's gross inefficiency and mismanagement of the offensive, he stated categorically on November 25, 1644:

I did also declare some such speeches and expressions offered by his Lordship . . . whereby he hath declared his dislike to the present war, or the prosecution thereof, and his unwillingness to have it prosecuted unto a victory or ended by the sword, and desire to make up the same with some such a peace as himself best fancied.<sup>2</sup>

He was here getting at the root of the difficulty--Manchester's lukewarm attitude toward the prime objective of the war, the decisive defeat of the Royalist army. This in turn was due to an impression that negotiation might end the war at any time without need for military victory. Actually, the Presbyterian party as a whole, satisfied that the solution of the church question was provided by the Assembly and as good as adopted by Parliament, was now eager that the King should be brought to terms. Far from resigned to such a settlement, however, Cromwell was even more resolute than before that non-Presbyterians should be provided a sufficient guarantee of toleration, and had taken a decisive step to that end. On September 13, 1644, Baillie wrote:

This day Cromwell has obtained an order of the House of Commons to refer to the Committee of Both Kingdoms the accom-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

modation or toleration of the Independents--a high and unexpected order.<sup>1</sup>

This startling move, carried through by Vane, St. John and others of the Independent party, served notice on the Presbyterians that they might not expect to carry Presbyterian settlement without further concessions. Coming as it did in the midst of the public controversy over toleration of the sects, it could not but be interpreted as sabotaging the Assembly's avowed objective of bringing forth a bill to establish uniformity. Baillie perceives at once the set-back this has brought to the Assembly. He writes:

This has much affected us. These men have retarded the assembly these long twelve months. This is the fruit of their disservice, to obtain really an act of parliament for their toleration, before we have got anything for presbytery either in assembly or parliament.

He adds in the same letter:

The great shot of Cromwell and Vane is to have a liberty of all religions without any exception. . . . Many a time we are put to great trouble of mind.<sup>2</sup>

Assuredly the cause of toleration had not been forgotten by Cromwell in his absence from Parliament. On the contrary, it was now vividly brought again to the attention of the whole country as an issue worth fighting for.

While the whole controversy with Manchester had undoubtedly further intensified feeling between the Presbyterian and Independent parties in Parliament, this stormy atmosphere was now to be cleared by a lightning-stroke of inspired action on Cromwell's part. He arose in the House of Commons on December 9 and swiftly analyzed their perilous situation: the need for a vigorous prose-

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<sup>1</sup>Baillie, I, 230.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 61.

cution of the war; the present divided command threatening to prolong the war till the public should grow sick of it; the necessity of dropping charges and of overlooking past mistakes on either hand, and finally the need for all those in Parliament to render up their commands for the good of the cause. A motion was made and immediately carried that no member of either House should henceforth hold military or civil command. Thus the famous Self-Denying Ordinance, since Cromwell himself was exempted from its terms by special action, prepared the way for the recasting of the entire army that spring along the lines of the New Model. Not only did this masterly stroke close for a time the dangerous breach in parliamentary ranks created by the religious issue, but at the same time it consolidated Cromwell's personal leadership of that army and gave him the dominant voice in the reforms that were now to revitalize its morale and efficiency.

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J. H. Birch, *Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate* (London, Methuen, 1913), p. 318.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MISSION OF THE NEW MODEL ARMY

#### Religion in the New Model Army

Beyond the new efficiency of the fighting force that came to be known as the New Model, and underlying it, was that remarkable esprit de corps of Puritan earnestness which was to make that army not only a mighty instrument for the destruction of opposing armies, but a potent and unique force in the entire Puritan revolution. It is no doubt easy to overestimate the numbers of zealous Puritan saints in the ranks of the New Model, because of the tone imparted to the whole by this earnest minority. Large numbers of those from Waller's and Essex's armies when absorbed into the new body were neither remarkable for their Independency nor for any particular piety. Firth points out, "The 7,000 or 8,000 pressed men added to make up the required numbers cannot be credited with definite theological views of any kind."<sup>1</sup> There were raw levies and many from the west and other parts of England which were not at this time strongly Puritan. Even so, from an early date, there had been a realization among many that the parliamentary army represented the sober, determined and devoted people of England. Baxter expressed this when he said:

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Firth, Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 318.

But though it must be confessed that the public safety and liberty wrought very much with most, especially with the nobility and gentry who adhered to the parliament, yet was it principally the differences about religious matter that filled up the parliament's armies and put the resolution and valour into their soldiers, which carried them on in another manner than mercenary soldiers are carried on.<sup>1</sup>

As has already been seen, like attracted like, and the spiritual and military enthusiasm of the "godly" in Cromwell's army, so largely drawn from the Puritan eastern counties, was so contagious that it soon spread to the rest of the armies. With the reorganization of 1645, the new leadership (under Fairfax) of the type of officers Cromwell had gathered round him earlier became dominant, so that increasingly these became the moulders of the New Model army and their ideals its motivating force.

Joshua Sprigg was to describe in glowing language in his Anglia Rediviva the phenomenon of this army as it appeared at the height of its glory following the First Civil War:

The officers of this army, as you may read, are such as knew little more of war then [sic] our own unhappy wars had taught them, except some few, so as men could not contribute much to this work: Indeed I may say this, they were better christians than souldiers, and wiser in faith than in fighting and could believe a victory sooner than contrive it; and yet I think they were as wise in the way of soldiery as the little time and experience they had could make them.

These officers, many of them with their soldiery were much in prayer and reading Scripture, an exercise that soldiers till of late have used but little, and thus then went on and prospered: men conquer better as they are saints, than soldiers; and in the countries where they came, they left something of God as well as of Caesar behind them, something of piety as well as pay.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baxter, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Joshua Sprigg, Anglia Rediviva, England's Recovery: Being the History of the Motions, Actions and Successes of the Army under the Immediate Conduct of Sir Thomas Fairfax (London, 1647), p. 323.



Faith of the common soldier.--How are we to discover the animating faith of the ordinary soldiers of this army? What turned it from a mixture of disorganized rustics, unschooled in war, and inexperienced in politics, into a crusading victorious army, terrible not only for its sword of steel but even more for the sword of the Spirit it wielded?

When so much evidence that has survived to us today represents the thoughts and actions of the political leaders of the time, it is refreshing to turn to some of the lesser-known contemporary sources for evidence of the common thought and piety of that army. While there is ample evidence of what the enemies of that army thought of its heresies--its alleged treason, and its fanaticism--it is important that authentic testimony be gathered concerning what was the faith of the common soldier through this conflict. What were his religious presuppositions? For what was he fighting? What were his political views? It will be seen that these have a direct bearing upon the religious views of their commanding general, and upon his military and political career.

Among the dozens of pamphlets which sprang from the presses of the day in the propaganda of the war one of the most illuminating for its reflection of rank-and-file sentiments is The Souldier's Catechism. This Catechism is believed to have been written by one Robert Ram, a Puritan clergyman, and originally published in 1644-45, "for the encouragement and instruction of all that have taken up arms in the cause of God and his people, especially the common soldiers."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Souldier's Catechism, Composed for the Parliaments Army (London: John Turner, 1644), preface, no pagination.

Using the simple question-and-answer technique of the catechism, it first establishes the Christian's justification for taking up arms. By a detailed appeal to Scripture, citing David, Abraham, and the New Testament centurion, the Christian's right and duty to bear arms in a just cause is demonstrated. The question is then asked, "What is it that you chiefly aim at in this War?" "Answer:

1. At the pulling down of Babylon, and rewarding her as she hath served us, Psalms 137: 8.
2. At the suppression of an Antichristian Prelacy, consisting of Archbishops, Bishops, etc.
3. At the Reformation of a most corrupt, lazy, infamous, superstitious, Soul-murdering Clergy.
4. At the advancement of Christ's Kingdom, and the purity of his Ordinances.
5. At the bringing to Justice the enemies of our Church and State.
6. At the regulating of our Courts of Justice, which have been made the seats of iniquity and unrighteousness.
7. At the upholding of our Parliaments, which are the subjects best Inheritance, and the Crown of our Nation.
8. At the preservation, and continuing of the Gospel to our posterity, and the Generations to come.<sup>1</sup>

As a statement of war aims, this is scarcely surpassed by any of the political literature of the civil wars.

The Catechism goes on to consider the role of Providence in support of their cause, in words which might almost have been written by Cromwell himself. The question: "What do you conclude from the good success that your side hath already had?"

"Answer:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

1. That Almighty God declares himself a Friend to our Party.
2. That he hath already much abated the Courage of our Enemies.
3. That we have all the reason in the World to trust God for the future, who hath done so much for us.
4. That the Lord will glorify himself more and more in his Churches behalf.<sup>1</sup>

If the Catechism be considered the ideological manifesto of the Puritan army, it illumines that remarkable combination of political and religious motives which lay at the root of that army's will to resist the powers that were. It is the same confidence in the righteousness of their cause as we shall see again and again in Cromwell himself.

Still more illuminating as regards the faith which motivated the Puritan soldier is The Soulders Pocket Bible, whose popularity attests its universal appeal and inspiration value as a pocket guide to the Scriptures. It is a sample of the best of Puritan piety, in a style that is simple, direct, and eminently practical. It consists of some eighteen propositions, supported by citations of Scripture, for the instruction and inspiration of the parliamentary soldier. While written in 1643 before the time of the New Model, it so breathes the spirit of that army that no better summary of that spirit can be found than the creed that is here set forth in these propositions. They are as follows:

1. A soldier must not do wickedly.
2. A soldier must be valiant for God's cause.
3. A soldier must not rely on his own wisdom, his own strength, or any provision for war.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

4. A soldier must put his confidence in God's wisdom and strength.
5. A soldier must pray before he goes to fight.
6. A soldier must consider and believe God's gracious promises.
7. A soldier must not fear his enemies.
8. A soldier must love his enemies as they are his enemies, and hate them as they are God's enemies.
9. A soldier must cry unto God in his heart in the very instant of battle.
10. A soldier must consider that some times God's people have the worst in battle as well as God's enemies.
11. Soldiers and all of us must consider that though God's people have the worst, yet this cometh of the Lord.
12. For the iniquities of God's people, they are sometimes delivered into the hands of their enemies.
13. Therefore both soldiers and all God's people upon such occasions must search out their sins.
14. Especially let soldiers and all of us upon such occasions search whether we have not put too little confidence in the arm of the Lord, and too much in the arm of flesh.
15. And let soldiers and all of consider that to prevent this sin, and for the committing of this sin, the Lord hath many times given the victory to a few.
16. And let soldiers and all of us know that the very nick of time that God hath promised us help, is when we see no help in man.
17. Wherefore, if our forces be weakened, and the enemy strengthened, then let soldiers and all of us know that now we have a promise of God's help which we had not when we were stronger, and therefore let us pray more confidently.
18. And let soldiers and all of us know, that if we obtain any victory over our enemies, it is our duty to give all the glory to the Lord, and say: "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes." (Ps. 118: 23)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Souldiers Pocket Bible (London: G. B. and R. W., 1643), no pagination. See Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 332, for facsimile of title-page.

Here in brief form and stripped largely of the theological polemic that characterizes much of Puritan literature is the essence of the religious faith that animated the parliamentary army. Anonymous, it was probably written by a Puritan divine, but so perfectly does it express that army's beliefs that it is small wonder that it was for a long time known as "Cromwell's Pocket Bible." Here, as in the Catechism is an utter confidence in the rightness of their cause, a calm assurance of divine strength, and a sublime trust that "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord." Present here too is a real sense of humility that demands a searching for sin in the self, and finds its highest insight in that paradox of justice and mercy: "A soldier must love his enemies as they are his enemies, and hate them as they are God's enemies."

There is plentiful evidence that these pious sentiments were not mere sermonizing but were borne out in the everyday life of many a Puritan soldier's praying and fighting, not least of all in the time of testing. Early in the war, the Puritan army had gained fame for their psalm-singing before, during, and after a battle. Vicars describes an incident in the hottest part of the battle of Marston Moor:

In the rout of the enemy, and in their flying and scattering about, many of them ran most frightedly and amazedly to the place where some of the regiments of horse of the Parliament side were standing on their guard, and all or most of their riders were religiously singing of Psalms; to whom as the aforesaid runaways of the enemy came near and by their singing of Psalms perceiving who they were, they all most fiercely fled back again, and cryed out, "God damn them, they had like to have been taken by the Parliament Roundheades." For they only knew them, I say, to be the Parliament soldiers by their singing of Psalmes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 333, citing Vicars, Parlia-

To this may be added Hugh Peters' account of Cromwell's devotions before the storming of Basing House on October 14, 1645, as typical of the General's reliance upon divine support in and before an engagement--in this case one of the most violent short engagements of the war, involving as it did a Catholic stronghold. Peters reported:

Lieut. Gen. Cromwell had spent much time with God in prayer the night before the storm; and seldom fights without some text of Scripture to support him. This time he rested upon that blessed word of God, written in the 115th Psalm, eighth verse, "They that make them are like unto them [images], so is every one that trusteth in them."<sup>1</sup>

Increase of sectaries.--We have already seen how the encouragement Cromwell had given to the sects in the army was causing grave alarm among the Presbyterian right of the parliamentary cause. Now the creation of the New Model only augmented these fears, for at last it seemed obvious that this sectarian party controlled the army, that radical doctrines were on the increase and that Cromwell had determined to become their champion. The victory at Naseby on June 14, 1645, gave Cromwell such a burst of new prestige that the worst fears of the orthodox were now confirmed. The Independents in Parliament were encouraged; the sectaries were jubilant. A clear picture of the situation in the New Model at this time is given in Baxter's vivid and firsthand account. Deciding to visit friends in the army soon after Naseby, he found a most disturbing situation:

But when I came to the army among Cromwell's soldiers, I found a new face of things which I never dreamt of: I heard

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mentary Chronicle, God's Ark, p. 28.

<sup>1</sup>Sprigg, p. 152.

the plotting heads very hot upon that which intimated their intention to subvert both Church and State. Independency and Anabaptistry were most prevalent: Antinomianism and Arminianism were equally distributed. . . .

Abundance of the common troopers, and many of the Officers, I found to be honest, sober, orthodox and of upright intentions: But a few proud, self-conceited, hot-headed secretaries had got into the highest places, and were Cromwell's chief favorites, and by their very heat and activity bore down the rest, or carried them along with them, and were the soul of the army, though much fewer in number than the rest (being indeed not one to twenty throughout the army; their strength being in the General's and Whalley's and Rich's regiments of horse, and in the new placed officers in many of the rest). . . . They [the men] most honoured the Separatists, Anabaptists, and Antinomians, but Cromwell and his council took on them to join themselves to no party, but to be for the liberty of all.<sup>1</sup>

For this scandalous state of affairs, Baxter partly blamed the orthodox ministers, many of whom had begun as chaplains in the early days of the war, but attracted by the good livings at home, had since returned to their churches. He reproached himself even more, for he had once been invited to become the chaplain of Cromwell's own troop, but had rejected it "because my judgment was against the lawfulness and convenience of their way." Now he reflected upon it regretfully:

These very men that then invited me to be their pastor were the men that afterwards headed much of the Army, and some of them were the forwardest in all our changes; which made me wish that I had gone among them, however it had been interpreted; for then all the fire was in one spark.<sup>2</sup>

But now Baxter had a new opportunity--a bid from Whalley's regiment to be their chaplain. At the risk of misunderstanding in his church at Coventry, that divine now joined the New Model, determined at all costs to do everything in his power to set right all the errors that had taken such strong rootage in the fertile

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<sup>1</sup>Baxter, pp. 50 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

soil of that army's sectarianism. It was not to be easy. As Baxter relates:

My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the more tractable, and another kind of militia I had than theirs.

I found that many honest men of weak judgments and little acquaintance with such matters, had been seduced into a disputing vein, and made it too much of their religion to talk for this opinion and for that, sometimes for State Democracy, and sometimes for Church Democracy; sometimes against forms of prayer, and sometimes against infant baptism, (which yet some of them did maintain); sometimes against set-times of prayer, and against the typing of ourselves to any duty before the spirit moves us; and sometimes about free-grace and free-will, and all the points of Antinomianism and Arminianism. So that I was almost always, when I had opportunity, disputing with one or another of them. . . . But their most frequent and vehement disputes were for liberty of conscience, as they called it, that is, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do to determine of any thing in matters of religion, by constraint or restraint, but every man might not only hold, but preach and do in matters of religion what he pleased.<sup>1</sup>

From this may be gathered how great was the gap between Cromwell and even a moderate Presbyterian, as Baxter might be termed. The liberty of conscience prized so highly by the General and so many of his army was anathema to the orthodox Puritan, concerned as he was with maintaining purity of doctrine as the very lifeblood of the Christian church. But even Cromwell could not foresee all the far-reaching implications of this revolutionary new approach he was taking, nor the extremes to which some of the radical sectarians would carry their individualism in the name of religious liberty. He could not know that he too would be forced in the not too distant future to define the limits of toleration also, and so to alienate many of those who now hailed him as their saviour.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 53.



Cromwell's Growing Assurance of  
the Army's Mission

Meanwhile, Cromwell who from all reports was apparently going far toward moulding the New Model after his own beliefs, was finding it to be an effective instrument of the divine will in prosecuting the war in the field. His own words are significant as he reports the victory at Naseby:

Sir, this is none other but the hand of God; and to him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him. . . . Honest men served you faithfully in this action. Sir, they are trusty; I beseech you in the name of God, not to discourage them. I wish this action may beget thankfulness, and humility in all that are concerned in it. He that ventures his life for the liberty of his country, I wish he trust God for the liberty of his conscience, and you for the liberty he fights for.<sup>1</sup>

As he saw such striking evidence of the effectiveness of his forces, Cromwell was likewise persuaded that in this army, made up of all types of believers, their very principle of liberty of conscience was at once a powerful motivating force and the distinctive sign and seal of the Almighty which would enable them to overcome. He, therefore, through the summer and autumn campaign of 1645 in the west, continued to be impressed by the providential favor showered upon this army in that series of engagements climaxing in the fall of Bristol in August. In order that the political significance of these victories might not be altogether lost upon a Parliament still apprehensive at the growth of Independent views within the army, he took occasion after the fall of Bristol in his report to Commons to spell out the importance of toleration in continuing to win such successes:

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 360.

Presbyterians, Independents, all had here the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same pretence and answer; they agree here, know no names of difference; pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere. All that believe, have the real unity, which is most glorious, because inward and spiritual, in the Body, and to the Head. As for being united in forms, commonly called Uniformity, every Christian will for peace-sake study and do, as far as conscience will permit; and from brethren, in things of the mind we look for no compulsion, but that of light and reason. In other things, God hath put the sword into the Parliament's hands, for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from it, he knows not the Gospel: if you would wring it out of your hands, or steal it from you under what pretense soever, I hope they shall do it without effect. That God may maintain it in your hands, and direct you in the use thereof, is the prayer of

Your humble servant,  
Oliver Cromwell<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell's eloquent plea for even a limited toleration fell upon deaf ears for the most part, for whatever the wishes of the Independent minority in Parliament, there was an unquestioned majority who looked upon any exception to enforced uniformity as an opening of the gates to every kind of sectarian excess and error. As Baxter has described, the encouragement given in the New Model to the sects, plus their growing awareness of the army's importance as the saviours of the nation, had resulted in a rapid multiplication of sects during 1644-45, with such varieties of belief, and such unconventionality of behavior as has scarcely been seen in England either before or since. Yet with it all, certain trends may be seen in these transition months which have a direct bearing upon the state of the army religiously, and the position of Cromwell as its head.

(1) One trend that is most apparent is the increased freedom of criticism of both Church and State during this time.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 377 f.

This was partially a result of the anarchy stemming from years of protracted civil war, whose results seemed to vindicate the most extreme antimonarchic forces. Then too there was a marked unleashing of the more radical elements of sectarianism among both a populace and an army where a very large and unaccustomed liberty of preaching was now being allowed. What this produced in political terms was a tremendous impetus toward egalitarianism now largely described as the Leveller movement,<sup>1</sup> a study in itself which cannot be considered in detail here. But at the same time there was a sharp increase in the more radical tendencies of Puritanism--toward anticlericalism, antinomianism, and the accentuation of every kind of unorthodox belief.

Baxter has given us the most vivid description of the state of the army at this period, and of his heroic efforts to rescue some of his erring brethren by argument from the more dangerous heresies. He writes:

But I perceived that it was a few men that bore the bell, that did all the hurt among them, I acquainted myself with those men, and would be oft disputing with them in the hearing of the rest; and I found that they were men that had been in London, hatched up among the old Separatists, and had made it all the matter of their study and religion to rail against ministers, and parish churches, and Presbyterians, and had little other knowledge, nor little other discourse of any thing about the heart or heaven: but were fierce with pride and self-conceitedness, and had gotten a very great conquest over their charity, both to the Episcopal and Presbyterians. (Whereas many of those honest soldiers which were tainted but with some doubts about liberty of conscience or Independency,

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<sup>1</sup>For the Leveller movement, see T. C. Pease, The Leveller Movement: A Study in the History and Political Theory of the English Great Civil War (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1916). Also Wilhelm Schenk, The Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution (London: Longmans Green, 1948).

were men that would discourse of the points of sanctification and Christian experience very favourably.)<sup>1</sup>

(2) A second related trend in the religion of the army was the increase of lay preaching during the course of the war. This is perhaps the most pronounced development of all, for lay-preaching was before 1640 relatively uncommon, whereas by 1646 it had become in Edwards' view "the scourge of the ministers."<sup>2</sup> This is abundant evidence that this was given direct encouragement within the army, where it continued to enjoy its greatest popularity and protection. Did not Cromwell himself believe that "He that prays best and preaches best fights best."<sup>3</sup>

While much of Edwards' testimony must be heavily discounted because of his extreme antipathy to sectarianism, and his calculated campaign to exhibit it always in the worst possible light, some idea of the prevalence of the various aberrations of sectarianism may be gleaned from his Gangraena. He gives repeated examples of lay preaching both by and among the soldiers. These involved frequent instances of soldiers speaking out in services, railing at the minister, and even occasional threats or acts of violence against the clergy, which he cites with horror as typical.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baxter, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Edwards, Gangraena; Or A Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of This Time, Vented and Acted in England These Last Four Years (London: Ralph Smith, 1646), III, 254.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, II, 378.

<sup>4</sup>Edwards, III, 30, 107, 250, 173 f.

Certainly there were some grounds for the argument he cites from one soldier: "If they preach not they fight not. . . ." <sup>1</sup> On these very practical grounds a greater degree of tolerance was shown toward preaching in the army, even when Parliament passed an order on April 25, 1645, soon after the New Model was established, prohibiting preaching by anyone not an ordained minister of a reformed church. <sup>2</sup> Needless to say, this was scarcely enforced in the army. It is quite evident then that already lay preaching was a thoroughly popular practice in the army, especially for officers to preach to their men. Edwards cites numerous instances also of officers and troopers preaching in civilian churches, either by invitation or, more often, without. One Lieutenant Webb did much of this. He was reported to have interrupted a service at Steeple Aston one morning, then to have preached from the pulpit that afternoon. Next Sunday his Colonel Hewson took over the pulpit morning and afternoon. Hewson also publicly denounced the order against lay preaching. <sup>3</sup>

Later on, when the Parliament army was in Scotland in 1650-51, Nicoll notes in his Diary that Major General Lambert demanded the use of the East Kirk in Edinburgh, where sermons were preached not only by Independent ministers, but by captains,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>How this order was not only ignored but a persuasive "Vindication" of lay preaching was simultaneously issued is described by Prof. William Haller in his article, "The Word of God in the New Model Army," Church History, XIX (March, 1950), 13-33.

<sup>3</sup>Edwards, III, 251-53.

lieutenants, and even ordinary troopers.<sup>1</sup> This question of soldiers' preaching nettled the Scots clergy into open controversy with Cromwell after the battle of Dunbar. They declined his invitation to come out of Edinburgh castle and preach freely in the churches of the city, complaining against the usurpation of lay preachers in the English army. This provoked Cromwell to reply:

Are you troubled that Christ is preached? Be not envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy. Where do you find in the Scriptures a ground to warrant such an assertion that preaching is exclusively your function?<sup>2</sup>

Cromwell's pride in the preaching of his army comes out further in a later speech to Parliament:

For I must say to you on behalf of our army--in the next place to their fighting they have been very good preachers, and I should be sorry they should be excluded from serving the Commonwealth, because they have been accustomed to preach to their troops, companies, and regiments--which I think has been one of the blessings upon them to the carrying on of the great work. There may be some of us, it may be, who have been a little guilty of that, who would be loath to be excluded from sitting in Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

(3) Another trend evident in the army's religious pattern was its distinctive emphasis upon the Spirit. The importance of this belief in the Holy Spirit to all these sectarian groups has been well brought out by G. F. Nuttall, who believes that it offers the key to understanding the entire faith of the Puritan.<sup>4</sup> He maintains the view that the impetus of Puritanism drove men farther and farther to the left in accepting the Spirit as

<sup>1</sup>Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, II, 338.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., IV, 491.

<sup>4</sup>Nuttall, pp. 6-7. Cf. Schenk, chap. v, "The Religion of the Spirit," pp. 82-95.

sufficient ground of revelation, until many who began as orthodox Calvinists moved gradually to the various degrees of mysticism represented by the Seekers, the Quakers, and many unclassified types who shifted freely from one position to another.

The point is that the focus of authority shifted from the Word to the Spirit. One humble case, for example, was the Quartermaster of horse who preached, claiming only the Spirit as his license for doing so.<sup>1</sup> This was, in Edwards' outraged opinion, one of the most fruitful grounds for antinomianism in the army and in the country at large, as the sects increasingly gained in strength. Certainly it was a distinctive mark of lay preaching in the army that they spoke by the power and the authority of the Spirit of God and laid claim to many of the gifts thus imparted.

#### Religious Aspect of the Army Debates--1647

When the parliamentary victory was completed with the end of royalist resistance in June, 1646, the problems of war were soon overshadowed by the problems of making the peace. During these four years of war, Cromwell had been troubled by no serious doubts as to either the outcome nor the justice of the war. He had seen the hand of God constantly in the unbroken string of recent victories, climaxed in the fall of Oxford. What was God's will in the settlement that was to follow was not to be so clearly seen. The winning combination of forces was soon split by the refusal of the Presbyterians to grant the army's demands for a cash payment of their arrears, together with a religious settlement

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards, III, 107.

with toleration for the sects. In the months of negotiations that followed in 1646-47, Cromwell first found himself in the role of a mediator vainly striving to gain an agreement between a restless army and a stubborn Parliament, while a crafty King maneuvered for time in which to play off the one against the other, using the Scots as his trump card. Cromwell saw in the obstinate hostility of Parliament a growing peril--either of a restoration of the old regime with Charles gaining unlimited powers in exchange for a Presbyterian uniformity, or an open breach between Army and Parliament which could only result in anarchy. During the prolonged negotiations over disbandment, Parliament seemed willing to flirt with either alternative rather than yield. Only when the army moved ominously near to London were the members of Parliament brought at last to see that this aroused creature meant business.

Meanwhile the new democratic elements in the army, stirred to self-consciousness by the war's ferment and the subsequent opposition of the Presbyterian party in Parliament, took a direct hand in constitution-making with their submission of The Case of the Army Truly Stated, a manifesto of rights and grievances. While the Leveller wing was preparing this and its successor, the Agreement of the People, Henry Ireton had formulated a more conservative settlement in his Heads of the Proposals, which he had submitted on July 23 to the King, as the plan of that Cromwellian element of the army who wanted primarily a limited monarchy, a shown hierarchy, and toleration for dissenters. Since it was essential for the General Council of the Army, in which the levelling agitators were well represented, to agree on the official position



of the army, a council was called on October 28, 1647, at Putney church, to discuss the two specific schemes of government. This remarkable series of meetings reveals not only the temper of the army at this crucial moment, but throws much light also on Cromwell's own mental processes and religious presuppositions. The dominant concern of the whole council was to apply a religion of the Spirit to the political issues of the moment. For this reason, it is important to understand the religious views and assumptions of these army leaders as they approached the staggering problems of a nation's political and religious life in this time of transition.

Religious assumptions of the Cromwellian army.--Much has been written about the political issues in these debates--the trends toward more democratic government foreshadowed in the significant demands for equality made by the Levellers, the resistance to these demands by the more conservative officers, and the resulting synthesis that finally resulted as it is seen in the constitutional proposals of Ireton the next spring. In this important rediscovery of the political issues of the debates, one might easily miss the significant contribution of all this evidence to an understanding of Puritan religion. Yet the firsthand nature of the discussions in the Clarke Papers places this among the best evidence of the theological as well as political grounds of Puritanism. Particularly these debates afford a revealing glimpse of Cromwell's own religious views, seen always most clearly in interaction with other minds, and in the give and take of discussion. We have seen that his was not a contemplative

mind, but one which sharpened its thoughts upon the whetstone of other opinions. He reached his conclusions most often after listening, arguing, observing others' reactions, and finally with his uncanny sixth sense selecting the right time for decision--and then acting. Undoubtedly these debates represent Cromwell at one of those periods when he was more than ordinarily receptive, tolerant, and open to suggestion through the clash of opinion in open debate. Certainly it was a time when those around him felt free to urge their solutions upon the council with freedom and with a solemn sense of their historic importance.

In seeking to know the religious presuppositions of Puritan faith which underlie the army debates and are revealed by them, much may be learned from the sermon of Thomas Collier delivered at headquarters in Putney just a month before the debates took place. In this virtual keynote sermon, called "a Discovery of the New Creation," he sets forth in typical Puritan homiletic fashion the task of the army in this crucial hour. Through his discourse several presuppositions of the Puritan army may be discerned.

(1) They come under a high sense of mission, believing that they as an army have a divine calling to discover and formulate a government that will establish justice and vindicate the hopes of an oppressed and weary people. Collier at once declares that God has called them to this high mission. Anticipating to a large extent the millenarian program later to be tried under the Barebone Parliament, he calls for the Saints to reign in this their glorious hour.

Where God is manifesting himself, there is his and the Saints' kingdom, and that is in the Saints.<sup>1</sup>

Such a righteous rule requires an earthly magistracy that has been made new, for the old rulers are done away.

. . . First, in respect of the persons ruling, they shall be such as are acquainted with, and have an interest in, the righteous God; that as formerly God hath many times set up wicked men to rule and govern . . . so he will give it into the hands of the Saints.<sup>2</sup>

(2) The army council comes together not only believing that God has given them this mission, but that they have been given the Spirit by which to discover God's will. Thus they are to begin their sessions with lengthy prayer-meetings in which the way of the Lord is sought. The single ministration of the Spirit can enable them to fulfill their mission.

Pray in the Spirit, preach and prophesy in the Spirit, praise in the Spirit; that is, in the wisdom and power of that law in the Spirit which will deliver Saints from fleshly actings into the glorious liberty of spiritual actings, that they shall no more act from a legal principle to a law without them, but from a principle of light, life, liberty, and power within them.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the guidance of the Lord through the Spirit plays a most essential role in these deliberations. It would be impertinent, and contrary to historical reality, for us to dismiss these prayer-meetings cynically as mere hypocrisy. While we may well question whether the results were not overestimated, misinterpreted, or frequently rationalized, there is every historical reason for supposing that the members of the council genuinely regarded

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon reprinted in A. S. P. Woodhouse (ed.), Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950 ed.), p. 390.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

enlightenment through the Spirit as an important mode of divine revelation, not to be lightly disregarded.

(3) They come with the faith and hope (expressed by Collier) that their sharp political differences, which had so far split the Council, might somehow be bridged through the reconciliation of the Spirit. While this was to prove, on the whole, an abortive hope, it was always an operative factor. The fact that it was even expected to play a part tells us something of the religious assumptions of those on both sides of the current controversy.

It is only the glorious light of this new creation that will put an end to these divisions amongst Christians. . . . And the truth is that nothing else will be able to put an end to these divisions but this spiritual dispensation, this new creation of God in the spirits of his people, and this is and shall be the glory of this heaven, unity and peace amongst Saints.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus with this mission before them, this means of revelation inspiring them, and this hope of reconciliation before them--all products of the Spirit in which they put their trust--that the Council is led to expect great things of its deliberations. While admittedly this key-note sermon is set in the language of the most spiritual wing of the army, there was a large measure of agreement among all the participants upon these common bases for discussion and action. Their differences were to come when they attempted practical applications of their theories of temporal and spiritual government and in devising tests to determine what was of the Spirit and what was not.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 392.

Major issues in the debates.--Before considering further the religious aspect of these debates, we must look for a moment at the political issues on which the controversy hinged. For the most part, the debates center round the extent to which the established order of government by Commons, Lords, and King is to be altered in the direction of more radical democracy in which every man shall have a vote. The Independents like Ireton and Cromwell support the more conservative view that changes in the old constitution should be gradual and that such a revolutionary change as the institution of equal manhood suffrage might lead to anarchy.

On the other side, radical religion is allied with radical politics. The Left is composed of the more millenarian sectaries, such as Harrison; plus the Levellers who are less motivated by religious enthusiasm than by a political theory of natural rights, but are even more determined to effect a settlement that shall recognize the equal voting rights of all men, regardless of property and position.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the Putney debates, Cromwell acts as moderator though he scarcely attempts to disguise his agreement with Ireton at nearly every point. However, his less dogmatic nature is apparent in his willingness to hear every side presented, while his concern with discovering a real unity of purpose leads him to act often in the role of mediator between the arguing factions. From the time the debates open with a frank confession of distrust by the agitator Sexby, motives are frequently impugned, feelings

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<sup>1</sup>See Woodhouse, Introduction (pp. 115-91).

ruffled, and opinions violently contradicted without regard to rank, yet always it is assumed that there is a common interest in the army which binds them together. This interest is basically to find a settlement which will avoid the perils of absolutism and which will also protect (and perhaps extend) the liberties of the subject. But as we have seen, they meet also as a unique representative of an army conscious of a mission and seeking the will of God for their situation. Thus their religious attitudes constantly color their debates and enter into their every argument, not simply to provide the appearance of piety in the eyes of their fellows, but to find real sanctions of authority for their position and divine guidance amid their perplexities.

Modes of revelation and their testing.--In their earnest searching for what is the will of God and the meaning of revelation we see in these debates the Puritan mind in action, and especially do we see Cromwell's basic attitudes and beliefs applied to concrete problems. This is most clear in the frequent discussions following the prayer meetings on what has actually been revealed to them, and how that revelation should be tested or checked.

Cromwell's attitude toward the possible modes of divine revelation is seen best in his occasions of debate with the more enthusiastic sectaries such as Lieutenant Colonel Goffe. Whether it be true, as Woodhouse observes, that whenever the debate comes to a stalemate Goffe always moves a prayer meeting, while Cromwell moves a committee meeting, there are some grounds for the remark. A closer look at these discussions may disclose why the sectarian

enthusiasts usually stress private revelations, while Cromwell is more disposed to discover means of testing the validity of such revelation.

In the process of determining what is the cause of the present sad state of the kingdom and of their stalemate in reaching a settlement, Colonel Rainborough had maintained, seconded by several of the agitators, that the time had come to break their engagements to defend the person of the King. While Cromwell is inclined to refer this to a committee, Goffe moves a public seeking of God to find out the cause of their present troubles. Says Goffe:

[I am troubled] when I do consider how much ground there is to conceive there hath been a withdrawing of the presence of God from us that have met in this place. . . . Therefore, I say, let us show the spirit of Christians, and let us not be ashamed to declare to all the world that our counsels and our wisdom and our ways, they are not altogether such as the world hath walked in; but that we have had a dependency upon God, and that our desires are to follow God, though never so much to our disadvantage in the world if God may have the glory.<sup>1</sup>

To this proposal Cromwell readily agrees "either to convince or be convinced as God shall please."<sup>2</sup> Ireton also confesses in some contrition his sense of the need for such a searching of God's purposes:

I fear we none of us--I am sure I have not--walked so closely with God, and kept so close with him [as] to trust wholly upon him. . . . Every one hath a spirit within him--especially [he] who has that communion indeed with that Spirit that is the only searcher of hearts--that can best search out and discover to him the errors of his own ways and of the workings of his own heart.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The searching was thus agreed upon, some to meet publicly, others privately but each to seek the Lord "every one as God shall incline their hearts."<sup>1</sup> However, even this was not done without the insinuation by the more sceptical Levellers that such a delay is intended merely to put off the agitator's proposals. This Cromwell stoutly denies:

I hope we know God better than to make appearances of religious meetings covers for designs or for insinuation amongst you. . . . This requires [guidance from the] Spirit. . . . Perhaps God may unite us and carry us both one way.<sup>2</sup>

In due time when the Council reconvenes on November 1, Goffe soon takes occasion to claim divine inspiration for the following view:

God hath spoken in several ages in sundry ways. [Of old] when they sent to a prophet and he comes and tells them upon his bare word, he tells them that he received such a message from the Lord . . . and God does not now speak by one particular man, but in every one of our hearts. . . . It seems to me evident and clear that this hath been a voice from heaven to us, that we have sinned against the Lord in tampering with his enemies.<sup>3</sup>

To this attack upon the principle of continued negotiations with the King, Cromwell breaks in, not without a touch of unconscious humor:

I shall not be unwilling to hear God speaking in any; but I think that God may [as well] be heard speaking in that which is to be read as otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

Then coming to terms shortly with Goffe's claim to private revelation on this point, he goes on to urge the necessity of some broader test of such revelation than arbitrary conviction:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 100 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 101.



I confess it is an high duty, but when anything is spoken [as from God] I think the rule is, Let the rest judge! It is left to me to judge for my own satisfaction, and the satisfaction of others, whether it be of the Lord or not, and I do no more. I do not judge conclusively, negatively, that it was not of the Lord, but I do desire to submit it to all your judgments, whether it was of the Lord or no.<sup>1</sup>

Having cited the test of others' judgment, Cromwell now examines the claim to revelation on sheer grounds of factual premises:

If in those things we do speak, and pretend to speak from God, there be mistakes of fact, if there be a mistake in the thing [or] in the reason of the thing, truly I think it is free for me to show both the one and the other, if I can. Nay, I think it is my duty to do it; for no man receives anything in the name of the Lord further than [to] the light of his conscience appears.<sup>2</sup>

(This suggests much, incidentally, as to Cromwell's idea of conscience and his fundamental basis for belief in the necessity for religious toleration generally.) As for the alleged revelation, he acknowledges that, as for himself "I cannot say that I have received anything that I can speak in the name of the Lord. . . ." But he warns that "when we say we speak in the name of the Lord it is of an high nature."<sup>3</sup> It is a claim not to be lightly made by any man.

At this point, Sexby interposes with an argument from Scripture. They are, he says, going about to "heal Babylon, but she would not be healed. We are going about to set up that power which God will destroy: I think we are going about to set up the power of kings, some part of it, which God will destroy. . . ." <sup>4</sup> This Cromwell denies. True, if they were sure it was Babylon

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 103 f.

they set about to heal, they should be condemned, but it is not evil to desire healing in itself.

Cromwell now returns to Goffe, who had suggested that God hath spoken in several ways in sundry ages. Cromwell seizes on this as a possible clue:

God hath in several ages used several dispensations, and yet some dispensations more eminently in one age than in another. I am one of those whose heart God hath drawn out to wait for some extraordinary dispensations, according to those promises that he hath held forth of things to be accomplished in the later times, and I cannot but think that God is beginning of them.<sup>1</sup>

Surely the Millenarians among them--Harrison and the others--must have interjected a hearty "Amen" at this apparent confirmation of their doctrine of the latter days. The signs might even now be beginning to appear. Is it possible that the reign of the saints, as Collier had pictures, was not far off? But Cromwell quickly brings them to earth again. What if such self-authenticating acts of God are not apparent at the moment?

If, when we want particular and extraordinary impressions, we shall either altogether sit still because we have them not, or not follow that light we have, or shall go against, or short of, that light that we have, upon the imaginary apprehension of such divine impressions and divine discoveries in particular things,--which are not so divine as to carry their evidence with them to the conviction of those who have the Spirit of God within them--I think we shall be justly under a condemnation.<sup>2</sup>

So, whether they either choose wrongly, based upon imaginary revelation or refuse to act at all, awaiting a clear-cut sign, they may be equally undone. One is reminded of one of Cromwell's earlier remarks in the debate:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

I know a man may answer all difficulties with faith . . . but we are very apt all of us to call that faith that perhaps may be but carnal imagination and carnal reasonings. . . . Therefore, we ought to consider the consequences, and God hath given us our reason that we may do this.<sup>1</sup>

Granted then that reason is fallen, Cromwell is nevertheless seen in this common-sense argument to be more willing to trust to reason's calculation of odds and consequences than upon whatever arbitrary argument may claim the name of revelation. Reason though corrupt and fallible may be checked against the reason of other devout men, consequences may and must be taken account of, and facts and evidence must be checked. Note that not every man's reason is to be consulted but "those who have the Spirit of God within them."<sup>2</sup> Even so there will certainly not be uniformity of opinion. He acknowledges this:

Truly we have heard many speaking to us; and I cannot but think that in many of these things God hath spoke to us . . . yet there hath been several contradictions in what hath been spoken. But certainly God is not the author of contradictions.<sup>3</sup>

Of course these contradictions are not so much in ends as in the way to attain these.

The end is to deliver this nation from oppression and slavery, to accomplish that work that God hath carried us on in, to establish our hopes of an end of justice and righteousness in it.<sup>4</sup>

So far they are agreed. They agree too that there is some danger in re-establishing King and Lords, and so far as they agree, it is of God, says Cromwell. But they disagree in the extent of that danger, and in the alternative to such re-establishment of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

the old constitution. Some, on the one hand, would rather risk the danger of retaining King and Lords than to destroy all that they represent in the kingdom. Others think the danger to public safety which they represent is more important than their rights or dues under the constitution.

But returning to the deadlock which ensues when men of godly spirit disagree as to the will of God, Cromwell seeks refuge once more in the inner law. Though making a confused statement, he appeals again to the Spirit of God as the only source of guidance in such a situation. That spirit is undoubtedly in some men, and we are to have a regard to those men's opinions. Trying to elaborate further a criterion for knowing what is this Spirit and how it may be known to be present, he says:

When it doth not carry its evidence with it, of the power of God to convince us clearly, our best way is to judge the conformity or disformity of [it with] the law written within us, which is the law of the Spirit of God, the mind of God, the mind of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

There are certain outward evidences of the true Spirit seen in--

. . . the appearance of meekness and gentleness and mercy and patience and forbearance and love, and a desire to do good to all, and to destroy none that can be saved.<sup>2</sup>

Thus where he sees these fruits of the Spirit in men's words and actions, then he knows the true Spirit is present; conversely when envy and malice are evident the Spirit is absent. The way of love and mercy in all things marks the spiritual man. But he hastily adds: that must go hand in hand with a strict and rigorous justice.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

On the other hand, I think that he that would decline the doing of justice where there is no place for mercy, and the exercise of the ways of force, for the safety of the kingdom where there is no other way to save it . . . doth [also] truly lead us from that which is the law of the Spirit of Life, the law written in our hearts.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus defined that inner law of the Spirit as nearly as he was ever to define it, Cromwell's view of revelation and the necessary tests of it may now be summarized. Private revelation is not to be accepted uncritically, for being fallen creature we are apt to mistake "carnal imagination and carnal reasonings" for faith. It must be checked first by the facts, for God is not the author of contradictions. It should further be submitted to other minds, for the rule is, "Let the rest judge." Nor should it be lightly claimed, for to speak in the name of the Lord is a high thing. But our best test is to submit it to the judgment of those who themselves have the spirit within them, are of sound judgment, and evidence this Spirit in fruits of meekness, mercy, and love.

But in Cromwell's view it is never enough to judge merely the spiritual quality of a revelation. If it is to be applied to worldly action, as it must be, one must also consider consequences. This of course involves historical judgment, for it is impossible to gauge the future only by the past. It also raises the question, even when an action is thought just, "Who is to carry it out?" How far is man to wait upon Providence and how far is he to become the instrument of Providence? As to the present case,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

was it God's will that they should take it upon themselves to depose King and Lords?

They must take heed, first of all, he reminds them, of any a priori assumption that God wills any such thing. They may well be mistaken in this. Yet even granting for the moment that it be God's will--

. . . yet let us not make those things to be our rule which we cannot so clearly know to be the mind of God. . . .

Though God have a purpose to destroy them he may be able to do so without requiring them to do something that would be a scandal, or sin, "or which would bring a dishonour to his name."<sup>1</sup> If on the other hand they wait upon God, a better way may appear.

"Surely what God would have us do, he does not desire we should step out of the way for it."<sup>2</sup>

This surprisingly passive attitude toward God's will is in such striking contrast to Cromwell's usual willingness to be the executor of divine judgment that we may well look at it more closely. It reveals surely how deeply attached he still is to the traditional form of English government and how unconvinced he really is by the Leveller arguments for radical change. In such a situation he puts the burden of proof upon God, demanding in effect a clear sign, or leaving it to divine judgment in its own way to reduce these proud powers without the army's intervention. Lacking this, he insists that the best course is to wait and watch events.

If we do act according to that mind and that spirit and that law which I have before spoken of, and in these particular

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

cases do take these two cautions, God will lead us to what shall be his way, and [first] as many of us as shall incline their minds to [him], and the rest in their way in a due time.<sup>1</sup>

In these two cautions of which he speaks, he is warning against two extremes. There are those who might decline any rigorous action against King or Lords solely on grounds of the great difficulties involved. On the other hand, there are those who might take God's vengeance too much into their own hands and proceeding rashly, bring scandal upon the army. It is because Cromwell is alive to both these dangers, especially the latter, that he counsels waiting until they are thoroughly convinced what is God's will for them. This means in effect continuing the negotiations with Charles until that project has demonstrated its complete futility, when moderates like Ireton and himself may then join the more radical element in seeking another solution to their constitutional problems.

#### The Army Breaks with the King

Unable to carry the Council with them, Cromwell and Ireton were forced to give ground steadily before the pressure of the Levellers in the sessions between November 3 and November 8, until Rainsborough was at last emboldened to insist that the army make no more addresses to the King, but call a general rendezvous, where the Levellers might exert their maximum pressure in effecting a settlement on their terms. Cromwell, however, managed to frustrate this design by moving on November 8 that all the agitators meanwhile be sent back to their regiments, thus effectively

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

breaking up their concentrated strength in the Council.

At this juncture, Charles, frightened by threats of assassination at the hands of the army radicals, fled from his Hampton Court prison, making his dramatic escape to Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight. This escape proved to be from the frying pan into the fire when his new jailer, Colonel Hammond, proved loyal to the army and the guard over the royal prisoner was then doubled. At the same time, the flight of the King did have the effect of forcing Cromwell to yield to the more radical faction of the army in forswearing all further dealings with the King. Whether or not secret letters were discovered which confirmed the dark suspicions of Charles' secret intention to repudiate all agreements with army of Parliament, Cromwell and Ireton did execute an abrupt about face and with the announced "Engagement" of Charles and the Scots, made haste to heal the breach in the army ranks. They were reconciled to the Leveller faction at a great all-day prayer-meeting of the Council at Windsor on December 22 at which it was said that Ireton and the other officers prayed so fervently that they made "such sweet music as the heavens never before knew."<sup>1</sup> Within a few days, the House of Commons (January 3) also had received the King's rejection of their Four Bills and the break was nearly complete. Cromwell in the debate threw his weight behind a vote of no further addresses. As Clarendon describes it:

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, State Papers Collected by Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, ed. by R. Scrope and T. Monkhouse (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1767), Vol. II, app. xlv.



Cromwell declared that the King was a man of great parts and a great understanding, but that he was so great a dissembler, and so false a man that he was not to be trusted.<sup>1</sup>

That his mind was now made up seems further indicated by a letter to Colonel Hammond, the King's jailer at Carisbrooke, penned the same day in which he concludes:

But, dear Robin, this business hath been (I trust) a mighty providence to this poor Kingdom and to us all. . . . And although it was trouble for the present, yet glory has come out of it; for which we praise the Lord with thee and for thee.<sup>2</sup>

Now Cromwell became intensely occupied with the pressing problem of the new government which must take the place of the shattered monarchy. Through every kind of negotiation, including the giving of dinners for the representatives of the various factions, he now took upon himself the task of bringing together the Republicans, the army, the City, and as many of Parliament as possible on some kind of agreement as to the new government. Distrusted and feared by such Republicans as Ludlow, Marten, and Rainsborough, and attacked by such vociferous Levellers as Lilburne, there was more than a little desperation in Cromwell's position.

Nevertheless, he sought with redoubled efforts to consolidate the support of the army for the work which he saw was not far off. Meeting in another Council of War at Windsor on April 29, 1648, the General humbled himself before his fellow officers, confessing his past folly in negotiating with the King, and urging upon the whole group the need of searching past actions "to see

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<sup>1</sup>Clarendon, History, X, 146.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, I, 577.

if any iniquity could be found in them, and what it was."<sup>1</sup> In the remarkable account of this meeting by William Allen is found the description of this heart-searching:

And the way more particularly the Lord led us to herein, was to look back and consider what time it was that we could with joint satisfaction say, to the best of our judgments, the presence of the Lord was amongst us, and rebukes and judgments were not as then upon us. . . . By which means we were, by a gracious hand of the Lord, led to find out the very steps . . . by which we had departed from the Lord, and provoked him to depart from us; which we found to be those cursed carnal conferences . . . had prompted us the year before to entertain with the king and his party.<sup>2</sup>

This repentance in sackcloth and ashes not only brought them to see their past sin but also their present duty.

And presently we were led and helped to a clear argument amongst ourselves, not any dissenting, that it was the duty of our day, with the forces we had, to go out and fight against those potent enemies and . . . to call Charles Stuart that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed, and mischief he had done to his utmost, against the Lord's cause and people in these poor nations.

All argument and doubt was resolved when in the course of this three-day meeting news arrived at Windsor of an armed uprising in Wales. The Scots meanwhile were preparing an invasion to rescue the King. Royalist conspiracies and seething discontent had all the country in an uproar. In face of such open rebellion the army of Fairfax and Cromwell was once more mobilized, and its leaders, strengthened by their new-found unity and determination, went forth to subdue the land. Once again in time of crisis,

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<sup>1</sup>Somers Tracts: A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts, on the Most Interesting and Entertaining Subjects, but Chiefly Such As Relate to the History and Constitution of These Kingdoms, 2d ed. revised by Sir Walter Scott (13 vols.; London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809-15), VI, 500.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 501.

Cromwell had been brought to see that in solidarity with his army lay his destiny and the only hope of bringing about a settlement in which both order and freedom could be preserved.

### The Second Civil War

South Wales campaign.--Whatever the odds now against the parliamentary cause, with Welsh rebellion before them and Scottish invasion at their rear, there is no doubt that it was with some relief that Cromwell took the field again, for in military action the issue was always more clear-cut. United in opposition to the King at last, the army could concentrate on its threefold military objectives in Wales, Yorkshire, and the southeastern counties.

Briefly considered, it took the first half of the summer of 1648 for Cromwell to crush the Welsh uprising, with victories in Monmouthshire, and finally after a long siege, the capture of Pembroke castle effectively broke Welsh resistance. From here he writes to Fairfax of his difficulties of munition and rations:

It's a mercy we have been able to keep our men together in the midst of such necessities, the sustenance of the foot (for the most part) being but bread and water. . . . I pray God teach this nation; and those that are under you, what the mind of God may be in all this, and what our duty is. Surely it is not that the poor godly people of this Kingdom should still be made the object of wrath and anger, nor that our God would have our necks under a yoke of bondage; for these things that have lately come to pass have been the wonderful works of God; breaking the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian, not with garments much rolled in blood, but by the terror of the Lord; who will yet save His people and confound His enemies, as in that day.<sup>1</sup>

While others completed the "mopping up" operations in Wales, Cromwell by July was preparing to go to the relief of

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 619.

Lambert who was falling back in orderly fashion before the advance of Hamilton's forces which had crossed the border into England on July 8. Fighting a rear-guard action until reinforcements should arrive, Lambert held the Scots back until Cromwell should arrive and the two joined forces on August 12 between Knaresborough and Wetherby. They attacked Hamilton at Preston where the Scots were crushed in a running battle that continued for four days until the main body of infantry surrendered at Warrington on August 20. Elated by this victory and by the fall of Colchester to Fairfax, Cromwell in his pursuit of the Scots near Knaresborough, wrote in the following joyful terms to Oliver St. John:

I can say nothing but surely the Lord our God is a great and glorious God. He only is worthy to be feared and trusted, and His appearances patiently to be waited for. He will not fail His people. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.

Remember my love to my dear brother H. Vane]. I pray he make not too little nor I too much, of outward dispensations.<sup>1</sup>

Many in Parliament made even less of such dispensation than Sir Harry Vane, for with the return of Holles and others of the excluded Presbyterians, the House was little disposed to celebrate these Independent victories. That Cromwell was still very much aware of the political implications of his victories had been indicated in his letter from Warrington to Speaker Lenthall in which he added to his doxology of praise the following:

It is not fit for me to give advice, nor to say a word what use should be made of this, more than to pray you, and all that acknowledge God, that they would exalt Him, and not hate

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 644.

His people, who are as the apple of His eye, and for whom even Kings shall be reprov'd; and that you would take courage to do the work of the Lord, in fulfilling the end of your magistracy, in seeking the peace and welfare of the people of this Land, that all that will live quietly and peaceably may have countenance from you, and they that are implacable and will not leave troubling the Land may speedily be destroyed out of the land.<sup>1</sup>

First Scottish campaign.--Moving northward now in a vain attempt to cut off Munro's army of Scots from reaching their homeland, Cromwell reached Alnwick on September 12, prepared to press his advantage to the utmost and to invade Scotland if necessary. The overthrow of Hamilton had however restored to power the Argyll faction and with it the great majority of clergy of the Assembly. To make matters easier too, the Lowland Whigamores under Leven seized Edinburgh Castle and thus prepared the way for Cromwell's advance into Scotland. Writing ahead to the Committee of Estates from near the border, Cromwell solemnly reminded them of the harm Hamilton had done and what a witness God had borne in his defeat:

How dangerous a thing is it to wage an unjust war, much more to appeal to God the Righteous Judge therein.<sup>2</sup>

In these negotiations as later in his campaign of 1650-51, he feels it may be possible to overawe men of the reformed persuasion by the manifest favor which the Lord has shown his forces in battle. He continues this approach in writing to Chancellor Loudon on September 18:

And give us leave to say, as before the Lord, who knows the secret of all hearts, that, as we think one especial and of Providence in permitting the enemies of God and goodness in both kingdoms to rise to that height, and exercise such tyranny over His people, was to show the necessity of unity

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 638.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 652.

amongst those of both nations, so we hope and pray that the late glorious dispensation, in giving so happy success against your and our enemies in our victories, may be the foundation of union of the people of God in love and amity; and to that end we shall.<sup>1</sup>

Whether impressed by the hand of Providence or the imminence of Cromwell's army, the Committee of Estates decided to surrender the disputed strongholds at Berwick and Carlisle and by October 4, Cromwell was in Edinburgh to treat with such Scots as Argyll and Johnston of Warriston on the peace terms. In a very few days there, he gained his desired terms, especially a provision that all the Hamiltonian "Engagers" be prohibited from holding any public office.

Meanwhile, events in London were beginning to absorb Cromwell's attention as he left Edinburgh to move southward to take over the surrendered Royalist strongholds at Carlisle and Newcastle, before turning to the more important fortress of Pontefract. The parliamentary Presbyterians, seeing the handwriting on the wall, were resuming frantic negotiations once more with the King at Newport. While stoutly opposed by the Republicans in this enterprise, the Presbyterians were now surprisingly joined by a few of the Independents such as Vane, who feared in this crisis the imposition of a military dictatorship even more than the restoration of a limited monarchy and episcopacy. The death of Rainsborough in a Royalist ambush at Doncaster had hardened many of the army leaders, even former moderates like Ireton, to demand that Charles be brought to trial as soon as possible.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 653.

Cromwell seemes to have been in no hurry to press this final desperate measure. In fact, at a time when it might have been supposed that he would return to London with all possible haste, he showed no disposition for the moment either to cut off Vane's negotiations with Charles or to force an army coup d'état, but remained doggedly at the slow business of reducing Pontefract. He writes on November 6 from there to Colonel Robert Hammond, to comment ironically on the efforts of Vane and Pierrepont:

How easy it is to find arguments for what we would have; how easy to take offence at things called Levellers, and run into an extremity on the other hand, meddling with an accursed thing. Peace is only good when we receive it out of our Father's hand, it's dangerous to snatch it, most dangerous to go against the will of God to attain it. War is good when led to by our Father, most evil when it comes from the lusts that are in our members. We wait upon the Lord, who will teach us and lead us whether to doing or suffering.<sup>1</sup>

Defending himself against the charge of having dealt too leniently with the Scots he continues:

Dear Robin, tell brother Herne [Vane] that we have the witness of our consciences that we have walked in this thing (whatsoever surmises are to the contrary) in plainness and godly simplicity, according to our weak measure, and we trust our daily business is to approve our consciences to Godward.  
 . . .<sup>2</sup>

There is good reason why he has been at such pains to reconcile the Scots, he goes on:

I profess to thee I desire from my heart, I have prayed for it, I have waited for the day to see union and right understanding between the godly people (Scots, English, Jews, Gentiles, Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, and all).<sup>3</sup>

Thus a peaceful settlement with the Scots has been worth far more than the sack of Edinburgh or indeed, a conquest from the Tweed to the Orcades:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 676-77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 677.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

We can say, through God we have left by the grace of God such a witness amongst them, as if it work not yet there is that conviction upon them that will undoubtedly bear its fruit in due time.<sup>1</sup>

Though Cromwell makes it clear in this letter that he opposes further "meddling with an accursed thing," "against whom God hath so witnessed," he seems to have been content still to follow events, perhaps trusting in Charles' duplicity to disillusion Vane before long and then allow the pressure of the army extremists to force a more decisive step upon their return to London. Perhaps he is still hoping as at Putney that God would not have them to "step out of the way" or bring scandal upon themselves by bringing Charles to justice. Yet he is moving steadily to see the inevitability of this justice and in these days before Pontefract is laboriously considering whether or not the entire course of this second Civil War leaves only this one possible conclusion to be drawn.

#### Providence Directs That the King Must Go

Argument of the letter to Colonel Hammond.--Cromwell is thus feeling toward this final decision on November 25 when he again addresses to Colonel Hammond a letter in which he thinks aloud in what seems a "trial balloon" to see how his thoughts sound to a conservative army man who has suffered from the heavy fate of being the King's jailer while actually far from convinced of the justice of the army's position. In this remarkable letter, Cromwell seeks to resolve both his own and Hammond's doubts. The letter is so crucial in illuminating Cromwell's conception of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 678.



Providence and his thinking processes that it must be cited at length. He first comments on his own recent illness as an example of the Lord's trial of his servants:

Thou desirest to hear of my experiences. I can tell thee: I am such a one as thou didst formerly know, having a body of sin and death, but I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord there is no condemnation, though much infirmity, and I wait for the redemption.<sup>1</sup>

He turns now to the Lord's manifestation of Himself through recent events--the real point of the letter:

As to outward dispensations, if we may so call them, we have not been without our share of beholding some remarkable providences, and appearances of the Lord.

He takes Hammond bluntly to task for his doubts, and his refusal to admit the principle "that it is lawful for a lesser part, if in the right, to force [a numerical majority]. . . . The burden of keeping the King should not be considered either heavy or sad. . . . If your Father laid it upon you, He intended neither."

Pressing the point painfully on the personal level, he asks Hammond pointedly whether he had not been seeking an escape from harsh reality when he originally sought the quiet of the Isle of Wight. Did God not find him out there? And is God not seeking him even now in the sadness of his burden and in his dissatisfaction with his friends' actions and motives? In fact has God not been working in all this to bring about some decisive event?

If thou wilt seek, seek to know the mind of God in all that chain of Providence, whereby God brought thee thither, and that person to thee; how, before and since, God has ordered him, and affairs concerning him: and then tell me, whether there be not some glorious and high meaning in all this, above what thou hast yet attained.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 696.

As to thy dissatisfaction with friends' actings upon that supposed principle, I wonder not at that. If a man take not his own burden well, he shall hardly others', especially if involved by so near a relation of love and Christian brotherhood as thou art.<sup>1</sup>

After this candid dealing with his friend, professing to feel duty-bound to speak thus forthrightly, Cromwell next takes up some of Hammond's political doubts and deals with them one by one. First as to authority being ordained of God.

This or that species is of human institution, and limited, some with larger, others with stricter bands, each one according to its constitution. I do not therefore think the authorities may do anything, and yet such obedience [be] due, but all agree there are cases in which it is lawful to resist. . . . Indeed, dear Robin, not to multiply words, the query is, Whether ours be such a case?

This involves three further questions: (1) Whether salus populi be a sound criterion for determining when resistance may be offered? (2) Whether a treaty with the King could protect the safety of the people, or whether "the whole fruit of the war" is like to be frustrated by such a treaty because the King's covenants are made only to be broken. (3) Whether this army be not a lawful power, called by God to oppose and fight against the King upon some stated grounds.

This obviously is the heart of the matter and the most simple and clearcut statement anywhere of what has been growing in Cromwell's mind through the past several months of this second Civil War. He has stated the fact only to draw back from its far-reaching implications, as if only toying with the thought. But it plainly has grown past the status of a hypothetical question,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 697.

for it is confirmed by all the trend of providential events as he looks back.

My dear friend, let us look into providences; surely they mean somewhat. They hang so together; have been so constant, so clear and unclouded. Malice, sworn malice against God's people, now called Saints, to root out their name; and yet they, by providence, having arms, and therein blessed with defence and more. . . .

What think you of Providence disposing the hearts of so many of God's people this way, especially in this poor Army, wherein the great God has vouchsafed to appear. I know not one officer among us but is on the increasing hand. And let me say it is here in the North, after much patience, we trust the same Lord who hath framed our minds in our actings, is with us in this also. And this contrary to a natural tendency, and to those comforts our hearts could wish to enjoy with others. And the difficulties probably to be encountered with, and the enemies, not few, even all that is glorious in this world, with appearance of united names, titles and authorities, and yet not terrified, only desiring to fear our great God, that we do nothing against His will. Truly this is our condition.<sup>1</sup>

He turns now to another of Hammond's objections: that in such action they may be only tempting God, despite his apparent support in times past. Should they press Providence too far? To this, Cromwell replies:

Dear Robin, tempting of God ordinarily is either by acting presumptuously in carnal confidence, or in unbelief through diffidence: both these ways Israel tempted God in the wilderness, and He was grieved by them. The encountering difficulties, therefore, makes us not to tempt God; but acting before and without faith. If the Lord have in any measure persuaded His people, as generally He hath, of the lawfulness, nay of the duty, this persuasion prevailing upon the heart is faith, and acting thereupon is acting in faith, and the more the difficulties are, the more faith.

He goes on to point out that it may be quite as possible to sin by indecision as by decision, by passive as by active disobedience:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 698.

Have not some of our friends, by their passive principle (which I judge not, only I think it liable to temptation, as well as the active, and neither good but as we are led into them by God,--neither to be reasoned into, because the heart is deceitful), been occasioned to overlook what is just and honest, and [to] think the people of God may have as much or more good the one way than the other? Good by this Man, against whom the Lord hath witnessed; and whom thou knowest. Is this so in their hearts; or is it reasoned, forced in?

With this final burst of righteous indignation, Cromwell's true feeling comes to a boil. Can it be that in all these years of bloodshed and heartbreak they have learned so little as to have remaining any trust in "this man"? No, as he concludes, this is to fly in the face of all the facts which God has been revealing in the course of these endless negotiations, and through the test of battle:

Ask we our hearts, whether we think that, after all, these dispensations, the like to which many generations cannot afford, should end in so corrupt reasonings of good men, and should so hit the designings of bad? Thinkest thou, in thy heart, that the glorious dispensations of God point out to this? Or to teach His people to trust in Him, and to wait for better things, when, it may be, better are sealed to many of their spirits?<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere in all of Cromwell's writing or speeches do we have such an intimate and revealing exposition of his innermost thoughts and feelings on such a critical issue as this, involving his basic conception of Providence. It is truly the locus classicus for that doctrine, in all his works. For here is stated the complete justification in Cromwell's mind of what is about to take place--the trial and execution of the King. True, he does not state explicitly that he is prepared to go so far as yet. To depose the King, perhaps imprison him indefinitely, force his

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 699.

exile, or otherwise render him helpless is still possible, while one of the Stuart sons might yet be set up in his place. But the difficulties of this are legion: the peril of Charles' raising forces abroad if he is exiled, the possibility of escape if he is imprisoned, and the ever-present chance of a Royalist insurrection and reaction that would release him. All these forced Cromwell and the extremer element of the army irresistibly to the conclusion in this next month that so far as a permanent solution to the problem "stone dead hath no fellow."

Above all, Cromwell is certainly convinced at this time that some disposal of the King has been eminently justified by the providential ordering of events through two wars and the fruitless negotiations between. It is thus not on grounds of expediency nor of necessity even that Cromwell sees the Puritan army justified in such a decision, but in terms of the divine dispensations which seem at last so indisputable--"so constant, so clear and unclouded."

What then, we may well ask by way of summary, has happened within the past twelve months to reverse Cromwell's position from that in which at Putney he was so confidently carrying on negotiations with the King, rejecting all suggestion that it might be God's will that the King be destroyed, even maintaining that if it were God's will, he would not have them as an army to take such action upon themselves?

1. He was bitterly disillusioned in early 1648 by the King's escape and secret Engagement with the Scots. This perhaps together with the discovery of some secret correspondence was the

end of all confidence in Charles' pledged word.

2. The cumulative force of another series of military victories had confirmed Cromwell's belief in the righteousness of the army's cause and the divine support for it. "They, by providence, having arms, and therein blessed with defence and more. . . ." The mighty had been put down from their seats; the Lord had exalted them of low degree.

3. If the choice now lay, as it seemed, between an army of saints and "this man," how could Cromwell do other than put his trust in these whose godly lives he knew, whose unselfish devotion to free worship in a free state had been amply demonstrated to him? Of these, the officers closest to him had come to believe that the only hope lay in a government without the King. ("I know not one officer among us but is on the increasing hand.")

These were the decisive facts which lay behind Cromwell's belief that outward dispensations of Providence now pointed unmistakably to the necessity of ridding the nation of Charles forever. It had already been decided in his own mind "whether this army be not a lawful power, called by God" to set down one authority and to erect a new one, though what that new authority should be was not to be so easily determined in the days that were to come.

Trial and execution of Charles I.--While the letter to Hammond, in the light of the outcome, sounds as if Cromwell's mind were definitely made up, he had yet to be finally convinced on two matters: what to do with the King, and how soon this must

be done. On both scores his policy of waiting upon events served him in good stead. His reluctance to leave the siege of Pontefract even in view of the importance of the daily army council meetings at headquarters underlines this hesitance. There Ireton had assumed again the political leadership of the council, and his constitution-drafting disposition was employed in drawing up a "Remonstrance of the Army" which not only advocated bringing the King to trial but proved that he was swinging toward the Leveller conception of government by consent. After protracted negotiations between the Leveller and the Independent wings of the army, a new version of the "Remonstrance" was worked out, approved by Cromwell, and as a last resort was submitted to Charles officially on November 16. When this was rejected and it became plain once more that Charles was still in hopes of maneuvering an escape, or bringing Parliament around to his terms, or both, the army council took decisive measures by removing their royal prisoner first to Hurst castle then to Windsor for safer custody. When the army itself meanwhile entered the city to enforce its policies upon a Parliament still insistent upon addressing the King, the drastic action of Pride's Purge was resorted to on December 6, a matter of hours before Cromwell arrived from the north. Apparently his approval had been secured to each major step in these actions, though Ireton and the council had actually executed them, and he may not have known about the purge itself until afterward. As Ludlow said of the purge: "He declared that he had not been acquainted with this design; yet since it was done, he was glad of

it and would endeavor to maintain it."<sup>1</sup>

Even though Cromwell and Ireton had been led to see the necessity of the King's trial, they realized more than most others the vastness of the consequences, as well as the many issues dividing their own party, and both seem to have hesitated before plunging forward to the last act of the drama. Ireton withdrew from his extreme position so far as to believe momentarily that to try the King, then hold him in prison, might suffice to bring him to renounce his position. Cromwell for his part sought to have such lesser war criminals as Norwich and Capel tried first-- in the hope of buying further time for consideration of what to do with the King. Gardiner cites further his private negotiations with such men as Whitelocke, known to oppose taking the King's life. With that eminent lawyer he was known to have "discoursed freely together about the present affairs and actions of the army and the settlement of the kingdom."<sup>2</sup> When a group of peers interceded, sending the Earl of Denbigh as their representative with new terms to Charles, Cromwell in the Council on December 25 pleaded for them to await the outcome of this mission. When the King refused even to see Denbigh, the die was cast. The council unanimously agreed on the 27th to cut off all further addresses to the King. A few days later in the House of Commons, Cromwell was reported to have said:

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund Ludlow, The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Lieutenant-General of the Horse in the Army of the Commonwealth of England, 1624-72, ed. by C. H. Firth (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), I, 211-12.

<sup>2</sup>Whitelocke, pp. 362-63.



Mr. Speaker, if any man whatsoever had carried on this design of deposing the King and disinheriting his posterity, or if any man had yet such a design, he should be the greatest traitor and rebel in the world. But since the Providence of God hath cast this upon us, I cannot but submit to Providence, though I am not yet provided to give you my advice.<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell's whole bearing throughout the trial and execution of the King suggest that he had finally, in the Denbigh rejection, received what Buchan calls a "sign." While gradually he had moved closer and closer to the desperate position of a large part of the army who were ready to bring Charles to speedy justice, he had still waited for a clear signal from Providence before undertaking the loathesome business. All caution was now thrown to the winds, and almost with vulgar abandon he was able to go about the setting up of the court of justice, the prosecution of that judicial travesty, and the final signing of the death warrant for the King. Whether or not he actually in that final moment helped to guide the pens of some of those who wavered at the last, he undoubtedly steadied the nerve of many of the regicides by his determined confidence in those last days of the King's life. It is unlikely that he never suffered inner doubts as to the wisdom of this portentous act, but if he did he revealed few outward signs of any doubt or regret. His customary compassion, once stirred to tears at the sight of the same King playing with his children, was now sealed up by his own conviction of the divine witness in this event, and his mind no doubt wandered back over the memory of countless lives lost because of this one man who now was to offer up his own life in payment for these crimes

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 719, citing Lawrans to Nicholas, January 8, in Clarendon, State Papers, II, app. 1.

of war. Whether or not there was truth in the tale told by Southampton of seeing him in a muffled cloak slip into the Banqueting House where the King's body lay, to murmur over it the words "cruel necessity," he recognized both the element of necessity and that of divine retribution in the execution of Charles. It was from necessity, in so far as all reasonable alternatives, in Cromwell's mind, had been exhausted through the months of negotiation with Charles, and the dangers of any solution that would have come short of execution too clearly imperiled the cause for which two wars had already been fought. It was a divine Providence in that this King by his stubborn courage and cunning had in Cromwell's eyes been guilty of this second war in particular, "this man against whom the Lord hath witnessed" through the months of battle in Wales, through the valley of the Ribble, and even in Scotland's downfall. Now when given the final chance to redeem himself, he had slammed the door in the face of Denbigh and refused even to listen to further terms. As he had said to Hammond of such providences, "Surely they mean somewhat. They hang so together; have been so constant, so clear and unclouded."<sup>1</sup> It was to these events that Cromwell looked for a pointer of the divine intention more than to an inner voice speaking to him of the King's guilt. These were dispensations which to him had objective validity. What he did not see was that they were subject to other interpretations than his own, by even godly people, and that "carnal reasoning" which he detected so often in others, could enter into his own interpretation of events as well.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, I, 697.

## CHAPTER IV

## VICTORY, RULE, AND FAILURE OF THE SAINTS

## Establishing the Commonwealth

Suppressing mutiny at home.--In the powerful vacuum created by the execution of Charles I on that fateful winter afternoon of January 30, 1649, new crises were not slow in coming to test the mettle of England's new rulers. Although nominally only one of the leaders of the new Commonwealth, Cromwell realized that by his ability and determination he had earned himself a more conspicuous place in this new state and that he must assume the responsibility that was involved in this new power. Thus we must look at his activities in these first months of the Commonwealth with a view to discovering first his position in the new regime, but also to find what changes, if any, he had undergone in his inner life, evidenced by any significant actions or expressions now available to view.

His first concern was in stabilizing the new government he had helped to bring to birth--lending his giant strength to the superhuman task of turning the tides of destruction into other more constructive channels, reconciling the factions of the new republic whose already deep divisions had been further deepened by the shock of the King's execution, and helping always to carry on the day-to-day administration and constitution-making necessary

to put the republic on a firm basis for the tasks that remained ahead.

Long before the death of Charles I the little knot of convinced regicides had begun to face the question of what sort of government should succeed the monarchy they were cutting off. In a revised form of the "Agreement of the People" they had formulated a proposed substitute centered around an executive committee--the new Council--and in effect continuing the committee system under which the revolutionary government had long been operating. Two days following the execution, the Commons remnant further purged itself by eliminating all those who had favored settlement with the King on his terms as late as December 5, thus reducing the number in the House to less than a hundred. This body next decided "that the House of Peers in Parliament is useless and dangerous and ought to be abolished."<sup>1</sup> Of the first Council of State of forty members, Cromwell was elected president, and if not the head of the new state, he was indisputably primus inter pares, the directing force and militant energy behind the new regime. By abolishing the rigid terms of the Engagement oath, the Council gained nine more of their former colleagues who had balked at the King's execution. Thus Fairfax, Vane, and Haselrig were again among them with more or less regularity. With this semblance of order restored, Cromwell could count his labors well spent when by February 24 we get a glimpse of his mood in an incident reported by Whitelocke: Challenged by the guards on their way home after supper with Whitelocke, Cromwell and Ireton were

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<sup>1</sup>Journals of the House of Commons, VI, 132.

not recognized and thus were threatened with arrest. The general commended the men for doing their duty and gave them twenty shillings.<sup>1</sup>

If Cromwell was convinced of the importance of the work the army had been called to, he was now about to have new assignments for that army to carry out. The threat of an invasion from Ireland had grown steadily more ominous as Ormond had concluded a peace between the Irish Confederate Catholics and the Royalists, and immediately invited the Prince of Wales to hasten to Ireland to head the new military force. On the other hand, if Ireland was to be made a base of hostile operations, a countermove by the Commonwealth was imperative for the defense of England. Accordingly on March 15, Cromwell was named Commander-in-Chief of the new expeditionary force. In a speech before the Council on March 23, he outlined several reasons why he hesitated to accept the nomination. He was convinced of the urgency of the task, yet "It was fit for me in the first place to consider how God would incline my heart to it, how I might, by seeking of Him, receive satisfaction in my own spirit, as to my own particular."<sup>2</sup>

Further, he did not want soldiers to follow him merely out of personal loyalty, but wished to be certain that their former arrears had been met and that they went forth to Ireland well equipped. He was willing to serve but he felt he was not the only possible choice for the place.

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<sup>1</sup>Whitelocke, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, II, 36-37.

It matters not who is our Commander-in-Chief if God be so; and if God be amongst us, and His presence be with us, it matters not who is our Commander-in-Chief.<sup>1</sup>

He warns against the dangers of disunity among this army which has thus far been so signal an instrument of the Almighty.

I think there is more cause of danger from disunion amongst ourselves than by any thing from our enemies; and I do not know anything greater than that. . . . Now, if we do not depart from God, and disunite by that departure, and fall into disunion amongst ourselves, I am confident, we doing our duty and waiting upon the Lord, we shall find He will be as a wall of brass round about us till we have finished that work that He has for us to do.<sup>2</sup>

At this moment one of the liveliest sources of the disunity Cromwell feared in the army was the influence of the Leveller, John Lilburne.<sup>3</sup> Nor was this confined to the army, for "Honest John" had gathered a great following among all the humbler classes of people in England who saw as yet scant evidence of any betterment of their lot despite the hopes that had been kindled for a broader franchise, more frequent Parliaments, and protection for civil rights. The taste of democracy afforded in the representation of the army agitators had given such men an argument for their voice being heard in both army and civil government, but especially on the issue of their right of petition these Levellers were doubly vociferous. When Cromwell and Ireton were instructed by the Council of Officers to seek a parliamentary act to punish all civilian propaganda work in the army by court martial, Lilburne burst forth with his pamphlet, England's New

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>For a recent biography, see Mildred Ann Gibb, John Lilburne, the Leveller: A Christian Democrat (London: L. Drummond, 1947).

Chains, attacking the commanders of the army as well as the Council of State for these repressive measures. When this in turn stirred mutinous declarations by Leveller troopers, resulting in the cashiering of five of them, the disaffected troopers retaliated by publishing their grievances in The Hunting of the Foxes from Newmarket and Triploe Heath to Whitehall, by Five Small Beagles. This pamphlet accused Cromwell, Ireton, and Harrison with ruling the nation which is now "under a more absolute arbitrary monarchy than before."<sup>1</sup> When Parliament branded Lilburne's book treasonable, he and several of his supporters were arrested, hailed before the Council, and soon after committed to the Tower. Cromwell's patience with Lilburne had run out when he saw that the firebrand was actively stirring up mutiny at a time when the nation was on the verge of invasion from Ireland. As Lilburne later related what he overheard through the door, Cromwell had demanded strong measures:

"I tell you, sir," Cromwell declared, thumping the table, "you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them or they will break you. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

With preparations for the Irish campaign well under way, the discontent that had recently been stirred up in the army was to flare into overt mutiny when the regiments were selected to go to Ireland before all arrears had been met. This as well as the sporadic mutinies in the coming month were quickly put down by Cromwell and Fairfax, but on the occasion when one Trooper Lockyer

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<sup>1</sup>Hunting of the Foxes (1649), reprinted in Somers Tracts, VI, 44-60.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, II, 41.

was executed in front of St. Paul's, thousands of Londoners turned out wearing the sea green of the Levellers in sympathy. The continued uproar raised by Lilburne for an England "governed by laws and liberties" had hurt the new government immeasurably, but the prompt suppression of the insurrection and the payment of the troops gave Cromwell the immediate unity in the army he so much needed before embarking for Ireland.

The hammer of Ireland smashing Popery.--Carlyle wrote of the next campaign: "The history of the Irish War is, and for the present must continue, very dark and indecipherable to us. . . ." Describing Cromwell's part in that campaign he says: "an armed Soldier, solemnly conscious to himself that he is the Soldier of God the Just . . . terrible as Death, relentless as Doom, doing God's Judgments on the Enemies of God!"<sup>1</sup> This picture of Cromwell as the terrible executor of judgment is one of which we have had only occasional glimpses in the First Civil War in England and Scotland, where his fury was always tempered by qualities and conditions that held his fiercest wrath in check. Heretofore, he had been restrained by the following factors: (1) respect for his opponents, who, whether Royalist or Scot, he always regarded as deluded but as men basically like himself; (2) political considerations dictated a policy of considerate terms for his enemies, for there was always public opinion which wavered and could be won or lost by the treatment of the defeated; (3) a common Protestantism had been a bond with most of those he had previously

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Carlyle, Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches (3 vols. in 1; London: Chapman and Hall, 1888), II, 43, 46.



fought; (4) his own sense of compassion which had for the most part controlled his military decisions, and counteracted his vengeful passions. For various reasons, these restraints were all now taken away nearly at once, to unleash the fury that we see in the carnage of Drogheda and in lesser degree before the walls of a dozen castle forts of Ireland. That Cromwell entertained a low opinion of the Irish was a prejudice he held in common with most Englishmen of the Tudor and Stuart period, who commonly regarded the Irish as less than human. So far as political warfare was concerned, Cromwell chose the policy of terror deliberately in one sense, hoping thereby to win a quick victory and by rigorous dealing to shorten what might prove a long and costly business if each fortress had to be reduced by siege.

In his recent conduct during the tense period of the King's trial and execution and later in dealing with the Levellers' mutinies, one might see some evidence that Cromwell had already become distinctly calloused by the rigorous policies he had been obliged to adopt to meet these emergencies. From this standpoint, it is difficult to avoid seeing some hardening of heart in these days which in a real sense mark the low point in Cromwell's career. "Oliver perverted," Buchan describes him in this period, "forced by his overmastering sense of practical needs out of his normal humanity."<sup>1</sup>

But the most important factor in this campaign is the religious issue which divides all Roman Catholics from the Protestant world in his mind. Earlier we saw his intense crusading

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<sup>1</sup>Buchan, p. 339.

zeal in the reduction of "Papist" Basing House where he believed himself endowed with a special mission against what he considered an idolatrous evil. So now in arriving in Dublin Cromwell announces his determination to destroy root and branch the enemies of Christ:

That as God had brought him thither in safety, so he doubted not but, by his divine providence, to restore them all to their just liberty and property; and that all those whose heart's affections were real for the carrying on of the great work against the barbarous and bloodthirsty Irish, and the rest of their adherents and confederates, for the propagating of the Gospel of Christ, the establishing of truth and peace and restoring that bleeding nation to its former happiness and tranquillity, should find favour and protection from the Parliament of England and receive such endowments and gratuities, as should be answerable to their merits.<sup>1</sup>

Never in his military career had Cromwell undertaken a campaign with as much deliberate planning and thorough preparation, from logistics to psychological warfare. Employing all the lessons learned by the experience of the recent civil war, he carefully drew up his strategy for the campaign step by step. He had first insured the high morale of his troops by insistence upon advance guarantees of pay and allowance, with every detail of supply and equipment assured before setting out. Once arrived, he immediately opened his propaganda offensive, as in Scotland, by a series of public declarations designed to clarify his aims and military policies: plundering by his troops would be rigorously punished, lives of unarmed civilians would everywhere be protected, open markets for the farmers would eliminate foraging, and repentant native land-owners might declare themselves in

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 107.

advance of violence by payment of reasonable fines and contributions. The lines were clearly drawn at the outset; in his view there could be no excuse for those who obstinately refused these published terms and resisted the parliamentary army.

That Cromwell came prepared to use extraordinary military measures upon the "barbarous and bloodthirsty Irish" there can be no doubt. Convinced as he was of the prime necessity of reducing Ireland to submission in "blitzkrieg" fashion, he was ready to sanction ruthless means which heretofore he had regarded as beyond the rules of civilized warfare. There was here no time to be lost, for he fully realized the slow wastage by disease that could decimate his army if this campaign were to last long, and none knew better than he that enemies would soon be ready to strike at England from the north whenever the Scots might be able to bring Charles II to terms. The depressing effect of the constant rain and mud of this unhappy isle he soon saw would bog down his army indefinitely unless they were able by speedy strokes to reduce the remaining strong points that stood between Dublin and O'Neill's army in Ulster. Chief of these coastal fortresses was that strategic Drogheda at the mouth of the Boyne. It was to this that Oliver turned on his fateful day of September 3, as he prepared here to crush all resistance so completely that all the rebels of Ireland might tremble before this "hammer of Ireland," drop their arms forthwith, and surrender to their English conquerors. If they should see the wrathful hand of an avenging God in their first hammer-blow, the whole campaign might be cut short and order quickly restored where anarchy now reigned.

The story of the carnage at Drogheda is quickly told. With the overwhelming superiority in men and artillery, nearly 10,000 strong, Cromwell chose his positions round the right triangle of fortifications that made the ancient fortress so nearly impregnable. On the 10th he summoned the garrison. Sir Arthur Aston, the veteran chosen by Ormond to command his picked garrison of some 2,000 men, rejected the terms; and the Cromwellian batteries at once answered with a roar. By next evening, breaches in the ancient walls had been opened, and Cromwell gave the order to storm. Twice repulsed by the defenders of the inner entrenchments, Cromwell threw all his reserves into the breach, and leading the attack in person, gave orders of no quarter. The officers were put to the sword; then the garrison troops also were slaughtered almost to a man. When others sought refuge in the north part of the town, a new massacre began in which a thousand armed defenders died in the streets, priests were indiscriminately slain, and inevitably many civilians as well lost their lives by fire or sword.<sup>1</sup>

In reporting the battle, Cromwell felt the need to justify himself and these extreme measures, though as Gardiner remarks, he was probably the only man at Drogheda who imagined that what had taken place needed any excuse whatever. The fact remains that even beyond the hideous bloodshed that accompanies any desperate hand-to-hand conflict, Cromwell had cast aside all restraint and broken almost every rule by which all his earlier

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Rawson Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649-1660 (3 vols.; London: Longmans Green, 1897), I, 126-38.

actions had been governed. If it is true that he was guilty of killing prisoners once permitted quarter (a point not clear inasmuch as the promise of quarter did not come from him and may not have been known to him) he violated his own code, for he himself later cashiered an officer at Limerick for that same offense. Whatever the specific crimes committed or allowed, it is clear that Drogheda and Wexford are dark blots upon Cromwell's record which he himself felt in some measure required to justify. Thus in writing Lenthall he said:

I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood; and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret. . . .

And now give me leave to say how it comes to pass that this work is wrought. It was set upon some of our hearts, That a great thing should be done, not by power or might, but by the Spirit of God. And is it not so clear? That which caused your men to storm so courageously, it was the Spirit of God, who gave your men courage, and took it away again; and gave the enemy courage, and took it away again; and gave your men courage again, and therewith this happy success. And therefore it is good that God alone have all the glory.<sup>1</sup>

In this account, behind the insistent emphasis upon the Spirit of God providentially working through their forces to bring victory, one can see that in a real sense this marks the most complete claim of Cromwell to an identity with God's will. It was God at every point, he claimed, giving them courage and taking it away, working through them the destruction of their enemies, who more clearly than ever before are also God's enemies. But as usual, it is not enough to accept Cromwell's claim to

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 127.

providential support without asking, "What was it that convinced him that God's hand was in this?" Was it only an inner intuition which required no other validation than his own claim to a private revelation? Or does he reveal what other events or external factors have helped to convince him of God's providential working? A fuller answer to these questions may be ventured presently with the greater evidence that comes to light in the Irish campaign.

There is no need for a detailed treatment of that campaign in its military aspects. At Wexford a similar massacre is allowed, and again there is a wholesale butchery of friars. At Ross the garrison capitulates on milder terms, partly because Cromwell has not hesitated to use the terror of Drogheda and Wexford as a threat. Even so there is now a distinct slackening of the extreme Drogheda spirit throughout the remainder of the winter and spring, when the desperate situation of the Irish had become apparent to all, and Cromwell's terms correspondingly more generous.

Just at this time, the bishops at Clonmacnoise published a manifesto identifying the revolt with the Church and warning the people that Cromwell intended to extirpate Catholicism from the land and exterminate the people. Cromwell was so enraged that he took occasion to reply in what has been called his first and longest state paper. As a revelation of his whole philosophy on the Irish Catholic question it is indispensable; as a clue to his underlying assumptions it also goes far to illumine his rationalization of the earlier massacres. Several aspects of Cromwell's attitude to Catholicism are highlighted in this declaration particularly, and in turn help us to understand his guiding principles and motives.

1. First, his declaration is a compound of all the Puritan prejudices and convictions that combined to make them regard the Roman Catholic Church as the anti-Christ, more to be hated than the devil himself, and more to be feared because it represented a corruption of the true Church, wearing the false garments of godliness. Cromwell regarded conflict between Romanism and Protestantism as inevitable, it is clear, just as the modern Marxist views the ultimate conflict between capitalism and communism. While the one is foretold in Scriptures, Oliver would have said, the other is inherent in the dialectic of history. Each sees the futility of argument with such confirmed enemies.

You are a part of Antichrist, whose Kingdom the Scripture so expressly speaks should be laid in blood; yea in the blood of the Saints. You have shed great store of it already, and ere it be long, you must all of you have blood to drink; even the dregs of the cup of the fury and the wrath of God, which will be poured out unto you!<sup>1</sup>

2. As a proximate cause of his bitterness toward the Irish, it is difficult to overestimate the effect on Cromwell of the exaggerated atrocities of the massacre of Protestants in Ulster in 1641.<sup>2</sup> That these were still vividly in the center of his thoughts and feelings throughout the Irish campaign is evidenced by his repeated reference to the '41 massacre, beginning with his

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 199.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, I, 139 n. "It is necessary to keep in mind the prevalence of a belief in the most exaggerated accounts of the Ulster massacre. May's History of the Parliament, published in 1647 had said: 'The innocent Protestants were upon a sudden deprived of their estates, and the persons of above 200,000 men, women, and children murdered, many of them with exquisite tortures, within the space of one month.'"

speech on arrival in Dublin. We have seen his reference after Drogheda to these "barbarous wretches who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood."<sup>1</sup> During his time in Ireland he had been further horrified by eye-witness accounts of that bloody uprising. Now in answering the bishops, Cromwell blazes forth in righteous fury to charge them again with the guilt of Ulster:

You, unprovoked, put the English to the most unheard-of and most barbarous massacre (without respect of sex or age) that ever the sun beheld. And at a time when Ireland was in perfect peace, and when, through the example of the English industry, through commerce and traffic, that which was in the natives' hands was better to them than if all Ireland had been in their possession, and not at Englishman in it.<sup>2</sup>

Gardiner comments as follows on Cromwell's view of this event:

As a contribution to Irish history, nothing could be more ludicrously beside the mark than these burning words. . . . Cromwell knows nothing of the mingled chicanery and violence which made the Ulster Plantation hateful in the eyes of every Irishman. He knows nothing of lands filched away, of the injustice of legal tribunals by which judgments were delivered in an alien speech in accordance with an alien law, of the bitterness caused by the proscription of a religion clung to more fondly because it was not the religion of the English oppressor.<sup>3</sup>

But however mistaken or perverted his facts, this was the honest belief of Cromwell in English innocence and Irish guilt, and in so thinking he represented the common mind of England at the time. Filled with indignation at these alleged cruelties, his rhetoric swells to unbounded heights as he rhapsodizes on the glory of their crusade:

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>3</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, I, 164-65.



If ever men were engaged in a righteous cause in the world, this will be scarce a second to it. We are come to ask an account of the innocent blood that hath been shed; and to endeavor to bring them to an account (by the blessing and presence of the Almighty, in whom alone is our hope and strength), who, by appearing in arms, seek to justify the same.<sup>1</sup>

3. Throughout the declaration, the deep-seated anticlericalism of Puritan conviction resounds in Cromwell's scathing invective on the arrogance, the injustice, and the presumption of the priesthood. Not only do we here catch echoes of his earlier violent and earthy language as a Root-and-Branch radical attacking the clergy in Parliament, but in his defense of the spiritual liberty of the laity is seen a conviction deepening through the civil wars of the positive importance of lay faith in any true church. The very distinction between Clergy and Laity is unknown to any except anti-Christian churches, he holds:

The most pure and primitive times, as they best knew what true Union was, so in all addresses to the several Churches they wrote unto, not one word of this. . . . It was your pride that begat this expression, and it is for filthy lucre's sake that you keep it up, that by making the people believe that they are not so holy as yourselves, they might for their penny purchase some sanctity from you; and that you might bridle, saddle and ride them at your pleasure. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Attacking also their design to reinstate the King as an ally of the Roman church, Cromwell grows eloquent once more in defense of the long-suffering people:

Alas, poor laity! That you and your King might ride them, and jade them, as your Church hath done, and as your King hath done by your means, almost all ages! But it would not be hard to prophesy, that the bests being stung and kicking, this world will not last always. Arbitrary power men begin to be weary of, in Kings and Churchmen; their juggle between them mutually to uphold civil and ecclesiastical tyranny begins to

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 204-5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

be transparent. Some have cast off both, and hope by the grace of God to keep so. Others are at it!<sup>1</sup>

Again with biting sarcasm he upbraids their carelessness in instructing their people, their encouragement of ignorance and their deliberate withholding of the Word of God:

You either teach them not at all, or else you do it . . . by sending a company of silly, ignorant priests, who can but say the mass, and scarcely that intelligibly; or with such stuff as these your senseless declarations and edicts! . . . You keep the Word of God from them; and instead thereof give them your senseless orders and traditions. You teach them implicit belief; he that goes amongst them may find many that do not understand anything in the matters of your religion. I have had few better answers from any since I came into Ireland that are of your flocks than this, that indeed they did not trouble themselves about matters of religion but left that to the Church. Thus are your flocks fed; and such credit have you of them. But they must take heed of losing their religion. Alas, poor creatures, what have they to lose?<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this extraordinary statement, Cromwell persistently denies that he intends to extirpate the Roman Church from the land. Yet that the Irish had good reason to question his intentions is evident from the foregoing statements. On the other hand, he had written on October 19, 1649, to the Governor of Ross:

For that which you mention concerning liberty of religion, I meddle not with any man's conscience. But if by liberty of conscience, you mean a liberty to exercise the Mass, I judge it best to use plain dealing, and to let you know, Where the Parliament of England have power, that you not be allowed of.<sup>3</sup>

Now in further attempting to explain his policy, Cromwell so far begs the question as to argue that he did not intend to "extirpate the Catholic religion" for that "supposes a thing to be already

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

rooted and established" whereas the Mass had been illegal in Ireland for some eighty years. Thus he will not suffer the saying of a single Mass, but offers them this dubious consolation:

As for the people, what thoughts they have in matters of religion in their own breasts I cannot reach; but think it my duty, if they walk honestly and peaceably, not to cause them in the least to suffer for the same, but shall endeavor to walk patiently and in love towards them, to see if at any time it shall please God to give them another or a better mind.<sup>1</sup>

He further denies his intention to massacre or banish Catholics from the land, even having the poor grace to add this self-righteous thrust:

Only, this argument doth wonderfully well agree with your principles and practice; you having chiefly made use of fire and sword, in all the changes in religion that you have made in the world. If it be change of your Catholic religion so-called, it will not follow: because there may be found out another means than massacring, destruction and banishment; to wit, the Word of God, which is able to convert (a means that you as little know as practise, which indeed you deprive the people of) together with humanity, good life, equal and honest dealing with men of a different opinion. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Buried at the bottom of this diatribe was this distorted truth in which Cromwell essentially believed, and stated more soberly when not in the heat of argument: Only the Word of God could convert, by appealing through the Spirit to men's consciences. All his example in Ireland to the contrary notwithstanding, he had little expectation that fire and sword could change or convert men's minds or hearts. He well realized what force could accomplish in determining the power pattern of national life, externally curbing or releasing by its controls the outer limits of man's spiritual life and worship. But even now he was

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

apparently aware of the futility of coercion as a means of converting a people. His chief purpose in Ireland had been to punish the uprising of '41, and to render that country useless as a base for the Royalist-Catholic invasion of England. That he found this end identical with the will of God at that moment of history only underlines the fact that the Providence of God was always mediated to him by events which in the last analysis he read for himself, though as he believed, guided by the light of the Spirit of God.

He had never been outwardly more sure of the guidance and power of Providence than in executing divine judgment upon these Irish rebels. As has been noted, the campaign marks in a real sense the high-water mark of that confidence of divine support which animated and provided the rationalization of so much of his action.

Campaign in Scotland--"The Lord of Hosts."--Finally obeying the summons to return to England, Cromwell left Ireland behind on May 26, to turn to the next most pressing threat to the Commonwealth, the rumble of trouble from Scotland. Since the death of Charles I, the regicide government had been despised by every foreign power, but in Scotland the opposition was clearly preparing for action. However dubious of the Stuarts some of the parties in Scotland might be, Charles II was still their lawful king and the majority of the nation could not surrender hope that he might somehow be brought to the terms his father had rejected so disastrously. A harmony of Presbyterian Covenant and royal sovereignty might yet be achieved. Protracted negotiations with

Charles II ensued, and after much biting of the lip, the young adventurer was at last compelled to accept the galling terms of the Scottish emissary. At Breda he assented to an agreement which pledged him to take both Covenants, to force a Presbyterian uniformity upon England and Ireland, and even to adopt its forms for his own personal and household worship. Even so, the full import of his plight did not come home to him till his ship had anchored at Speymouth, when he found that even his most moderate amendments had been rejected and that the so-called Treaty of Heligoland was to place him completely at the mercy of the Scots as the price of stepping ashore to assert his royal sovereignty in person once again.

Meanwhile Cromwell was being welcomed back with that awesome respect that was more and more mixed with fear among certain significant parties in public life. Still bitterly hated by both Royalist and Presbyterian, and assailed continually in shrill Leveller pamphlets, he was now also deeply suspect by that group of Republicans including Ludlow, Vane, and Hutchinson, who were coming to regard his military invincibility as a sure index to his political ambitions. Lucy Hutchinson bespeaks this gathering resentment among his former colleagues in this wise:

Now had the poison of ambition so ulcerated Cromwell's heart that the effects of it became more apparent than before, and, while yet Fairfax stood an empty name, he was moulding the army to his mind, weeding out the godly and upright-hearted men, both officers and soldiers, and filling up their rooms with rascally turncoat cavaliers, and pitiful sottish beasts of his own alliance, and others such as would swallow all things and make no questions for conscience sake.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lucy Hutchinson, Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson (London: Longman, 1808), II, 163.

It was good politics as well as good strategy for Oliver at this time to persuade Ludlow to take the command of horse in Ireland. He made use of Psalm 110 to clinch his point, "spending at least one hour in the exposition of that Psalm," conceiving his task to be that of "freeing the people from every burden," though many of the reforms which Ludlow would fain have seen could only be postponed until a more propitious day.<sup>1</sup>

When the Scottish campaign began to advance from the rumbling stage to the planning stage, Cromwell once again exerted his fullest powers of persuasion upon Fairfax in the hope of inducing that commander for the sake of the "old cause" to undertake the command of the expedition in spite of his coldness to the new regime, knowing well that Fairfax's Presbyterian sympathies would help to sugarcoat the pill the Scots would presently be obliged to swallow. Cromwell clearly realized that his own reputation as the leader of the Independents could only stiffen Scots' resistance against what they regarded as an army of sectaries. Such a move might have helped in conciliating opinion at home as well, for the refusal of Fairfax to countenance the King's execution had earned him increased respect among the moderates of the nation. However, Fairfax was not to be moved in his decision and the command devolved upon Cromwell himself. Thus on June 26 Parliament ordered him as "Commander-in-Chief of all the forces raised or to be raised within the Commonwealth of England" to proceed to Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup>Ludlow, I, 245-47.

He realized from past experience that he could not deal with the Scots as he had with the Irish. The fighting quality of their army under David Leslie, who had learned the art of war under Gustavus Adolphus, was not to be underestimated, though the wars of the past ten years had taken their toll of Scottish manpower, so that many now available were raw levies. Moreover, Cromwell could hope that the perennial rivalry of Kirk and Engagers, the internal feuds among the nobility, and the common distrust of Charles II's motives would soon open up divisions in the ranks of his northern enemies.

Nevertheless, as in Ireland Cromwell proceeded with a cautious speed, seeking a quick showdown but more than ever before realizing that he must prepare the way by a propaganda offensive that would clarify his aims and if possible win some support among the confused people he was about to invade. As in his campaign above the Tweed in 1648, he felt a genuine kinship with the Scots religiously as a people of reformed faith, yet he could only condemn their clergy's attempt to enforce uniformity upon England, at the price of subjection to a Stuart king. His own love of theological argument was strong enough to tempt him to try now once more to restate the case of the Puritan Commonwealth so that somehow he might reveal to the Scots the folly of their position and the reasonableness of his own. Accordingly on July 15 before crossing the border he issued a declaration "to all that are Saints and partakers of the Faith of God's Elect, in Scotland," in which he patiently sought to win his erring brethren from their course. He sets himself "to persuade the hearts and

consciences of those that are godly in Scotland that so they be withdrawn from partaking in the sin and punishment of evil-doers."<sup>1</sup> He delivers a reasoned apology for this government's bringing Charles I to justice, defends their breach of the Solemn League and Covenant on the grounds that the end of preserving religion was impossible by the Scots' chosen means of preserving the King. As for the Presbyterian form of church government, the English are still ready to embrace so much of it as "doth appear to be according to the Word of God." Here he grows more eloquent:

Are we to be dealt with as enemies, because we come not to your way? Is all religion wrapped up in that or any one form? Doth that name, or thing, give the difference between those that are the members of Christ and those that are not? We think not so. We say, faith working by love is the true character of a Christian; and, God is our witness, in whomsoever we see any thing of Christ to be, there we reckon our duty to love, waiting for a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of God, to make all those Christians, who, by the malice of the world, are diversified, and by their own carnal-mindedness, do diversify themselves by several names of reproach, to be of one heart and one mind, worshipping God with one consent. We are desirous that those who are for the Presbyterian government, should have all freedom to enjoy it; and are persuaded that if it be so much of God, as some affirm, if God be trusted with his own means, which is his Word powerfully and effectually preached, without a too-busy meddling with, or engaging, the authorities of the world, it is able to accomplish his good pleasure upon the minds of men, to produce and establish his purposes in the world, concerning the government of his church.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, he appeals once more to divine warrant for their confidence, "the full assurance we have that our cause is just and righteous in the sight of God," "that as he hath hitherto gloriously appeared, so he will still, bearing witness to the righteousness of this cause, in great mercy and pity of the infirmities and failings of us his poor creatures."<sup>3</sup> Finally, he

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 283.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



appeals for God to decide between the two causes, that "God shall please to order the decision of this controversy by the sword."<sup>1</sup>

At this same time Cromwell reveals in more intimate correspondence with Richard Mayor his personal feelings at the moment, writing in regard to the new grandchild, his son Richard having married Mayor's daughter:

I hope you give my son good counsel; I believe he needs it. . . . O how good it is to close with Christ betimes; there is nothing else worth the looking after. I beseech you call upon him; I hope you will discharge my duty and your own love: you see how I am employed. I need pity. I know what I feel. Great place and business in the world is not worth the looking after; I should have no comfort in mind but that my hope is in the Lord's presence. I have not sought these things; truly I have been called unto them by the Lord, and therefore am not without some assurance that He will enable His poor worm and weak servant to do His will, and to fulfill my generation.<sup>2</sup>

He is clearly feeling the burden of his increased responsibilities at this time, and aware that he is aging under them. The awareness of being "called" to these duties is especially great at this moment. Had he not tried to induce Fairfax to take up this command, and had it not been laid back upon his own shoulders once again? The thought gives him assurance that the Lord is both laying the burden on him and giving the necessary strength to carry it.

Advancing from Berwick toward Edinburgh, keeping to the sea whence would come his supplies, he found a land stripped of its male population, all mustered north for the defense of the capital. After days of reconnaissance around that city, Cromwell decided he must if possible cut off Leslie from supplies and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

reinforcements to the north. Outmaneuvered, he was forced to fall back toward Musselburgh along the east approaches to the city. There he tried to lure Leslie out into the open by such taunts as were reported by Wariston, that "they could not haive a good cause who keepled in trenches and durst not trust God with the decision of it."<sup>1</sup> While both sides were digging in, Cromwell took occasion to exploit the breach between the clergy and certain "malignant" Royalist elements whom they were trying to purge from the Scots' army at this very moment. He thus takes up the pen of theological argument in another attempt to convert the erring ministers--by stinging them with the shame of their recent covenant with Charles II and thus driving a wedge between the Kirk and Royalist factions:

Your own guilt is too much for you to bear; bring not therefore upon yourselves the blood of innocent men, deceived with pretences of King and Covenant, from whose eyes you hide a better knowledge. I am persuaded that divers of you, who lead the people, have laboured to build yourselves in these things wherein you have censured others, and established yourselves upon the Word of God. Is it therefore infallibly agreeable to the Word of God, all that you say? I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.<sup>2</sup>

There is such a thing, he goes on, as becoming drunken with carnal confidence and making a Covenant with death and hell. In closing he begs them to read Isaiah 28: 5-15, "and do not scorn to know that it is the Spirit that quickens and giveth life."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston, Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston, ed. by George Morison Paul (Edinburgh: University Press, 1911), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, II, 303.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

To this communication the Scots' clergy quickly replied without visible signs of repentance:

Wee have not so learned Christ as to medle with times and seasons which the Father hath kept in his owne hand nor do we desire to admitt any such light and confort as accompanies an unwarrantable warre. . . . We have long ago read the Scripture yow recommend unto ws, and prayes you industriously to search and consider who they are, and what they may expect, who, after they have broken covenant with God and their neighbours . . . darre promise to them selves not onlie immunitie from death and hell . . . but successe . . . in all their unrighteous undertakings.<sup>1</sup>

They charged bitterly once more that Cromwell had himself broken the Covenant after signing it in good faith, a reproach which represented the heart of the Scots' case.

When it was thus apparent that both sides were unshakeably convinced of their own righteousness, the next move was military. At first Cromwell attempted to outflank Leslie by passing around the Braid Hills to the south of Edinburgh, crossing the Water of Leith, only to find Leslie always well protected by the swollen bogs and marshes, and watching every movement from the vantage of Corstorphine Hill. When this strategy failed, Cromwell fell back to the east all the way to his fleet at Dunbar, pressed by the Scots every step of the way. After five weeks around Edinburgh his tactics had been fruitless. Outnumbered, his troops were succumbing to sickness and cold; five hundred had already been shipped back to Berwick and others were falling sick each day. "A poor, shattered, hungry, discouraged army," Captain Hodgson called it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> John Hodgson, Original Memoirs during the Great Civil War: Being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby, and Memoirs of Captain

At Dunbar it seemed that Cromwell was trapped, his forces still intact but always in danger of being pushed into the sea. Distributing his available forces in strong positions, he nevertheless had chosen his ground so that the only avenue of attack open to Leslie lay down the Doon Hill through a narrow defile southeast of the town. While he waited Cromwell wrote to Haselrig for reinforcements:

We are upon an engagement very difficult. The enemy hath blocked up our way at the Pass at Copperspath, through which we cannot get without almost a miracle. He lieth so upon the hills that we know not how to come that way without great difficulty; and our lying here daily consumeth our men, who fall sick beyond imagination. . . .

. . . Our spirits are comfortable (praised be the Lord), though our present condition be as it is. And indeed we have much hope in the Lord; of whose mercy we have had large experience.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Leslie, though he had every advantage of numbers and initiative, was being pressed by the clerical commissioners for a quick victory. Yet they had seriously weakened him in recent days by purging the army of about 4,000 experienced men and officers who had "malignant" tendencies. To that extent, Cromwell's propaganda campaign had borne rich fruit, for the General Assembly had been uneasy enough about this ungodly mixture to insist at this most critical moment on their removal.

The showdown came on September 3. All the previous day Cromwell had watched Leslie's preparations to attack on his left down near the mouth of the shallow Brox Burn, and the plan had gradually opened up to him. If he could attack Leslie's right

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Hodgson, ed. by Sir Walter Scott (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1806), p. 143.

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 314.

sweeping him toward the steep ravine, gain the hill, and throw the bulk of his army into confusion, the Scot's superiority in numbers would be their own undoing. The dramatic account of one paper has it that as soon as Cromwell saw the intention of Leslie on September 2, he exclaimed: "The Lord has delivered them into my hands."<sup>1</sup> A stormy night held up all attacks by Leslie on the night of the second, while Cromwell prepared to beat them to the draw next morning. There was much movement and little sleep in the English camp that night, and prayers were heard from many a tent. Hodgson tells of overhearing a cornet at his prayers: "I met with so much of God in it as I was satisfied deliverance was at hand."<sup>2</sup> Oliver too was in an exalted mood. Attacking before dawn, the English regiments had so rolled up the entire Scottish line by the time daylight broke on the third that no help could find its way through. In Hodgson's words:

The horse and foot were engaged all over the field and the Scots all in confusion, and, the sun appearing upon the sea, I heard Nol say, "Now let God arise and his enemies shall be scattered."<sup>3</sup>

The retreat of the Scots was in panic, and as his cavalry gave chase, Cromwell stopped them to sing as a thanksgiving the 117th Psalm, "O give ye praise unto the Lord." As Cromwell himself described the victory in his report to Commons:

It is easy to say, the Lord hath done this. It would do you good to see and hear our poor foot go up and down making their boast of God. But, Sir, it is in your hands, and by these eminent mercies God puts it more into your hands, to give glory to Him; to improve your power, and His Blessings,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 317, citing New Statistical Account, II, 79.

<sup>2</sup>Hodgson, pp. 146-48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

to His praise. We that serve you beg of you not to own us, God God alone; we pray you own His people more and more, for they are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. Disown yourselves, but own your authority, and improve it to curb the proud and the insolent, such as would disturb the tranquillity of England, though under what specious pretences soever; relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of poor prisoners in England; be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions; and if there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

Argument with Edinburgh clergy over "dispensations."--With

his stunning victory at Dunbar, Cromwell so disorganized the entire defense of Leslie that it seemed likely at first that the whole of Scotland must soon fall to him. Still, the fortress of Edinburgh Castle stood unchallenged, while to the north the remnants of Leslie's army were gathering with whatever forces could be mustered elsewhere for a final stand at Stirling behind the barrier of the Forth. Seeing the necessity of first reducing Edinburgh to submission, Cromwell had seized the port of Leith, and on September 7 met a delegation of Edinburgh citizens to reassure them of his intentions, but also to summon them to an immediate surrender of the Castle. He had even sent Colonel Whalley to ask the ministers who had taken refuge in the Castle to come down and preach in the city pulpits, promising that they should do so without molestation by the soldiers. When the wary ministers refused, fearing a trap, Cromwell took occasion to declare to them not only his innocence of such evil designs, but indignantly attacked them for their part in fomenting the recent war by that ill-conceived mixture of spiritual and worldly power in which the ministers of Kirk had involved themselves in a guilt

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 324-25.

that had formerly been only that of the Stuart family and their "malignant" followers:

When ministers pretend to a glorious Reformation, and lay the foundations thereof in getting to themselves worldly power, and can make worldly mixtures to accomplish the same, such as their late agreement with their king; and hopes by him to carry on their design, [they] may know that the Sion promised and hoped for will not be built with such untempered mortar.<sup>1</sup>

With such tampering in worldly power they had provoked first an invasion of England and now this retaliation in which "God hath hid His face for a time" from them.

Yet it's no wonder--when the Lord hath lifted up His hand so eminently against a family as He hath done so often against this, and the men will not see His hand--if the Lord hide His face from such; putting them to shame both for it and their hatred at His people, as it is this day.<sup>2</sup>

When in spite of these exhortations, Cromwell's overtures were still rebuffed by the clergy, he turned in the leisure of the siege while awaiting reinforcements and machinery from the south to a continuation of his theological argument with the Scottish clergy. In a remarkable letter strikingly paralleling his long harangue of the Irish bishops, Cromwell now sets himself to justify his cause and to dispute with the Presbyterians their claim to infallibility. In both cases he saw the chief obstruction in this stiff-necked claim to authority on the part of an overbearing clergy, though in the former he only blasted his opponents, while now he attempts to persuade them of their errors and turn them to a better course. In this letter he sets forth most fully the Independent position as opposed to the Presbyterian, revealing the roots of his long-standing distrust of that church even while

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 335-36.

expounding his own philosophy of toleration more cogently than on any other single occasion.

Beginning first with a dispute over their respective understandings of the terms of the Covenant, Cromwell soon advances to the attack and indicts the clergy for their pretensions to be the sole interpreters of the Word:

But if these gentlemen which do assume to themselves to be the infallible expositors of the Covenant, as they do too much to their auditories of the Scriptures, counting a different sense and judgment from their breach of covenant and heresy, no marvel they judge of others so authoritatively and severely. But we have not so learned Christ. We look at ministers as helpers of, not lords over, the faith of God's people. I appeal to their consciences, whether any trying their doctrines, and dissenting, shall not incur the censure of sectary? And what is this but to deny Christians their liberty, and assume the infallible chair? What doth he whom we would not be likened unto do more than this?<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, he defends the treatment of the English Presbyterian clergy whom it is charged, they had imprisoned, threatened, and persecuted. True they did "turn out a tyrant, in a way which the Christians in aftertimes will mention with honour, and all tyrants in the world look at with fear; and many thousands of saints in England rejoice to think of it."

If ministers railing at the civil power, calling them murderers and the like, for doing this, have been dealt with as you mention, will this be found a personal persecution?<sup>2</sup>

On the contrary, he maintains that such severity as was shown to such critics was light considering their offense of having stirred up the people to arms, and bringing a new war upon England. Besides, it is not the province of the spiritual power to dictate to the civil power its form of government, for according to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 338.



Scriptures, Jesus had refused even to interfere in the dividing of an inheritance or any other political "meddling":

This was not practiced by the Church since our Saviour's time, till Antichrist, assuming the infallible chair, and all that he called the church to be under him, practised this authoritatively over civil governors. The way to fulfil your ministry with joy is to preach the Gospel; which I wish some who take pleasure in reproofs at adventure, do not forget too much to do.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, he assails the clergy for their resentment at lay-preaching as a scandal to the Reformed Kirk. Here all of Cromwell's anticlericalism and lay pride come to a boil:

Are you troubled that Christ is preached? Is preaching so inclusive in your function? Doth it scandalise the Reformed Kirks, and Scotland in particular? Is it against the Covenant? Away with the Covenant, if it be so!<sup>2</sup>

Ordination is an act of convenience rather than of necessity and to prohibit all lay preaching an offense.

Your pretended fear lest error should step in, is like the man that would keep all the wine out of the country lest men should be drunk. It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy, to deny a man the liberty he hath by nature upon a supposition he may abuse it. When he doth abuse it, judge. If a man speak foolishly, ye suffer him gladly because ye are wise; if erroneously, the truth more appears by your conviction. Stop such a man's mouth with sound words that cannot be gainsayed; if he speak blasphemously, or to the disturbance of the public peace, let the civil magistrate punish him; if truly, rejoice in the truth.<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, Cromwell turns to his perennial theme of Providence in this recent contest. Could the favor of God have ever been more decisively shown than in this recent appeal of both sides to Him?

In answer to the witness of God upon our solemn appeal, you say you have not so learned Christ to hang the equity of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 338-39.

your cause upon events. We could wish blindness hath not been upon your eyes to all those marvellous dispensations which God hath wrought lately in England. But did not you solemnly appeal and pray? Did not we do so too? And ought not you and we to think, with fear and trembling, of the hand of the Great God in this mighty and strange appearance of His; but can slightly call it an event! Were not both yours and our expectations renewed from time to time, whilst we waited on God, to see which way He would manifest Himself upon our appeals? And shall we, after all these our prayers, fastings, tears, expectations and solemn appeals, call these bare events? The Lord pity you.<sup>1</sup>

With this final blast, Cromwell feels he has spoken the last word on Providence in battle. Never had he been more sure of the divine favor than now, not even in the Irish campaign. For with all his dislike of Presbyterian order and Scottish interference in English affairs, he had entertained high respect for the basic conformity of their faith to the Word of God, however mistakenly interpreted and applied. He had, as he makes plain by his tone of aggrieved argument, come with the hope of persuading rather than coercing the Scots, if such could be done. Thus to submit their respective causes to the arbitrament of divine Providence, as each had done, was to let God judge between them. This he had done at Dunbar, where unlike many of his other battles, he had the military odds also against him--yet God had spoken in giving them the victory! Such an outcome could not be a mere event; it must be a dispensation, in judgment against their taking up arms alongside Charles Stuart. Only by severing themselves from this "chief malignant" could they make restitution and regain the former state of grace.

Meanwhile, the loss of face suffered at Dunbar by the "Remonstrants" had redounded to the benefit of Charles who at

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

Perth saw now a chance of uniting all the Scots under a patriotic banner of defense from invasion, and with the Kirk discredited, of assuming himself the leadership of the Royalist cause. Given a willingness to subscribe to both covenants unashamedly while still entertaining this scheme, thus recovering dominance over the badly divided Scots' forces, Charles II was now able to exploit all these advantages, to win Argyll with sweet promises, as well as to gain new Royalist forces from Aberdeen and Angus and the other regions where Montrose had drawn so much Cavalier strength. The result was a new coalition of all the anti-English groups except the western "Remonstrants" who had followed Ker and Strachan under the spiritual leadership of Johnston of Wariston. Though penitence was first exacted by the Kirk, eventually at the price of a mild confession of past guilt, most of the old Engagers and other Royalists were reinstated in the public eye while Charles II himself paid the price of publicly humiliating himself for his own sins and those of his father. Then at last on January 1, 1651, the unabashed young man "very seriously and devoutly" received the crown at Scone after a long sermon by Robert Douglas.

The months after Dunbar, though brightened by the fall of Edinburgh Castle on December 24, 1650, were not happy ones for Cromwell. Isolated spiritually by his lodgment in an alien land, where even the joys of theological argument were denied him by a clergy who preferred to avoid this chief of sectaries lest they be contaminated by him, he was also laid low by sickness. During the first six months of 1651, this was one reason for the slowness of the campaign against Leslie at Stirling; the other was the

impregnability of that fortress. The Royalists in England were meanwhile actively plotting the overthrow of the Commonwealth, and so serious did the threat become that drastic action was taken to break up the conspiracies in early March, in order that the executions of the ringleaders might prove an example to the rest.

Victory at Worcester--"the crowning mercy."--Apparently fully recovered by the end of March from his long illness, Cromwell now turned every effort toward the new campaign whose prime objective was the capture of Stirling. After a futile expedition to the west, by June he had conceived a new strategy for dislodging the obstinate Leslie from his stronghold. Cromwell's bold plan was to turn the left flank of the Scots by crossing the Firth of Forth, thus forcing Leslie either to accept battle or to make a dash for England. By leaving the way open for the latter, Cromwell was taking a calculated risk, but he was so confident now of English national feeling against the Scots that he felt fully justified in taking the chance. By landing a strong assault force at Inverkeithing on June 20, the English army under Lambert established a firm bridgehead and soon had complete control of the Firth, passing the whole army quickly across into Fife. Now it was time for Charles II to rise to the bait. Believing as he did that all England waited to welcome him with open arms, he overrode the judgment of Leslie, and on July 31, ordered the march to England.

Cromwell was fully prepared for the move, having taken the same risk at the time of Preston.

Upon deliberate advice we chose rather to put ourselves between their army and Scotland: and how God succeeded that, is not well to be forgotten. This is not out of choice on our part, but by some kind of necessity; and it's to be hoped, will have the like issue, together with a hopeful end of your work; in which it's good to wait upon the Lord, upon the earnest of former experiences, and hope of His presence, which only is the life of your Cause.<sup>1</sup>

The issue was not long in doubt. Lambert and Harrison had already been alerted, the English militia was called from the counties, and Fleetwood brought the midland forces together at Banbury. With Oliver driving the game before him from the north and his cohorts pressing them from south and east, it soon became apparent to Charles that with daily defections from his ranks and few responding to his call to arms, his hope of reaching London on a rapid march was lost. All he could hope for now was to turn to the west and Wales as a last resort, hoping that those who had in times past been the most loyal Stuart supporters would once again spring to the defense of their monarch. It was a hope doomed to failure. By August 22, he had reached Worcester with something less than 16,000 weary and footsore troops, most of them discouraged and seeing the desperate risk of being cut off so far from hope. Cromwell had planned his strategy well; his reconnaissance was painstaking. By September 3, the anniversary of Dunbar and Drogheda, and his "lucky day," he closed in on Worcester. The Cavalier and Scots forces fought stubbornly, many of them preferring death to dishonor or the risks of being taken prisoners of war. Their losses came to nearly 10,000, including over 600 officers, and half the nobility of Scotland was said to be among

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

these. The invading army was annihilated as a fighting force, and few were as fortunate as Charles II in escaping the reckoning.

The victors in their joy sensed that at last the time of peace had come, that they had wrought here a final deathblow to the aspirations of their opponents. Hugh Peters, addressing the troops in a victory oration, rhapsodized:

When your wives and children shall ask you where you have been, and what news: say you have been at Worcester, where England's sorrows began, and where they are happily ended.<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell was equally sure of the divine mercy in this final stroke:

The dimensions of this mercy are above my thoughts. It is, for aught I know, a crowning mercy. Surely, if it be not, such a one we shall have, if this provoke those that are concerned in it to thankfulness, and the Parliament to do the will of Him who hath done His will for it, and for the nation; whose good pleasure is to establish the nation and the change of the government, by making the people so willing to the defence thereof, and so signally to bless the endeavors of your servants in this late great work.<sup>2</sup>

So came to an end the military career of Oliver Cromwell.

The struggles and conflicts that lay yet before him were to test him just as severely, and his doctrine of Providence must now undergo trial as a guide to the problems of peace. No longer could he appeal as he had at Dunbar and Worcester to the Lord of Hosts to make his will known in the clear-cut decisions of the battlefield's verdict. Henceforth, in the council chamber, in Parliament, and at Whitehall he must again feel his way slowly to discern the hand of God acting in history. Never again could he

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, I, 445.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, II, 463.

make such a simple direct appeal to Providence in the full confidence that within hours the Lord would unmistakably bare his arm upon the field. Now he must return to the slow processes of debate, discussion, and statesmanship which he had begun to learn in the Long Parliament and in the interim between the wars, from 1646 to 1648. Meanwhile, the fundamental problems of the kingdom had not been solved but only postponed.

### The Ferment of the Sects

Cromwell and the army's hopes of church reform.--On his victorious return from Worcester, Oliver found himself able for the first time in years to relax in the knowledge that, for the moment at least, all external foes had been vanquished. Milton was writing:

While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots inbrued,  
And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,  
And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much remains  
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories  
No less renowned than War. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Not long was Cromwell permitted to enjoy his hawking and his horses, for the nation more than ever looked now to him for leadership. All the problems of government had been postponed; none had been solved.

To be sure, Cromwell seemed to have acquiesced in the present Parliament's continuance as a necessary evil, though he was neither without his criticisms of its past performance nor without ideas of what it must now do to justify all the expenditure of blood and treasure that had been poured out during the

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<sup>1</sup>John Milton, Sonnet XVI, "To Oliver Cromwell," in Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. by E. H. Visiak (London: Nonesuch Press, 1938), p. 73.

past nine years of conflict. Numerous suggestions of policy had been dropped by him like seeds along the way in the course of his many reports to Parliament. We have already seen his concern for liberty of conscience, expressed in nearly every battle report since Naseby. After Dunbar he had shown a new concern for justice and a swelling indignation at the reports of corruption that were coming to him. Writing at that time, he said:

Disown yourselves, but own your authority and improve it to curb the proud and the insolent, such as would disturb the tranquillity of England, though under what specious pretence soever; relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of poor prisoners in England; be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions; and if there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

Now after Worcester he prayed that this mercy should provoke Parliament "to do the will of Him who hath done his will for it and for the nation . . . and that justice and righteousness, mercy and truth may flow from you, as a thankful return to our gracious God."<sup>2</sup>

For all his dissatisfaction with Parliament's imperfections, Cromwell realized that it still constituted the only remnant of stable government remaining now that King and Lords had fallen. Thus he had to be content with Parliament's merely fixing a date of dissolution in three years from that November. Yet he knew that something in the nature of a strong executive was necessary to prevent the absolutism of this single House whose abuses were now all too apparent to him. It was to explore this constitutional problem further than Cromwell called a conference at the Speaker's house on December 10, with the leading officers and a

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 324-25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 463.



number of prominent lawyers invited. The variety of viewpoints represented soon showed what an open question it still was as to what should be the central authority. Several of the lawyers, like Whitelocke and Widdrington, were for a modified monarchy, possibly looking to the Duke of Gloucester as king; the soldiers mainly wanted a republic; Oliver himself stayed discreetly in the background though he went so far as to admit that "a settlement of somewhat with monarchical power in it would be very effective."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile both Cromwell and the army were prepared to insist that immediate steps be taken toward the reforms they had so long sought in both the church and the legal system. At first Parliament showed some signs of cooperating. On January 15 it completed the nomination of twenty-one commissioners to reform the law. These set at once to work and began to recommend bills to Parliament with the object of speeding legal action and making it less costly. Unfortunately most of these were only debated and discussed, but little else done by them in these first months of 1652.

Even more urgent in the eyes of Cromwell was the establishment of a reformed church along the tolerant lines laid down in the Agreement of the People, and most other pronouncements of the army during these past years of war. The rapid turnover of ecclesiastical policies and systems had left the churches in a chaotic condition by 1652. The Presbyterian discipline established by the ordinance of 1658 had immediately been weakened

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<sup>1</sup>Whitelocke, pp. 491 f.

by the reaction against clerical interference and domination that had found most vehement expression in the outburst of sectarianism that had swept the land; but also the natural dislike of coercion in nearly every section of the population was beginning to make itself felt in regard to church settlement. Even in the strongest Presbyterian strongholds, London and Lancashire, the discipline of elders and deacons over the morals of the people had found no ready acceptance.

The Independents and Baptists in their "gathered" churches had, at the same time, thrived during this period of protected confusion while more unrestrained sects had blossomed out on every hand. It was natural that by the end of the war years proposals were being discussed whose aim was to implement the Independents' ideal of a church system of comprehension, if not of complete toleration. The leading figure in this reconstruction of the church was John Owen, an Independent minister who enjoyed Cromwell's confidence. He had been appointed in 1651, after serving as Cromwell's chaplain in Ireland, first as Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and soon after, as Vice-Chancellor of the University. He had been named on February 18 to the all-important Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel, from which a plan soon emanated for a new ecclesiastical establishment. In Owen's scheme there was to be an Established Church, controlled by two sets of commissioners, afterwards known as Triers and Ejectors, who should pass upon the fitness of the clergy. Toleration was to be allowed to sects who should give notice to the magistrate of their places of meeting, though toleration was still denied to certain of those

who like the Unitarians "opposed the principles of Christian religion, without the acknowledgement whereof the Scriptures plainly affirm that salvation is not to be obtained."<sup>1</sup> No mention was made of "Popery" or "prelacy" though it may be assumed that these would also be banned.

In the committee hearings which followed, Cromwell stoutly defended the plan's comprehensive features against those who held them to be too liberal. "I had rather that Mohametanism were permitted amongst us than that one of God's children should be persecuted,"<sup>2</sup> he was said to have maintained. Inevitably the argument between those who thought the toleration too broad and those who thought it too narrow, centered on the interpretation of "the principles of Christianity" which were not to be infringed. When John Owen and his supporters came forth with a list of fifteen fundamentals of doctrine, the controversy entered a phase which was not only uncongenial to Cromwell's intent, but soon promised to degenerate into an endless debate on doctrine. This debate was only terminated by the onset of a new war with the Dutch which now turned the attention of Parliament from all considerations of internal reform to those of defense.

The Fifth Monarchy principles and program.--During this prolonged period of searching for a settlement of both church and state affairs in the confused postwar years after Worcester, the Fifth Monarchists were one group with definite ideas on both the

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, II, 29, citing "Proposals for the Propagation of the Gospel."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

religious and political front. With Major General Harrison high in Cromwell's confidence, and the army generally sympathetic to their views, they were in a position to exert considerable influence. If Cromwell's shaken confidence in Parliament should produce a dissolution, leaving a dangerous vacuum in the constitutional structure of the government, their weight might prove decisive. What were their principles and their program at this critical juncture? After establishing this we may ask how far Cromwell himself believed in these and how far he disagreed with both their means and ends, as a preliminary to a consideration of his part in the calling and the falling of the Barebone Parliament.

Although it was a type of millenarianism which perennially finds expression in the Christian tradition, the Fifth Monarchy movement was peculiarly an outgrowth of the scripturism of the parliamentary armies during the civil wars. Through these times of great tension and crisis, a large number of these sectarians found ready explanations for the revolutionary events of that day in the vivid apocalyptic symbols of the prophecy of Daniel and the Revelation of John. The idea was then current that the visions of the four beasts in Daniel referred to the four kingdoms which were to follow one another on earth--the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires--to be succeeded by a Fifth Monarchy, when Christ should reign, following a long period of strife and turmoil in which most of the earthly authorities should one by one be brought low. In the violence of the civil wars and the shattering of monarchical power under Charles I, these visionaries saw the fulfillment of this word of prophecy, with themselves as

the saints who were chosen to bring in the new order. Throughout the wars, this conception that they were fighting battles for Christ found ready acceptance in the parliamentary armies, so that with the end of hostilities it seemed clear to many that now they were called upon to set up the kingdom they had so long awaited.<sup>1</sup>

We have observed what role this played in the Putney debates, being the keynote of Thomas Collier's opening sermon and a frequently expressed hope in the utterances of men like Lieutenant Colonel Goffe and Harrison. A year later when the Agreement of the People was being discussed, Harrison had made clear that he only approved this as a possible step towards a fuller realization of his dream of the rule of the Saints. He had said:

The Worde of God doth take notice, that the powers of this world shall bee given into the hands of the Lord and his Saints that this is the day, God's owne day, wherein hee is coming forth in glory in the world, and hee doth putt forth himself very much by his people, and hee sayes in that day wherein hee will thresh the Mountaines hee will make use of Jacob as that threshing instrument . . . and he will worke on us soe farre that we are [to be] made able in wisdom and power to carry through things in a way extraordinarie, that the workes of men shall be answerable to his works.

. . . I think that God doth purposely design [this government] shall fall short of that end we look for, because He would have us know our peace.<sup>2</sup>

Even among the more moderate Independents the notion was prevalent after the overthrow of Charles I that a new day was at

<sup>1</sup>Louis Fargo Brown, The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men in England during the Interregnum (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1912), pp. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup>William Clarke, Selections from the Papers of William Clarke, Secretary to the Council of the Army, 1647-49, ed. by C. H. Firth (4 vols.; London: Camden Society, 1891-1901), II, 185.

hand in which the wars of the day were preparing the way for a new kingdom. John Owen had preached in this vein in his "Sermon . . . concerning the Kingdom of Christ, and the Power of the Civil Magistrate," on October 13, 1652. Thomas Goodwin also pictured the Fifth Monarchy as an earthly kingdom in which the saints were to have a part.<sup>1</sup> Whatever vagueness there may have been in these worthies of the Independent churches, the political implications of their notion were spelled out by the extremer sectarians. In February, 1649, a petition from the citizens of Norwich was presented to the Council of Officers, proposing the establishment of such a new monarchy. Such a kingdom, it was maintained, would be administered "by such Laws and Officers as Jesus Christ our Mediator hath appointed in his Kingdom." It was not to be established by "humane power and authority," but by the gathering, through the spirit of Christ, of a people organized in churches, who shall eventually rule the kingdom by church-parliaments, "till Christ come in person."<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after the battle of Worcester, steps were taken in London to organize the gathered churches for this purpose. The plan was outlined to Cromwell who listened with interest, but took no steps to implement their suggestions. By December of 1651, a series of meetings was inaugurated at the Church of Allhallows, where "divers Officers and Members of Churches, among whom some were Souldiers" prayed for the removal of unfit

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, p. 16 and note below.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18. Certain Queries Humbly Presented by Way of Petition to the Lord General and Council of War (1649).

ministers and magistrates, the stirring up of Parliament, army and people, and the speedy exalting of Christ's kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Again after a few months' quiet in the spring of 1652, the movement broke out once more when the slowness of the Long Parliament to enact the reforms it had promised was beginning to arouse suspicion among the enthusiasts, and the Dutch war seemed to offer to these militant Saints an opportunity of spreading their rule to the Continent. Prominent among the leaders of this party was Christopher Feake, a Baptist minister now holding forth at St. Anne's, Blackfriars, to which the meetings were now transferred from Allhallows. Others who became prominent in the movement then or later were John Rogers, who had been educated at Cambridge and had lately returned from Ireland; John Simpson, a lecturer at St. Botolph's, Aldgate; and John Canne, a chaplain to the regiment of Robert Overton.

If Allhallows and Blackfriars were the preaching places where the Fifth Monarchy doctrines were aired, it was no less important that the government itself be directed along the right path. It was in this central role that the idol of the Fifth Monarchists and their ranking military figure, Major General Harrison, was to be most active. Petitions were regularly presented to Parliament, and agitation went on constantly in the army to propagandize the program of the party. None but the godly should be allowed either to elect or to sit in the places of authority,

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Feake, A Beam of Light, Shining in the Midst of Much Darkness and Confusion; Being an Essay towards the Stating the Best Cause under Heaven, viz. the Cause of God (London: Printed by J. C. for Livewell Chapman, 2 May 1659).

tithes should be abolished, existing laws should be replaced by the law of God, until Christ should return. There was always the possibility too, that the saints, if their urgent suggestions as to legislation were ignored, might feel called upon to establish the kingdom by force. The very preponderance of soldiers in their congregations as well as the violent language used by this sect gave further grounds for the suspicion with which their meetings were eyed by the government. Not only at home but abroad, force was advocated as the means of bringing in the kingdom--thus the popularity of the war with the Dutch among the party. Feake was quoted as saying in one sermon:

Thou gavest a Cup into the hand of England, and we drank of it. Then thou carriedst it to Scotland and Ireland, and they drank of it. Now thou hast carried it to Holland, and they are drinking of it. Lord, carry it also to France, and Spain, and Rome.<sup>1</sup>

Army impatience for reform presses dissolution of Parliament.--That the preachers of Blackfriars were not the only ones who were discontented with Parliament was made evident when the Council of Officers, growing impatient at the neglect into which the promised reforms had fallen, drew up a petition at a day-long meeting on August 2, setting forth their demands. Reform of the law, greater liberty of conscience, more activity in the propagation of the gospel, and a new Parliament were the main headings. Only Cromwell's mediation prevented their insistence upon an immediate dissolution by force. He was reported to have remarked:

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<sup>1</sup>Roger L'Estrange, The Dissenters Sayings (2d ed.; London: J. Brome, 1681).



"I am pushed on by two factions to do that the consideration whereof makes my hair to stand on end."<sup>1</sup> It was commonly supposed that these were the factions of Lambert and Harrison.

So far as Cromwell's own position at this time can be determined, he still had hopes for a "settlement, of somewhat with monarchical power in it," which he had favored ten months earlier. In a remarkable conversation with Whitelocke in November he vented his dissatisfaction with Parliament, complaining against their cliques, their meddling, their refusal to limit their power. In seeking some way to curb this power before it should bring ruin on the nation, he suddenly burst out with this question: "What if a man should take upon him to be King?"<sup>2</sup> No longer considering the Duke of Gloucester a possibility, and refusing to entertain Whitelocke's suggestion of returning Charles II, Cromwell seems to have been moving toward the showdown with Parliament in which he must assume the executive reins.

By January the Council of Officers which had refrained from political activity while the threat from the Dutch had been uppermost in men's minds, now resumed their ominous prayer meetings, while common soldiers prayed openly at Allhallows for a new representative. With the current running toward a parliamentary consideration of the army's wishes, Cromwell still refused to countenance any but a peaceful dissolution, by agreement rather than by coercion, though he seems in these early months of 1653 to have leaned more and more toward Harrison's views. Of the two

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<sup>1</sup>Ludlow, I, 346.

<sup>2</sup>Whitelocke, pp. 548-51.

factions already mentioned, Lambert represented the demand for parliamentary government by a new election, safeguarded only by restrictions on former Royalists. Harrison represented the demand for government by a select company of godly men. Cromwell had recognized both men as potential rivals, and had attempted to conciliate them, for they also represented the two largest factions in the army. He had sympathized with the personal schemes and grievances of each--Lambert in his disappointment at failing to secure the command in Ireland, Harrison in his much-criticized project for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales and his general concern in matters of religion. Parliament in January had momentarily exalted Harrison by appointing him to take charge of the act "touching an equal representative."<sup>1</sup> However he was immediately trimmed down to size by being out-voted on another matter very near to his heart. When the proposals of the Committee on the Propagation of the Gospel were reported on February 11, the Harrison party was left in a minority by Parliament's giving the magistrate power "in matters of religion for the propagation of the gospel."<sup>2</sup> Later on his was rebuffed again by their refusal to continue the authority of the Welsh commissioners, and by the appointment of more moderate ministers for those originally given power to dispense certificates to the clergy of Wales.

Though sympathetic with the aims and feelings of Harrison, Cromwell was determined not to be stampeded into a dissolution of

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Simpkinson De Wesselow, Thomas Harrison: Regicide and Major-General (London: J. M. Dent, 1905), p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, II, 196.

Parliament on this issue alone. Just as he had on March 11 restrained the Council of Officers when they had voted to turn out the Parliament, the same arguments still controlled his impulses to force a showdown. If they destroyed Parliament who should be the supreme authority? Only if Parliament could somehow be persuaded to lay down its authority voluntarily, or to turn it over to another body willingly, could he see any hope of a stable settlement. It was to that end that Cromwell continued to work, caught between the demands of the officers and the military preachers on the one hand, and the stubborn insistence of the Parliament upon maintaining its power lest it be supplanted by a military dictatorship. Meanwhile Cromwell was pressing for an end to the Dutch war, thereby alienating many in each party who resented his outspoken intervention. When this resentment issued in rumors that he might be displaced from his army command, Cromwell became so angry at Parliament's ingratitude that he absented himself from its sessions for a whole month. Still he was determined that Parliament must put an end to its sitting, not recruiting a few new members to be selected by the old, as Vane and Haselrigg would have done, but either calling a new election or leaving their places for the godly of the army to fill as they saw fit. On the 13th another army petition had pushed Parliament to the point of including in the qualifications for new members that they be "of known integrity, fearing God, and not scandalous in their conversation."<sup>1</sup> The question of who was to interpret and judge this vague but all-important qualification of godliness

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<sup>1</sup>Journals of the House of Commons, VII, 277.

now was to precipitate the final break between army and Parliament.

Cromwell returned from his month's absence from the House to re-enter the fray on March 15, more convinced than ever that Parliament must go, but still unwilling to dissolve them, suggesting rather a general election before that. Tempers were now on edge and it was suggested that a new general might also be needed, whereupon Cromwell called the bluff and offered his resignation on the spot. Perhaps Lambert or Harrison might have been willing to have succeeded him, but neither dared under the circumstances to accept, and Fairfax was known to have refused the command, so the resignation was refused.

Still seeking a compromise when his temper had cooled, Cromwell called a meeting on April 19, to which he invited the parliamentary leaders. He had already discussed his plan with the officers and gained their approval. Essentially it was the Harrison plan of a temporary suspension of parliamentary government by a voluntary surrender of power to a select interim group. As stated later in the Declaration of April 22:

After much debating it was judged necessary and agreed upon that the supreme authority should be by the Parliament devolved upon known persons, men fearing God and of approved integrity, and the Government of the Commonwealth committed unto them for a time as the most hopeful way to encourage and countenance all God's people, reform the law, and administer justice impartially. . . .<sup>1</sup>

When this solution met with a cold response from both lawyers and politicians, the conference reached a stalemate. However, Cromwell understood the parliamentarians to have agreed at least to postpone

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 6.

immediate action on the bill now before them, which would have perpetuated the Long Parliament in power, with the right to fill vacancies and pass on new members, perhaps even rendering it impossible to repeal the Act in future.

Thus when the news was brought to Cromwell on the following morning that Parliament was proceeding with the bill, in spite of the wishes of the army and whatever understanding may have been reached the night before, Cromwell hastily betook himself to the House. In a scene now familiar to history, he dismissed the House forcibly. He had now allowed himself to be driven to that, "the consideration whereof" made his "hair to stand on end" but a few weeks before. In that long-disputed act he had made himself once again the undisputed master of England, but he had done so at the price of breaking with her heritage of parliamentary government. Whatever now might take its place must be dictated by the dominant faction in the army, and supported by that loyal portion of the people who still believed in the Puritan cause.

#### The Rule of the Saints--"The Barebone Parliament"

Search for a new constitution: Cromwell's compromise.--It was beyond question that whatever the difficulties which now confronted him, Cromwell had the support of the army and the navy, the acquiescence of most of the administrative officials, and a free hand to undertake whatever constitutional settlement might promise to achieve those aims which had been in his mind through the last ten years of war and ferment. One of the first concerns

of the Council and the general was to allay public fears at the removal of Parliament and to justify their act before the world. This was attempted in the "Declaration of the Lord General and His Council of Officers" published on April 22, to provide a defense of what might seem to most an act of naked force. But Cromwell and his colleagues could see only the work of Providence once more casting down the mighty from their seats and exalting them of low degree.

The Declaration was a thorough-going denunciation of the late Parliament for their opposition to the people of God, and their intention to perpetuate themselves in power. It had become evident, they asserted, that this Parliament

. . . through the corruption of some, the jealousy of others, the non-attendance and negligence of many, would never answer those ends which God, his people, and the whole nation expected of them: but that this cause which the Lord hath so greatly blessed, and bore witness to, must needs languish under their hands, and by degrees be wholly lost, and the lives, liberties, and comforts of his people delivered into their enemies hands.<sup>1</sup>

After a recapitulation of events leading up to the dismissal of the Parliament by way of justifying that act, this appeal is then made:

But we shall conclude with this, that as we have been led by necessity and providence, to act as we have done, even beyond and above our own thoughts and desires, so we shall and do, in that of this great work which is behind, put ourselves wholly upon the Lord for a blessing; professing, we look not to stand one day without his support, much less to bring to pass any of the things mentioned, and desired, without his assistance; and therefore do solemnly desire and expect that all men, as they would not provoke the Lord to their own destruction, should wait for such issue as he shall bring forth and to follow their business with peaceable spirits; wherein we promise them protection by his assistance.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

Having thus found in God the prime mover in this "late great and glorious dispensation," the de facto government now addressed themselves to the form and direction of this new order which they were to set up. Here again disagreement within the council between the Harrison and Lambert parties was evident. Harrison's plan for a nominated assembly consisting of some seventy members on the pattern of the Jewish Sanhedrin was being publicly urged by his Fifth Monarchy associates such as John Rogers who outlined the scheme in a pamphlet at this time.<sup>1</sup> Lambert, on the other hand, preferred that power should be entrusted to a small council, later to share its powers with an elected Parliament, limited by a written constitution. While a body of ten men, the so-called Decemvirate, was established to provide for day-to-day business, Cromwell pondered which of these two types of body should govern in the new regime.

When his proclamation was issued on May 6, it was immediately seen to be a compromise between the two plans with the weight falling on the side of Harrison's. Lambert's plan of a council was used, but the ruling body was to be an assembly of Puritan notables nominated by the "gathered" churches of the British Isles, yet larger in numbers than Harrison had contemplated, allowing for a number of personal appointees who should be experienced in government and of proven fidelity to the General himself. The mixture of idealism and realism so typical of Cromwell's entire career is nowhere better illustrated than in this compromise

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<sup>1</sup>John Rogers, A Few Proposals Relating to Civil Government (London: Printed for Robert Ibbitson, April 27, 1653).

between the saints of the gathered churches and the politicians of Westminster who were soon to be brought together by Cromwell under the name of the Nominated Parliament.

Selection of the Nominated Parliament.--While the principle of a Nominated Parliament represented a triumph for Harrison, the step had no more been taken than the latter began to have doubts of Cromwell's motives in approving that plan. Cromwell's hesitation over the course to take had been sufficient in itself to convince Harrison that he was not wholly to be trusted. The leader of the Fifth Monarchists was reported to have written that "it was the Lord's work, and no thanks to his excellency" that the Long Parliament had been dissolved.<sup>1</sup> His fellow enthusiasts, jubilant at first, were already beginning to question the intentions of the General openly. Feake, preaching at Christ Church in Newgate Street declared:

Although the General had fought their battles with success, yet he was not the man that the Lord had chosen to sit at the helm.<sup>2</sup>

There were not wanting others among the sects who saw Harrison as the man best fitted to rule. Meanwhile Lambert who had become again the ruling spirit in the Council of State, obviously disappointed at the turn of events, frowned upon the rantings of Harrison, and withheld his support generally in that "bottomless" fashion which Cromwell said was his nature, giving rise in so doing to a fresh crop of Royalist rumors that he was

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, II, 225.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



himself available as a candidate for high office whenever the opportunity might come.

Still the preparations for the choice of a new representative went on amid the welter of cross-purposes within the ruling party. The qualifications restricted membership in the new assembly to "those well affected to religion and the interest of the nation," which excluded at the outset all Catholics, Anglicans, "neuters" (neutrals in the past war), and Presbyterians, and virtually confined the selection by definition to members of the "gathered" churches--Independents, Baptists, Quakers, or the mixed groups like the Fifth Monarchists. Nominations were to be sent in by the congregations of England and Wales and by the civil and military authorities in Scotland and Ireland. From these Cromwell and his colleagues would select the members. From May 28 on, the Council of the Army sat each day, winnowing the lists, and at times substituting names of their own choosing. A seat was offered to Vane who declined, and one to Anthony Ashley Cooper who accepted. Fairfax was also urged strongly to serve but finally declined. By early June the roll was made up of 129 representatives from England, five from Scotland, and six from Ireland. Each of the 140 writs was signed by Oliver Cromwell as "commander in Chief of all the armies and forces to be raised within this Commonwealth," and summoned the nominee to appear at the council chamber at Whitehall of July 4.

If Cromwell had adopted the plan of a nominated Parliament with some hesitation, it was not because he did not believe in the rule of the best for the many. Deeply rooted in his experience,

this principle of rule by a select few in the interests of God's people had grown with the years as he had been convinced that the Puritan program was for the best interests of the people of England even though they could not recognize it as such. Those that have the Spirit of God within them, he had suggested in the Putney debates, are those best qualified to judge either a political program or a divine revelation, whether it be of God.<sup>1</sup>

Now, he was bolstered with new confidence by the churches' hearty response to his expulsion of the Long Parliament and to his appeal for the congregations of "saints" to nominate "men of courage fearing God and hating covetousness." The letters from these churches bear evidence of their joy and relief at his dismissal of that Parliament. The saints of Durham, for instance, were so surprised they were "like men in a dream" that they had been delivered from "that slavery and bondage they were formerly involved in." They wanted to let him know "how much we desire to bless God for still owning you, and to show you how much our hearts own you in this action of late . . . that he may always be wisdom and strength for you in directing you in the way for a new representative that may settle this poor nation in its proper rights and freedoms, which hath been long expected."<sup>2</sup> The churches of Bedfordshire, including among the signers one John Bunyan of Elstow, also owned "the good hand of God in this great turn of

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<sup>1</sup>Woodhouse, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>John Nickolls (ed.), Original Letters and Papers of State, Addressed to Oliver Cromwell (London: W. Bowyer, 1743), Letter Dated April 28, 1653, p. 90.

providence."<sup>1</sup> The saints of Chester cautioned the Lord-General against pride and prayed that "the Lord will make you circumspect herein, as also in the choice and permission of representatives for the several counties; that not the eminency of their persons, but the excellency of their spirits" might be considered as the prime qualification for the members of the new assembly.<sup>2</sup>

In selecting the "new representative" there is evidence that Cromwell and the officers did not hesitate to name men "for the eminency of their spirits" even though they would have said that it was the "excellency of their spirits" which recommended them. More than a third of those chosen held military titles (fifty-three in all) though Cromwell had stipulated that no one now on active duty be chosen. There was a handful of "gentlemen" including two lords and seven knights. Throughout, the Cromwellian officer and official class was well represented by men who had experience either in local or national administration--including such familiar names as Lawrence, Fleetwood, Pickering, Strickland, Carew, Bennet, and Wolseley. From the City there were aldermen like Sir Robert Tichborne and merchants like Samuel Moyer who were natural nominees.

But beyond these were the group of "gathered church" nominees who looked to Harrison for leadership and who were to form the nucleus of that radical party of Puritans who were to impress their character upon the whole assembly, and one of whose members, Praisegod Barebone, was to give the parliament its colorful name. These were the element dubbed by Dugdale as "fanatick

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

sectaries" and considered by Clarendon to have been "inferior persons . . . known only by their gifts in praying and preaching."<sup>1</sup> Many of these religious radicals undoubtedly made their first and last appearance upon the political stage in these few brief months. Men like Edward Plumstead, a Quaker from Suffolk; Stephen Pheasant of Huntingdonshire; Captain Henry Ogle of Northumberland, and Dennis Hollister, a tradesman and lay preacher of Bristol may be taken as representing the party of those who had been picked more for their godliness and concern with matters of religion than for any experience in government. Perhaps none is more typical than Barebone himself, a London Baptist and leather merchant, said by Bishop Suter to have been "well known and respected for half a century" for his lay preaching and his staunch Puritanism. His warehouse windows were frequently smashed by mobs, as Pepys noted, and his place of business finally burned in the great fire of 1666. Barebone was a leading spokesman for the London Baptists, and took a leading part in the continuing controversy over toleration. He had a short period of confinement in the Tower following the Restoration, but lived until 1680 when he died at the ripe age of eighty-four.<sup>2</sup>

Of those who assembled at Cromwell's call, none was more deserving of the title "Puritan notable" than the new Speaker, Francis Rous. Provost of Eton from 1644 to 1659, Rous was a remarkable fusion of the mystic and the man of action. He had been

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 50.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Alexander Glass, The Barebone Parliament, First Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, 1653 (London: J. Clarke, 1899), p. 64.

intimately concerned in the fortunes of Parliament from the time he was first returned as a member for Truro in the second Parliament of Charles I. By 1628 he was on the Committee for the Better Continuance of Peace and Unity in the Church and was an outspoken critic of Dr. Mainwaring and the abuses of prelacy. Always insistent that religion have first place in the parliamentary discussions, during the sitting of the Long Parliament, he was on nearly every committee in any way connected with the religious issue, with his name appearing in the Journals of the House of Commons hundreds of times in these years. Meanwhile he found time to prepare a version of the Metrical Psalms for public use which later became the national Psalm book of Scotland. Throughout the sitting of the Barebone Parliament, Rous was highly influential in formulating that moderate program of church reform which Owen had initiated and Cromwell was encouraging, but which finally was wrecked by the radical demands of the Harrison party.<sup>1</sup> When these moderates at last returned their power to Cromwell and bowed out, it was because such men as Rous realized the futility of continuing parliamentary battle against the superior numbers and discipline of an uncompromising party of radicals intent upon reform at any price.

Cromwell's vision of saintly rule.--When the nominees of the new Parliament assembled in the Council Chamber of Whitehall on a warm July 4 day, the Lord General began a speech of welcome

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<sup>1</sup>For an able treatment of Rous' religious views, see Jerald C. Brauer, "Francis Rous, Puritan Mystic, 1579-1659: An Introduction to the Study of the Mystical Element in Puritanism" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1948).

to the 120 representatives present, in which he poured forth the hopes and dreams that had been gathering in his mind through all the years of conflict and now had been brought to a moment of apparent fulfillment by the unexpected dissolution of the old authority and the calling of this new body. We see here his philosophy of providence at work in reducing these confused events to a pattern of meaning, and giving him direction as he faces the future with this assembly of inexperienced but expectant men, called from their several homes and vocations to assume the leadership of a nation in this critical hour.

From the outset, Cromwell sees their meeting through the glasses of providential ordering: "Forasmuch as considering the works of God, and the operations of His hands, is a principal part of our duty; and a great encouragement to the strengthening of our hands and of our faith. . . ." <sup>1</sup> He thus considers it necessary to interpret past and present events in the light of that divine purpose. From the beginning of this struggle, not the bare events themselves were important but "those things wherein the life and power of them lay; those strange windings and turnings of Providence; those very great appearances of God, in crossing and thwarting the purposes of men, that He might raise up a poor and contemptible company of men, neither versed in military affairs, nor having much natural propensity to them, even through the owning of a principle of godliness and of religion." <sup>2</sup>

In this revolution of affairs, the battles won, the bringing of the King to justice, the "sifting and winnowing of Parlia-

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

ment," the work of the Lord was yet incomplete. He then recounts in great detail the story, from the army point of view, of the failure of the Long Parliament--the high hopes at the close of the war, the promises of reform, the gradual disillusionment, and finally the open breach between Parliament and army over the issue of its perpetuation. Instead then of handing over their trust to "persons of honour and integrity," "men well affected to religion and the interests of the nation," they had sought instead to perpetuate themselves at first openly, then by subterfuge. "Thus, as we apprehended, would have thrown away the liberties of the nation into the hands of those who never fought for it": Presbyterians, "neuters," and other untrustworthy persons. Thus also power devolved upon this remnant of the godly in the army who had remained faithful,

. . . who did these things, not to grasp after the power ourselves, to keep it in military hands, no not for a day; but, as far as God enabled us, with strength and ability, to put it into the hands of those that might be called from the several parts of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Thus were they called by the hand of God to this work, "by the way of necessity, by the way of the wise Providence of God, though through weak hands."<sup>2</sup>

It remained now for Cromwell to lay upon them a charge and to outline to them their high responsibilities:

1. They have a duty toward the unbeliever as well as to the believer. If Moses and Paul had a concern for the whole people, so must they.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

2. They have an even greater duty to the Saints, "who have been somewhat instrumental to your call."

I think this Assembly thus called is very much troubled with the common infirmity of the saints, and I hope that will teach you to pity others, that so saints of one sort may not be our interest, that we have respect unto all, though of different judgments. . . .

Therefore, I beseech you . . . have a care of the whole flock! Love the sheep, love the lambs, love all, tender all, cherish and countenance all, in all things that are good. And if the poorest Christian, the most mistaken Christian shall desire to live peaceably and quietly under you,--I say, if any shall desire but to lead a life of godliness and honesty, let him be protected.<sup>1</sup>

3. They should also endeavor to promote the Gospel through a godly ministry--"men that have truly received the Spirit," "men that have received gifts from him that ascended on high and led captivity captive, for the work before mentioned."<sup>2</sup> It is not a ministry pretending to an apostolic succession in the papal sense, but:

The true succession is through the Spirit, given in that measure, that the Spirit is given, and that is a right succession.<sup>3</sup>

Finally he exhorts his hearers once more with an almost ecstatic vision of the high possibilities before them.

I confess I never looked to see such a day as this,--it may be nor you neither,--when Jesus Christ should be so owned as He is, at this day, and in this work.<sup>4</sup>

They had none of them sought this political power--they were called to it, because they are a chosen people.

"This people I have formed for Myself," saith God, "that they may show forth my praise. . . . This people have I formed: consider the circumstances by which you are called

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.



hither, through what difficulties, through what strivings, through what blood you are come hither,--where neither you nor I, nor no man living, three months ago, had a thought to have seen such a company taking upon them, or rather being called to take, the supreme authority of this nation. Therefore, own your call!<sup>1</sup>

Their task is to "win the people to the interests of Jesus Christ by such a demonstration of godliness that all may soon be fitted to have a share in the selection of their government. ("I would all were fit to be called, and fit to call.")

So that they may see you love them; [that] you lay out yourselves, time and spirits, for them: Is not this the likeliest way to bring them to their liberties? . . . At least by convincing them that, as men fearing God have fought them out of their thralldom and bondage under the regal power, so men fearing God do now rule them in the fear of God, and take care to administer good unto them.<sup>2</sup>

They must own their call then, as of God, and answer to it. In so doing, God will lead them as before.

And indeed it hath been the way that God hath dealt with us all along, to keep things from our eyes, that in what we have acted we have seen nothing before us; which is also a witness in some measure to our integrity. I say, you are called with a high call. And why should we be afraid to say or think, that this may be the door to usher in the things that God has promised; which have been prophesied of; which He has set the hearts of His people to wait for and expect?<sup>3</sup>

Rising to the glowing oratory of Puritan exaltation, he continues:

Indeed I do think something is at the door; we are at the threshold; and therefore it becomes us to lift up our heads, and encourage ourselves in the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

Finally he reminds the assembly that the "consents and affections have flowed in to us from all parts, beyond our expectations," and both the army and the Churches of Christ have written:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

"both approving what hath been done in removing obstacles and approving what we have done in this very thing."<sup>1</sup> He commends them, in closing, to the grace of God and the guidance of his Spirit.

Having thus far served you, or rather our Lord Jesus Christ in it, we are as we hope, and shall be, ready in our stations, according as the Providence of God shall lead us, to be subservient to the work of God, and to that authority which we shall reckon God hath set over us.<sup>2</sup>

Work of the Barebone Parliament: failure of the saints.--

On the day following, the assembly entered upon its task "after seeking God by prayer" by electing Rous as Speaker. Its next act was to assume the name of Parliament, a term that had until now been sedulously avoided in Cromwell's summons and in all his reference to them. Since it had been his intention, as expressed in the declaration of April 22, that this body should only represent a temporary experimental body to prepare the way for a Parliament more freely chosen, it is likely that Cromwell and his council would have preferred some other title for the assembly, though once chosen it was never challenged. Nevertheless, that body had been advised that their authority should not extend beyond November 3, 1654, and that they should choose another assembly to succeed them, three months before dissolving.

For the executive branch of government, the new Parliament decided to establish a Council of State, adding eighteen to the thirteen on the last council, to make a total of thirty-one. Committees were chosen and by the middle of July the Parliament

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

was ready to consider legislation. The stormy career of the group was presaged at once by their first move--an attempt to abolish tithes after November 3, which by a vote of 56 to 49 was barely referred to committee. It is significant that the teller for the minority party was Harrison.<sup>1</sup>

Even so, it was evident that reform was to be the watchword of the new assembly--with the law and the church standing at the top of the list of institutions to be reconstructed according to their ideals. The unpopularity and abuses of the Court of Chancery were so generally accepted that a single day's debate sufficed to vote its abolition, while a committee was appointed to bring in a report on how pending suits might be handled and an equitable jurisdiction exercised in the future. Not a single lawyer was appointed to this committee, as not one had been admitted to sit in the House.

The question of finding some new system to replace the unjust tithes as the financial support of the ecclesiastical establishment proved to be an even more difficult one. Feeling was running high among the "gathered churches" against the old system which Cromwell seemed in danger of perpetuating, despite the long history of abuse which Puritans had heaped upon it. To many it seemed that to place the clergy's support on a voluntary basis was the only way of remedying these abuses; furthermore they held that it was one of the chief causes for which the civil wars had been fought. By October the controversy had become a major one

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, II, 240.

with lines clearly drawn between the Cromwellian moderates and the Harrisonian radicals. Supporting the parliamentary radicals and consistently needling the moderates were the preachers at Blackfriars who drew crowded audiences day after day with their demand for an overthrow of existing law and the substitution of the Mosaic law under a Fifth Monarchy. Wrote John Rogers in a pamphlet on November 7:

Now this law [the Ten Commandments] must be set up (and not man's) in this Fifth Monarchy. . . . Wherefore if you be the men whom the Lord will own and honour in this work; up then! and about it! for the Body of laws lies ready before you in the word of God.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the onset of other problems was occupying Cromwell increasingly. For internal security against the plotting of Royalists he had felt the need of a new High Court of Justice. Parliament acceded to his wish so far as to direct the council to draft such an act, but apparently it was opposed there, probably by the Harrison faction, for it was left undone. In September, the issue had been sharpened by the outburst of an old enemy, John Lilburne, who printed a thundering broadside accusing Cromwell of high treason and calling upon the people of England to convene in the several counties on October 6 to elect a true Parliament by universal suffrage. In the ensuing trial, while it resulted in drawing Parliament and Cromwell together under a common attack, the bitterness of the radical preachers at Blackfriars mounted as they became more pointed in their attacks upon the existing iniquities of the government. Accordingly when Lilburne's acquittal

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<sup>1</sup>Sagrir, Or Doomesday Drawing Nigh, with Thunder and Lightening for Lawyers (London: Printed by R. J. for Giles Calvert, November 7, 1653).

brought a revival of the bill for a High Court of Justice, the Fifth Monarchy men were furious in their attack on it, especially as the bill was finally passed while many of the more radical members were attending preaching at Bladkfriars. The wrath of Feake and his fellows was so great that Cromwell attempted first a personal conciliation, endeavoring to show them that their abusive language was only encouraging the enemies of the Commonwealth, but without result.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the church reform issue was still unsettled. Almost evenly divided on every vote, the Parliament had first voted to abolish all patronage on December 1, a clear victory for the radicals. Next it was the opportunity of the moderates, who brought in a fairly complete church scheme, on December 2, modelled upon Owen's plan for commissions of triers and ejectors who should pass upon the fitness of the clergy, but providing also a temporary continuance of the tithe system, with exceptions for the remedy of undue hardship. When this failed by two votes, on December 10, the handwriting on the wall was seen by the moderates. Led by Lambert in the council, they saw that only by bringing about a dissolution could they prevent the radicals from disrupting the entire ecclesiastical and legal system as they saw it. Accordingly they laid careful plans with the approval of the speaker, and by an early vote on Monday, December 12, before their opponents had arrived in force, they delivered up unto the Lord General the powers they had earlier received from him. The government by the Saints had ended in failure.

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, II, 273.

## CHAPTER V

## CROMWELL'S CALLING AS PROTECTOR

## Conviction of a Divine Calling to Rule

Changed approach after the failure of the saints.--With

the abrupt end of the temporal rule of the saints in the Barebone Parliament, a milestone was passed in Cromwell's own development. In so far as he had been inspired to expect great things of this assembly he had been rudely disillusioned. "You are at the edge of the promises and prophecies," he had told them in his opening address. They were standing at the threshold of a new day it had seemed a few months before. All that had been shattered with the demonstration of what the rulership of saints meant in concrete terms to these sectarian revolutionaries.

Consequently after he had had time to contemplate this experience in the sober light of its outcome, and when he had been subjected to a few more months of further abuse from the pulpits of Blackfriars, Cromwell was fully persuaded by the time he addressed his first Parliament of the new Protectorate that a new phase of the revolution had now been reached which called for stricter bounds to the liberty of conscience he had been at such pains to establish. The intervening time had seen a government by executive ordinance, under the Instrument of Government of which Lambert had been largely the author, and while it was a time of civil obedience, the end of the Barebone Parliament had

not further endeared Cromwell to the Fifth Monarchy men. Week after week he was castigated by Feake and Powell as the "Little Horn," the "Vile Person," or the "Old Dragon" of Daniel's prophecies. He had even grown accustomed by now to being called in Powell's words the "dissemblingest perjured villain in the world." But it was too much when that fervid orator appealed to all the army to rise up against their chief, crying:

Lord, have our army men all apostastised from their principles? What is become of all their declarations, protestations, and professions? Are they choked with lands, parks, and manors? Let us go home and pray, and say, "Lord, wilt thou have Oliver Cromwell or Jesus Christ to reign over us?"<sup>1</sup>

At this point, Feake, Powell, and Simpson were arrested, and after admonitions to refrain from such statements, were released, only to repeat the offense, and be committed to Windsor Castle for longer terms.

Thus there is a great measure of truth in the observation by Gardiner: "His work of striking down the opponents of Puritanism had for the most part come to an end. His work of striking down those who exaggerated Puritanism was now beginning."<sup>2</sup> In the same sense he has aptly termed the Barebone Parliament "the high-water mark of Puritanism."<sup>3</sup> A new era had begun.

In his opening address to the first Parliament of the Protectorate Cromwell made it perfectly clear that his emphasis had turned sharply in the direction of curbing these excesses

<sup>1</sup>Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles I (22 vols.; London: Longman, Green, and Roberts, 1858-93), XLII, 59.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel R. Gardiner, Cromwell's Place in History (3d ed.; London: Longmans Green, 1897), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, II, 295.

while seeking to conciliate the large Presbyterian element in the conservative Parliament now assembled before him. Many, he asserted, were making liberty of conscience a pretense for "the patronizing of villainies" and for denying the right of the magistrate even in civil matters. This party in the late Parliament had for one thing "laid the axe to the root of the ministry." The right of lay-preaching, furthermore, had been carried to such lengths that some even held that "he who is ordained . . . ought not to preach or not to be heard."<sup>1</sup> That there might be no doubt who he meant, he singled out the Fifth Monarchists by name, as "many honest people whose hearts are sincere," but while he acknowledged too that the reign of Jesus Christ is a notion to be honored and hoped for, "for men to entitle themselves . . . to rule kingdoms, govern nations, and give laws to people, they had need to give clear manifestations of God's presence with them before wise men will receive or submit to their conclusions."<sup>2</sup>

He likewise attacked the extremism of the Levellers, accusing them of subverting property as well as reducing "the ranks and orders of men whereby England hath been known for hundreds of years." "Did not that Levelling principle tend to the reducing all to an equality? . . . What was the design but to make the tenant as liberal as the landlord?"<sup>3</sup> Such sentiments were scarcely calculated to offend his conservative Presbyterian listeners, while the alienation of his former army colleagues of the Levelling party had apparently ceased to bother him.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 437.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 435.



What the new Protector was avowedly interested in now was "healing and settling" as he put it. He had realized more than ever since the default of the Barebone Parliament the urgency of achieving a constitutional settlement. To that end the Instrument of Government had been hastily drawn up as a written constitution, embodying the principle of a balance of power between Parliament and a "single person," with a Council to share the administrative responsibilities.

The Protector's growing interest in foreign affairs was also evidenced in his reference to the achievements in this area. He could tell, for instance, of peace made with the Dutch and the Danes, and of a forthcoming treaty of great promise commercially with the Portugese. Throughout the address his emphasis is upon the establishment of peace and order at home and abroad.

But all was not new in the program and policies of the new Protector. A definite thread of continuity is to be seen in the aims and purposes which had originally provoked him to dissatisfaction with the activities of the Long Parliament, in the ideals that reappear in his dreams for the Nominated Parliament, and the projected plans for the new Protectorate Parliament. Through all these changes he had actively contended, first of all, for a limitation to the power of an absolute Parliament. This power had been checked at first by his own personal prestige and the army's power, but he had increasingly seen the necessity of settling the government on a civil basis, with a division of powers between the legislative and executive branches.

Secondly, his persistent concern for reform legislation

is a theme which runs through all these postwar utterances of Cromwell's. According to him, it was because of the feeble efforts of the weary Long Parliament in this respect that scarcely the barking of a dog was heard in protest at their dissolution. The pendulum had then swung to the opposite extreme when the Barebone Parliament undertook such reforms with more zeal than common sense. So now Cromwell still felt the need for a thoroughgoing reform of the legal and ecclesiastical structures as a prime requisite for any government. In this a beginning had already been made when the Instrument of Government went into effect and he had assumed the title of Protector in December, 1654. The legal system was to be reformed, with the able help of such experts as Justice Hale, so that "laws might be made plain and short, and less chargeable to the people."<sup>1</sup>

As for the church, the chief concern as before was to "endeavor to settle a way for the approbation of men of piety and ability" and "for the expulsion of all those who may be judged in any way unfit for this work."<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, Cromwell was not prepared to go in the reformation of the church at this time, for he was never interested in the formulation of dogma nor even in ecclesiastical machinery as such, save as that contributed to the supply of a "godly, preaching ministry." He did throw a further concession to the conservative wing in his proposal to "put a stop to that heady way . . . of every man making himself a minister and a preacher."<sup>3</sup> His enthusiasm for lay-preaching had distinctly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 439.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

waned since his civil war days, as he had seen its excesses and now faced the necessity of setting up a regularized clergy for a national church. It may be conjectured that the fulminations of the Fifth Monarchists at Blackfriars had taught him the desirability of a licensed clergy also. Liberty of conscience he still believed in. Ideas or notions are to be let alone; "they will hurt none but them that have them." But when these become overt practices, then the civil magistrate is concerned, "especially where every stone is turned to bring confusion."<sup>1</sup> The times were too uncertain yet to allow undue openings for the enemies of the government. Nevertheless something must be done to satisfy that demand for able preaching of the Word and the purging of the clergy which had been a Puritan rallying-cry for at least a generation. This would involve, positively, the setting-up of a national church system; negatively, it involved defining the limits of toleration. It was on this latter rock among others that the ship of state was soon to suffer grievous damage.

Reassertion of his calling.--The Parliament had scarcely assumed its place the first week when it became apparent that between it and the Protector there was a basic divergence on the very terms of the authority by which they met. Cromwell expected it speedily to adopt the Instrument of Government as the new constitution and then to proceed to legislate under its terms. A large number in Parliament, on the other hand, conceived it to be their business to debate the essential structure of the government itself as proposed in that document, particularly whether that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 438.

government was to be settled in one single person and a Parliament, and how far each was to limit the action of the other. A resolute minority of Parliament was for placing authority in Parliament alone; others more moderate favored giving some authority to the Protector under whatever restrictions Parliament should think fit. Soon the issue was drawn, between a Parliament party concerned to place limitations upon the independence of the Protectorate, and a Court party which urged with no less urgency that it was necessary to place restrictions on the sovereignty of a single House. Involved through the debate at bottom was the practical issue of the control of the armed forces, for one thing, and the extent of religious toleration for another--whether Parliament was to have unlimited right to legislate as it saw fit on these matters, or whether on certain fundamental matters such as these they should be bound by the terms of a written constitution delimiting their powers.

When the initial actions and debates of the Parliament disclosed to the Protector this basic disagreement as to their ground of authority, he called the Parliament together on September 12, and with heated firmness set forth in close-knit argument an ultimatum demanding adherence to a minimum core of constitutional principles. It has been suggested that this speech more than any other reveals the inner workings of Cromwell's mind.<sup>1</sup> Certainly it discloses something of his sense of calling and his concern for the cause he felt bound to preserve and defend.

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, III, 25.

His first and more vehement claim in this speech is that he had never sought this first place in the government, but that he had been "called to it."

I was by birth a gentleman, living neither in any considerable height, nor yet in obscurity. I have been called to several employments in the nation--to serve in Parliaments, --and . . . I did endeavor to discharge the duty of an honest man in those services, to God, and His people's interest, and of the Commonwealth; having, when time was, a competent acceptance in the hearts of men, and some evidences thereof.<sup>1</sup>

Among the evidences of his acceptance, and the witnesses to his claim that he called not himself to this place, he cites three: "I have witness within, without, and above."<sup>2</sup>

Against his own wishes for retirement, peace, and quiet at the end of the war, he was prevailed upon to accept this civil as well as military authority, he says. This he believed to be a calling from God as well as from the people.

If my calling be from God, and my testimony from the people, God and the people shall take it from me, else I will not part with it. I should be false to the trust that God hath placed upon me, and to the interest of the people of these nations, if I should.<sup>3</sup>

That in his inmost soul he sought not such a place God only knows, is his claim.

That I lie not in matter of fact is known to very many; but whether I tell a lie in my heart, as labouring to represent to you that which was not upon my heart, I say, the Lord be judge.<sup>4</sup>

Continuing his account of the recent past, the Protector goes on to describe again the failure of the Long Parliament to achieve the ends for which they had fought--their intention to

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 452.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 453.

perpetuate themselves, their arbitrary power and infringement of civil rights. Seeing all this, that Parliament was dissolved, and seeking settlement above all things, he had with others called the members of the Nominated Parliament out of the several parts of the nation as a provisional assembly. In this too he seeks to justify what he now regards as a mistake, by insisting that it was prompted by good intentions.

I say that, as a principal end in calling that assembly was the settlement of the nation, so a chief end to myself was that I might have opportunity to lay down the power that was in my hands.<sup>1</sup>

But he acknowledges now his error, and here also sees it not only as a mistake in judgment but, looking back upon it, as a shirking of a God-given power that had been thrust upon him personally by Providence: "a desire perhaps (and I am afraid) sinful enough to be quit of the power God had most providentially put into my hand, before he called for it, and before those honest ends of our fighting were attained and settled."<sup>2</sup> Sadly he reflects upon the folly of that experiment in the rule of saints:

What the event and issue of that meeting was, we may sadly remember; it hath much teaching in it, and I hope will make us all wiser for the future.<sup>3</sup>

Having been disappointed thus, and all power surrendered back into his hands he had found himself supreme again, against his will. Whereupon with all government dissolved, certain gentlemen "being of known integrity and ability," had undertaken to draw up this Instrument of Government, after they "did consult divers days together," though Cromwell himself "was not privy to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

their counsels."<sup>1</sup> Again he was called upon to assume supreme authority.

When they had finished their model in some measure . . . they became communicative. They told me that except I would undertake the government, they thought things would hardly come to a composure and settlement, but blood and confusion would break in upon us. I denied it again and again, as God and those persons know, not complimentingly as they also know and as God knows.<sup>2</sup>

Having thus cited the witness within (his conscience) and that above (in the calling of God) he further elaborates the extent of the outward witnesses to his new authority as Protector--"a cloud of witnesses" as he calls it. These whose approval he cites include the officers of the army, the City of London, numerous other cities, boroughs and counties, the judges, and justices of the peace who had received commissions from him. Indeed all the administrative officers of the kingdom had become witnesses of this de facto authority by acting upon their commissions. Even these in Parliament had become witnesses, he insists, having been elected in response to his writs. But even more important, the elections themselves had been conducted under this Instrument, "read unto the people at the place of elections," and thus binding all those elected to this proviso: "that the persons so chosen shall not have power to alter the government as it is now settled in one single person and a Parliament." "To sit and not to own authority by which you sit" is only to invite confusion.<sup>3</sup> Therefore Cromwell outlines four fundamentals in this Instrument whose acceptance he deems essential to any settlement. These are:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 455.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 457-58.

1. That there should be government by a single person and Parliament.
2. That Parliaments should not make themselves perpetual.
3. That there should be liberty of conscience.
4. That neither Protector nor Parliament should have absolute power over the military, but should share it equally.

In conclusion he lays upon them the importance of an immediate settlement, in which to fail would now be unspeakable.

You had affairs and these nations delivered over to you in peace and quietness. . . . Through the blessing of God our enemies were hopelessly scattered. We had peace at home, peace almost with all neighbours round about. . . . If breaking should come upon us, and all because we would not settle when we might, when God put it into our hands--your affairs now almost settled everywhere,--who shall answer for these things to God?<sup>1</sup>

A document had been prepared for all the members to sign, not requiring assent to all the four fundamentals mentioned, but only to the first--promising not to "give my consent to alter the government as it is settled in a single person and a Parliament."<sup>2</sup> By September 21, no less than 190 had signed the Recognition, so the way was once more opened to seek an agreement on the other fundamentals and a constitution with parliamentary approval be adopted.

Progressive strain on relations between Parliament and Protector.--That the points at issue between the Protector and his Parliament were yet subject to conciliation is apparent from the fact that the next few weeks saw the first two fundamentals

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 461.

<sup>2</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, III, 33-35.



accepted in principle. The article giving supreme power to Parliament and a single person was first adopted; then a limited provision was made against the danger of Parliament perpetuating itself by a declaration in favor of triennial elections. Thus by September 22, Parliament was ready to approach the knottier point of the control of the armed forces. In the protracted debates and discussions which were to follow, it became clear that on this issue were focussed all the constitutional difficulties inherent in any government where there is a civil authority directing the military. Beyond this was the complex and delicate problem of sharing that control between an executive which must make the decisions and shape foreign policy on the one hand, and a legislative body which holds the purse-strings and also wishes to have a voice in policy thereby. Add to this the fact that recent events had proved beyond any doubt that the army was the decisive power in the entire power structure of the nation at this time. Flushed with victory, it had returned from the wars to demand prompt action on reforms to its liking. These being insufficiently realized, it had pressed for and obtained finally a dissolution of the Long Parliament. It had virtually named the succeeding Nominated (or Barebone) Parliament and upon its failure had again ruled, through the General and the Council, until the calling of this Parliament, by the terms of its own constitution. None realized better than the present Parliament that unless it was able to gain control of that army, and to reduce its size and expense drastically, it would continue to dominate all policy. It was true that while "on paper that army was the servant of Protector

and Parliament, . . . in reality it was the master of both."<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of officers on November 29, it was resolved for example that they should "live and die" not only with the Protector but with "the present government"--in other words, defend the Instrument against all opposition, perhaps even against all amendment. This actually went much farther than Cromwell was prepared to go, and only served to augment parliamentary resistance by such extreme demands.

From his point of view, Cromwell was willing to concede the necessity of sharing control of the army with Parliament and thereby to divest himself of some of his present authority, yet he was not willing to see the balance of power upset so far as to give Parliament absolute control of those forces. This was the dilemma which now confronted him and which produced the widening breach between him and Parliament through all the negotiations that followed.

Further aggravating this breach in a subtle but steady fashion was the underlying difference on the fourth fundamental--liberty of conscience. This actually lay behind the whole controversy over the control of the army, for consistently Cromwell had aimed at assuring the safety and toleration of the "people of God" as the prime objective of his regime. This was pointedly emphasized during the debate over the military when one speaker declared:

To exclude the Protector from the command of the standing force would be to give up the cause, that eminent and glorious cause, which had been so much and so long contended: for such

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

Parliaments might hereafter be chosen as would betray the glorious cause of the people of God.<sup>1</sup>

Here lay the crux of their deep-rooted differences. While he had gone far in his opening address to dissociate himself from his former reputation as a coddler of the sectaries, and was prepared now to draw stricter limits to the toleration afforded, Cromwell saw that the preponderance of Presbyterians in this Parliament had given teeth to a general trend toward a more conservative religious policy by pressing for stronger measures against what were termed "damnable heresies." They claimed the exclusive right to define and officially to condemn such heresies. They had also bitterly contested the Protector's power to determine what congregations were to enjoy immunity from the general strictures against nonattendance at the Established Church services. In many such devious ways, Cromwell saw his prime role as Protector of the people of God being consistently undermined. Coupled with the more obvious dispute as to his control of the military, in which lay his final weapon for such protection, he saw in this opposition a calculated attempt to subvert the new constitution and ultimately to destroy the government. For example, the House again on January 12 sought to alter the religious articles of the original Instrument when it claimed sole right (not as formerly a coordinate share) in legislation against atheism, blasphemy, popery, prelacy, licentiousness, and profaneness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Burton, Diary of Thomas Burton Esq., Member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell, from 1656-59, ed. by J. T. Rutt (4 vols.; London: H. Colburn, 1828), I, lxxxiii.

<sup>2</sup>Gardiner, Constitutional Documents, p. 324.

Cromwell sensed the growing threat to his system of toleration in this parliamentary encroachment.

The fact is that Cromwell was under tremendous pressure at this moment, caught between a demand for greater limitation on toleration from Parliament on the one hand, and an increased activity among such sects as the Quakers, whose disturbance of the peace was provoking increased wrath among the citizenry. How heavily this problem weighed upon him, and how thankless his position as a protector of the sects had become is seen in a letter written to a Lieutenant Colonel Wilks at this time. In this he confesses how trying this situation had become:

My exercise of [that] little faith and patience I have was never greater; and were it not that I know whom I have believed, the comforts of all my friends would not support me, no not one day. . . . Whosoever labours to walk with an even foot between the several interests of the people of God for healing and accommodating their differences is sure to have reproaches and anger from some of all sorts.<sup>1</sup>

With his patience rapidly running out and the differences with Parliament apparently still irreconcilable, Cromwell was plainly moving at the time of this letter toward another showdown with his opponents. He had calculated the five required months of their sitting, and by juggling the calendar to the lunar system, had come to the conclusion that their sitting could legally be terminated on January 22. Thus on that day he summoned the members to the Painted Chamber to address them. He was concerned as always to defend the regime as a fruit of the dispensations of God, "God having (as it were) summed all our former glory and honor . . . in an epitome, within these ten or twelve years last

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 572.

past."<sup>1</sup> Yet he felt called upon to indulge in a greater measure of self-justification than ever before. More strikingly than before, this speech shows his own sense of insecurity and an impatience amounting at times to sheer peevishness.

On his first meeting with them he had come with "great joy and contentment and comfort," but he is now under a great disappointment. It had been necessary within a few days, he recalls, to remind them of the danger of "not owning the authority that called you hither." With their signing of the Recognition, hope had been renewed that "you might have proceeded to have made those good and wholesome laws which the people expected from you." Since then he has been kept in the dark as to what they were doing. "I do not know whether you have been alive or dead," he remarks sarcastically.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile he had thought to wait and see how far they would go if given enough rope, "and what God would produce by you, than unseasonably to intermeddle with you." Instead of producing fruits of righteousness and peace, however, "weeds and nettles, briars and thorns have thriven under your shadow." The enemies within and without have taken new hopes from their sitting, and discovered that "they should have more done for them by and from our own divisions than they were able to do for themselves."<sup>3</sup>

Only the watchful eye of Providence had foiled these attempts to raise insurrection, despite all ungodly mocking at such providences, "calling such observations enthusiasms."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 579.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 580.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 581-82.

By this voice God has spoken very loud on the behalf of his people, by judging their enemies in the late war, and restoring them a liberty to worship with the freedom of their consciences, and freedom of their estates and persons when they do so.<sup>1</sup>

Here especially has this Parliament failed, for when they first met, the Protector had hoped they might make

such good and wholesome provisions for the good of the people of these nations, for the settling of such matters in things of religion as would have upheld and given countenance to a godly ministry, and yet would have given a just liberty to godly men of different judgments, men of the same faith with them that you call the Orthodox Ministry in England, as it is well known the Independents are, and many under the form of Baptism, who are sound in the Faith, only may perhaps be different in judgment in some lesser matters.<sup>2</sup>

Dwelling then upon the irony of the situation in which men of conscience trample upon other's consciences, he continued:

Had not they laboured but lately under the weight of persecutions, and was it fit for them to sit heavy upon others? Is it ingenuous to ask liberty, and not to give it? What greater hypocrisy than for those who were oppressed by the Bishops, to become the greatest oppressors themselves, so soon as their yoke was removed.<sup>3</sup>

Turning now to the defense of his authority under the Instrument, Cromwell stated his case for the control of the militia based upon external danger as well as internal security. If it can be demanded of him at any time that he yield control of the military, what is to become of the cause for which they had fought?

It [such a threat] determines his power, either for doing the good he ought, or hindering Parliaments from perpetuating themselves, or from imposing what religions they please on the consciences of men. . . .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 581-82.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 583.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 586.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 588.

As for personal power, "I desire not to keep it an hour longer than I may preserve England in its just rights, and may protect the people of God in such a just liberty of their consciences."<sup>1</sup>

He now begins an elaborate and verbose apology for the divine approbation on this cause:

If I had not had a hope fixed in me that this cause, and this business, is of God, I would many years ago have run from it. If it be of God, He will bear it up. If it be of man, it will tumble. . . . But if the Lord take pleasure in England, and if He will do us good, He is able to bear us up.<sup>2</sup>

Now arises an objection that has apparently been levelled more than once before as Cromwell has appealed to divine Providence and "necessity" for the justification of one arbitrary action after another: "Doth not he make these necessities?" By the very vehemence with which he denies this charge and yet repeatedly returns to it, Cromwell in some degree now betrays his own acknowledgment that there is an element of truth in it. But he violently rejects the thought:

That man liveth not, that can come to me, and charge me that I have in these great revolutions made necessities. . . . Let men take heed and be twice advised, how they call his revolutions . . . necessities of men's creations: for by so doing they do vilify and lessen the works of God, and rob him of his glory, which he hat said he will not give unto another, nor suffer to be taken from him.<sup>3</sup>

Again he denies the charge that by his own manipulation of power he has brought these changes to pass:

It was, say some, the cunning of the Lord Protector . . . and his plot that hath brought it about. . . . Oh, what blasphemy is this! Because, [these are] men that are without God in the world, and walk not with him, and know not what it is to pray, or believe, and to receive returns from God, and to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 587.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 590.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 591.

be spoken unto by the Spirit of God, who speaks without a written Word sometimes, yet according to it: God hath spoken heretofore in divers manners, let Him speak as He pleaseth.<sup>1</sup>

Rising then to heights of furious self-justification, Cromwell condemns all who hold such views to the hands of an angry God as the avenger of such blasphemies:

They that shall attribute to this or that person the contrivances and production of those mighty things God hath wrought in the midst of us, and [say] the government is laid, they speak against God, and they fall under his hand without a Mediator. . . . That is, if we deny the Spirit of Jesus Christ the glory of all His works in the world, by which he rules kingdoms and doth administer, and is the rod of his strength, we provoke the Mediator. And he may say, I'll leave you to God, I'll not intercede for you, let him tear you to pieces; I'll leave thee to fall into God's hands; thou deniest me my sovereignty and power committed to me, I'll not intercede nor mediate for thee; thou fallest into the hands of the living God.<sup>2</sup>

This speech in which Cromwell dissolves his first Parliament of the Protectorate is chiefly important for our present study in indicating the extent to which Cromwell is driven to exonerate his arbitrary decision in this act. As before, he can always cite the successes of the battlefield as witness to the divine approval of his cause. He can cite the failure of Parliament to enact legislation consonant with the urgency of the times. Beyond this, he can only throw down the gauntlet and cry, "Let the Lord judge between me and thee." So long as he holds the threat of the army as a trump card, there is little question who will triumph in the immediate test of strength, though Cromwell himself seems increasingly uneasy as to the outcome of the long-term issues involved. Never before has he explicitly referred to the opposition's objection that what he terms "divine necessity" is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 591-92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 592.



really only "feigned necessity"--a manipulation of events under a cover of pious talk. This he can refute only by a repeated appeal to divine sanctions. Unbelievers of course cannot see the divine hand in these events, he maintains; but to deny that these events are the workings of the mighty God, attributing them instead to human hands, is to provoke God's wrath and to invite his awful judgment.

Earlier when challenged in this way, Cromwell would no doubt have cited not only his army's victories in the field as evidence of that divine support, but the high character of that army as well--its visible witness of godly speech and behavior. Now he is perhaps conscious that his army is no longer the same Puritan bulwark it once was. Drained of its more enthusiastic sectarian element who have gone over to the Fifth Monarchists, the Quakers, and the Anabaptists in violent dissent, the army has become a professional force only faintly resembling its war-time spirit. To be sure, many of the same officers still remain--the staunch "Cromwellian colonels" or so-called "grandees" who were still the political and military backbone of that army--men like Desborough, Fleetwood, Lambert, Whalley, and others who were soon to become the "Major-Generals" who ruled England. But along the way not only had they lost Harrison to the Fifth Monarchy, but Levellers like Wildman, Sexby, and Overton had become open enemies of the government, conspiring to effect its downfall by fair means or foul. Less violent but just as opposed was Ludlow, who represented a Republican defection which had its effect in weakening the army also. Less obvious was the gradual effect of demobilizing

large numbers of Puritan soldiers who had now gone back to peacetime pursuits, where like James Naylor, they were often drawn into left-wing sects like the Quakers or the Unitarians, or perhaps joined gathered churches, societies, and groups whose existence seemed increasingly imperiled by the trend toward an Established church rigidly limited by credal definitions to the orthodoxy of the day. The Puritan army then had become a professional standing army, its former unity lost in sectarian fragmentation, inevitably losing too the close touch with its general which was felt in the solidarity of battle, and subject to a growing suspicion that, however strong and benevolent he might be, the Protector was prompted more by personal ambition and the desire to perpetuate a political regime than by a genuine concern for his former comrades-in-arms.

For his part, Cromwell must have felt this same sense of growing isolation from the "old cause," as he was driven back more and more upon his own judgment and obliged to invoke divine sanction for his most arbitrary decisions. Harrassed by plots and conspiracies on every hand, he was now driven to bolster his regime by a new appeal to military force in an attempt to rule England for her own good as he saw it, with little regard for the consent of the governed. He could still trust his junto of colonels to support him and with Parliament once again dissolved he now embarked upon a new experiment in the art of personal rule-- "the rule of the Major-Generals."

## The Rule of the Major-Generals

Internal security, not desire for reformation, prompts new regime. -- In considering Cromwell's next experiment in government and his reasons for setting it up, it is necessary first to recall briefly the state of public affairs in the early part of 1655. It has been seen that on January 19, 1655, Cromwell dissolved the first Protectorate Parliament, because it persisted in regarding itself as a constituent assembly with a right to amend the Instrument of Government, which the Protector maintained was barred by the Instrument by which they had been called. Thus between January, 1655, and September, 1656, no Parliament was called, and the Protector sought valiantly to rule strictly by the terms of that Instrument but without the help of a legislative assembly. The growing unrest which resulted during this period of personal rule flared into open insurrection as the two main classes of malcontents, the Royalists and the Levellers, fed the smouldering hatred with their own incendiary propaganda, prepared by now to plot not merely an assassination of Cromwell but the overthrow of the government itself. Only prompt and decisive action prevented these uprisings from succeeding. Early in February, 1655, Wildman was arrested near Marlborough in the act of dictating a revolutionary manifesto, and was imprisoned in Chepstow Castle. In March a threatening Royalist insurrection in Yorkshire under Sir Henry Slingsby was suppressed and the chief insurgents were arrested. Even more important was the so-called Penruddock rising in which some two hundred Cavaliers entered Salisbury on March 11

during the assizes, seized the judges in their beds, and attempted to rally the inhabitants to armed revolt. Failing in this, they were pursued westward by a troop of cavalry to South Molton in Devonshire, where they were finally overtaken and crushed by Captain Unton Croke's government forces.

Following this uprising in the west, Cromwell appointed his brother-in-law, John Desborough, as "Major-General of the west" with full power to make a vigorous investigation of conditions in that area of intrigue, to collect under his command all the horse and foot in the western counties' militia, and in co-operation with the justices of the peace, to arrest, suppress, and disarm all dangerous persons in those parts. Apparently it was the successful result of this experiment in military policing which gave Cromwell the idea of setting up similar districts all over England, to be ruled by trusted officers of "known integrity." These administrative officers would be able to supervise the organization of the new horse militia, and to prod the local authorities into enforcing the laws against troublesome Cavaliers, the whole system to be paid for by a new tax upon these Royalists.

As the Protector afterwards modestly described the birth of the new idea in the wake of these insurrection scares:

Truly when this insurrection was, and we saw it, in all the roots and grounds of it, we did find out a little poor invention . . . which was the erecting of your Major-Generals, to have a little inspection upon the people, thus divided, thus discontented, thus dissatisfied in divers interests.<sup>1</sup>

This "little inspection" was to be carried out by eleven Major-Generals in as many districts, each answerable directly to the

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 269.

Protector and reporting to him through his intelligence chief, John Thurloe. In each district there was to be a group of commissioners, consisting for the most part of country gentlemen, municipal officers or ex-army officers of the "honest party." All this was set in motion during the summer and autumn of 1655 while the memory of these uprisings was still fresh in the public mind.

What exactly was the primary objective of this new regime? Was the threat to internal security only an excuse for imposing totalitarian controls on the nation under which a pet scheme of thorough reformation might be carried out? Or had Cromwell a real program of reformation ever in mind--a conception of a holy commonwealth which he dreamed of enacting at the earliest possible moment? Was that his intention now or was he merely driven by military necessity from one expedient to another in an effort to subdue dissident elements and maintain his government in power--driven constantly to increase the dose of coercion in order to attain that goal? These are a few of the questions which arise as one attempts to evaluate Cromwell's experiment of the Major-Generals. Only a consideration both of the instructions given them, and an examination of how these were actually carried out can give an adequate basis for judging either the original intention of the Protector in establishing the system, or the extent to which that aim was realized.

Definite purposes were outlined when the original set of Instructions was issued during the period August 22 to October 10, 1655. Armed with their new authority, the Major-Generals were instructed to carry out the following:

1. To head up the militia of that district in the suppression of all "tumults, insurrections, rebellions, and other unlawful assemblies."
2. To see that all Papists and Royalists were disarmed.
3. To make highways safe by the enforcement of law.
4. To keep a strict eye on all the disaffected, by seeing that all horseraces, cockfights, bear-baitings are suppressed, "forasmuch as treason and rebellion is usually hatched . . . upon such occasions, and much evil and wickedness committed."
5. To arrest vagrants and other loose people who have "no visible way of livelihood," either compelling them to work or banish them from the land.
6. To "encourage and promote godliness and virtue, and discourage and discountenance all profaneness and ungodliness."
7. To enforce the ordinance for the ejection of scandalous and inefficient ministers.<sup>1</sup>

Still further instructions amplified the administrative details--describing the system of taxation by which the Royalists alone are to pay for this new police supervision of the entire country, and laying down laws for the regulation of alehouses and inns where it was presumed most of the Royalists' conspiracies were hatched.

By the very nature of their instructions it was inevitable that from the beginning of the new regime it would be difficult to distinguish between the intent to preserve peace and the desire to purify public morals. The injunction to "keep a strict eye on all the disaffected" was easily confused with the other admonition "to discountenance all profaneness and ungodliness." It was assumed from the outset that bear-baitings and horseraces

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 844-48.

ought to be suppressed not only because they were places where "treason and rebellion" are hatched but where "much evil and wickedness" is committed. Profaneness, idleness, drunkenness were not only evil and unlawful in themselves and subject to the penalties of the law, where the local enforcement officials could be stirred into action to do so, but these were also the earmarks of actual or potential insurgents, suspect by all who professed allegiance to the government. Likewise the very fact that Royalists were kept under constant surveillance for conspiracy no doubt made it easier to accuse them of minor infractions of the law which were common among all but the most punctilious Puritans of this time.

Nevertheless, any objective appraisal of the facts would reveal not only that the Major-Generals stayed within the spirit if not the letter of their instructions for the most part, but that their policing of public morals was distinctly secondary to their function as military governors delegated to keep an eye on the disaffected Royalists. To be sure, they had broad powers delegated to them. However, to preserve the peace often involved suppressing religious fanatics as well as hardened sinners, so that the arrest of Catholics and Quakers was as much the duty of the Major-General as the apprehension of criminal types common in every day and place. Most of the enforcement of ordinary criminal law was still left, however, to the local authorities, with the Major-General acting merely as a supervisory authority, keeping an eye on local enforcement and ready if necessary to throw the weight of the central government behind that effort, or if

necessary to remove local officials recreant to their duty. Indeed, a great deal of the Major-General's time and effort was directly concerned with this sort of liaison, and with finding justices and sheriffs competent and willing to serve. For example, Major-General Berry writes from Monmouth on February 19, 1656: "I am much troubled with these market towns everywhere vices abounding and Magistrates fast asleep."<sup>1</sup> Local enforcement was a thankless enough duty at any time, but with the shadow of the government always hovering over, it became even less popular among the reputable citizenry who were best able to serve in such a capacity. Berry amusingly summarizes the government's dilemma:

As to the business of the shreifes in the County I confesse I know not what to say, because to put it upon our friends is to do them great discourtesy and to put it into other men's hands is to do ourselves a greater.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly a large part of the work of each Major-General was concerned with problems of taxation, inasmuch as this was where the shoe pinched the Royalists most. To levy this income tax (decimation) of 10 per cent on all Royalists possessing land of the value of £100 a year or more, or personal property of £1,500 imposed a heavy task upon these officers. It must be noted in this connection that when Parliament finally abolished the regime, it was not the minor irritations involved in policing

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<sup>1</sup>John Thurloe, A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq., Secretary, First, to the Council of State, and Afterwards to the Two Protectors, Oliver and Richard Cromwell (7 vols.; London: F. Gyles, 1722), IV, 545.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 272. Cf. Sir James Berry and Stephen G. Lee, A Cromwellian Major-General, Col. James Berry, Illustrated by His Letters and Other Contemporary Documents (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 158.



public morals that came in for the heaviest criticism, but the unfairness of penalizing all former Royalists for the actions of a few in levying this decimation tax. Further involved was the whole system of registration by which all householders who were politically suspect had to give security that every servant in their employ would keep the peace while in such service.

Another example of the mixture of purposes involved in the entire system was the licensing of alehouses and inns, with the subsequent closing of many of these. Here again internal security could be cited as a reason, for the order specifically hit at "solitary alehouses (i.e., those outside city or village limits) and carefully regulated inns where horses were for hire, for the obvious purpose of preventing armed Cavalier uprisings. Soon the notorious character of many alehouses seemed to the Major-Generals to justify wholesale closings, as Berry put it, "considering that the end of the law in licensing inns was not to set up houses to tipple in, but to make entertainment for strangers and travellers."<sup>1</sup> He wrote that he intended to put down some two hundred alehouses in Blackburn alone, while from Lincoln reported as many as sixty being closed in some corporations.<sup>2</sup>

That Cromwell himself strove to keep in view the original purpose of these restrictions upon the liberties and recreations of his fellow countrymen is indicated by a letter from Whalley in which he tells of being approached by the Earl of Exeter as to

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<sup>1</sup>David Watson Rannie, "Cromwell's Major Generals," English Historical Review, X (1895), 496, citing Public Intelligencer, January 14 to 21, 1656.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 28 to February 4, 1656.

whether the Lady Grantham cup races were to be permitted. Whalley gave permission and adds in a personal note to the Protector:

I assured him it was not your highness intention in the suppressing of horse races, to abridge gentlemen of that sport, but to prevent the great confluences of irreconcilable enemies . . . what your highness at my last waiting upon you spoke to me gave me encouragement thereunto.<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written adversely about the Puritan system of public morality that was enforced during the rule of the Major-Generals. This was undoubtedly an aspect of their duties which they did not neglect, as their correspondence reveals. As discouragers of vice and encouragers of virtue they aroused a violent opposition from the beginning. In Lancashire, Worsley prohibited Saturday or Monday markets on the grounds that these "occasioned the Lord's Day to be much violated."<sup>2</sup> In London, Barkstead ordered out a company of soldiers under Pride to kill the bears in a bear-pit at Bankside and to wring the necks of the gamecocks in other parts of the city.<sup>3</sup> Such activities aroused such a furore of popular resistance and such hatred for the law-enforcers that this aspect of their rule has received an exaggerated emphasis.

In reality, if contemporary evidence is considered, while these incidents contributed to the general dislike of their regime, the chief reasons for their final overthrow are to be found in a different direction. An examination of the debates in Parliament at which the military rule met its doom is instructive at this point.

One consideration not yet noted was the changed nature of

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<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, IV, 607.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 277-78.

<sup>3</sup>Clarke, III, 64.

the Major-Generals' duties from the summer of 1656. The central events of that year just past--an alliance with France in October, 1655, and the outbreak of war with Spain in the following February--had placed such a strain upon the treasury that a new property tax had to be imposed, over violent public protest. This in turn prompted Cromwell, if public opinion was not to be raised to the boiling point, to call a new parliamentary election. In this situation he deemed it advisable to utilize the Major-Generals through the summer campaigns in electioneering for candidates acceptable to the government, and in most cases they also became candidates themselves. For example, Bridges wrote that all the commissioners in his district were active on behalf of government candidates.<sup>1</sup> Haynes wrote that he was also working hard to influence the elections.<sup>2</sup> While in the final outcome, all of the Major-Generals were themselves returned to Parliament, it is clear from the later reaction that this intervention in the elections capped the climax of the opposition to their continuance.

Another prominent feature in the debates was the personal history and deportment of the Major-Generals. Who were these men who demanded to be established as permanent authorities, and dared to dictate to the Commons of England? According to one critic: "Sir John Barkstead was a thimble-maker; Kelsey sold leather points; Maj. Gen. Bridge was a common dragoon in Yorkshire."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, V, 313-14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 311-12.

<sup>3</sup>Burton, Diary, I, 331. Cf. Roger Coke, A Detection of the Court and State of England during the Four Last Reigns and the Interregnum (3 vols.; London: J. Brotherton and W. Meadow, 1719), II, 60-66: "These major generals acted their parts to the life; and being an obscure company of mean fellows (except Fleet-

Such personal reflections were not spared in the stormy debates in the House, for many were finding a sweet revenge there for what they considered the insolent behavior of these grandees through their brief months of supremacy. Now they were again at the mercy of a Parliament not averse to taking their measure.

Yet the main issue upon which the debate turned went deeper than mere personalities. It was a fear of permanently establishing such a military oligarchy at the expense of the duly elected representatives of the people. Wrote Vincent Gookin:

That which makes me fear the passing of the bill is that thereby his Highness' government will be more founded in force, and more removed from that national foundation which the people in Parliament are desirous to give him.<sup>1</sup>

It was this reliance upon extra-legal force which had aroused such resentment during their span of office and emerged as an issue in the recent elections when the slogan of all the anti-government parties had been, "No soldier, decimator or any man that hath salary."<sup>2</sup> Lawyers joined with Presbyterians of Royalist sympathies to insist that while in individual Royalists might lose the benefits of their pardon by the Act of Oblivion, the decimation tax (and by implication the whole foundation of the Major-General's rule) was falsely based upon a collective guilt of all Royalists already renounced by that previous pardon. While this was to ignore the government's argument that the Cavaliers had broken their share of the compact by raising open rebellion, others were plainly disturbed by this tendency to perpetuate the

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wood), lorded it over the nobility, as well as gentry and clergy, with an unheard of insolence."

<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, VI, 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., V, 341.

ancient conflict by rubbing salt in Royalist wounds. Said one government spokesman:

You provoke your enemies by taking away a tenth part from them, and leave them the nine tenths to be revenged with.<sup>1</sup>

This halfway policy clearly settled nothing and satisfied no one. It was to Cromwell's credit that he finally saw that a reconciliation was necessary if internal unity was to be bought in the face of the peril from abroad. By tacitly consenting to the liquidation of the Major-Generals, he saw the militia bill defeated 124 to 88 and the regime cut off from financial support on January 29, 1656.

Results of the regime.--Some general observations may suffice to summarize the answers to questions raised earlier as to the purpose and results of the rule of the Major-Generals.

1. Concerning Cromwell's idea of a holy commonwealth, all the evidence indicates that Cromwell never conceived any utopia or ideal society with definite outlines to be realized "in England's green and pleasant land." To be sure, he speaks before the Barebone Parliament of the ideal of godliness he sought to realize in all. "Would all the Lord's people were prophets. I would all were fit to be called and fit to call. It ought to be the longing of our hearts to see men brought to own the interest of Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> But aside from establishing conditions of peace in the land, and extending protection to the godly, he seems to have had few definite notions of how, even with his immense power and prestige, he could go about establishing an ideal

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<sup>1</sup>Burton, Diary, I, 315.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, III, 64.

society. Rather he seems more often to have conceived his role in negative terms as a "good constable set to keep the peace of the parish," as he told a committee of Parliament on April 13, 1657.<sup>1</sup> So at the same time, he says that he undertook to be Protector "not so much out of a hope of doing any good, as out of a desire to prevent mischief and evil."<sup>2</sup>

2. Likewise from Cromwell's record up to this point it is clear that he had only the broadest notions of the kind of reformation needed in England. We have seen his dissatisfaction with three Parliaments for having failed to enact the kind of legislation expected of them, but aside from certain legal and ecclesiastical reforms, he offered little hint of what social legislation he would like to see enacted. So too when the First Protectorate Parliament was dissolved he began no program of long-awaited change, inclining instead to govern as conservatively as possible within the terms of the Instrument, until the multiplied insurrections forced a new approach upon him.

3. Even with the inauguration of the rule of the Major-Generals, it is by no means clear that Cromwell took the leading hand in the formulation of that system. Rather Lambert was given almost a free hand in drafting the original instructions for the suppression of the disaffected. While Cromwell's hand has been conjectured in the later instructions on public morals, these continue to be secondary.<sup>3</sup> At no time are they particularly stressed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., IV, 470.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, III, 181-82.

by the Protector in any extant correspondence of this time. It is true that the broad and independent powers granted to the Major Generals led them increasingly to superintend the total life of their districts, making decisions and enforcing penalties involving public and private morality. Nevertheless there is no evidence that this was a part of a preconceived plan to legislate a new society, or that it was pushed as an essential aspect of the government's program. Rather, the system was kept for the most part within the bounds of the original instructions, in which the maintenance of public order was distinctly primary.

4. Further, Cromwell's final action in permitting the regime of the Major-Generals to be strangled without a fight suggests that he may never have been enthusiastic about the institution, accepting it as a temporary expedient until opposition had quieted down, rather than as a positive reform program to be defended against its critics at all costs. The fact that the resolution to terminate its powers was introduced by John Claypole, Cromwell's son-in-law, and supported by others close to him personally indicates that he had acknowledged the regime to have fulfilled its appointed function and possibly even to have outlived its usefulness.

In brief, both its inception and its termination point up the fact that the regime was regarded by Cromwell as a necessary expedient to restore order in an explosive situation, but whose oversight of the country offered a chance to encourage law enforcement and a minor amount of Puritan reform at the local level, but that it was an experiment which could safely be

abandoned as soon as the immediate danger was past. The regulation of the moral order it involved was never either its main objective nor the chief target of criticism from its enemies, though its strictures may have contributed as an irritant to the downfall of the whole regime. The central issue, as in the whole of the Commonwealth and Protectorate government, was the fundamental opposition between civil and military rule in a government beset by the constant threat of armed insurrection.

#### Cromwell's Religious Policy: Toleration without Disorder

With the dissolution of the first Protectorate Parliament Cromwell felt the necessity of reassuring the public that even though embarking on a period of personal rule, he was nevertheless going to abide by the spirit of the constitution in its religious provisions. Not only did he intend to protect the people as before but he was concerned to promote as large a measure of religious liberty as was consonant with public order. In a proclamation issued on February 15, 1655, he sets forth his whole religious policy of the Protectorate more clearly than ever before. In it he reasserts the primacy of that "uninterrupted passage of the Gospel" by which God has blessed his people, and given a freedom to each to practice his own faith, "to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, without any interruption from the powers God hath set over this Commonwealth, nay with all just and due encouragement thereto, and protection in so doing by the same."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 626.



Such protection he conceives to be one of his chief duties as Supreme Magistrate, defending a privilege that extends to all "fearing God, though of differing judgments" who hold to the "quiet exercise and profession of religion, and the sincere worship of God." The enemies of such freedom, he goes on to point out, are "all such who shall, by imposing upon the consciences of their brethren, or offering violence to their persons, or any other way seek to hinder them therein."<sup>1</sup> The Protector makes it plain that too many are now abusing this liberty to the disquiet of their brethren, and "do openly and avowedly, by rude and unchristian practices, disturb both the public and private meetings for preaching the Word."<sup>2</sup> He therefore enjoins all such "Quakers, Ranters and others" who thus interrupt public peace to forbear such practices upon pain of prosecution by officers of the law.

The Quakers as disturbers of the peace.--The problem posed by the Quakers in this regard was an example of Cromwell's trying dilemma in attempting to maintain so large a degree of religious liberty in the face of sectarian excesses on the one hand, while popular disregard of the principle of toleration was widely prevalent. The left-wing mystics who were banded together under George Fox's leadership in the Society of Friends were a thorn in the side of all constituted authority in the England of the 1650's. Their doctrine itself was unorthodox enough to call down all kinds of criticism from the more straight-laced of that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 627.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

day--whether Anglican, Presbyterian, or Independent--their belief in human perfectibility, their persuasion that the Holy Spirit infallibly directed their words and actions, and their disregard of all outward forms of worship--these were sufficient to make them heretics in the eyes of most in that day. But when to this was added their peculiarities of behavior--their refusal to take oaths, to bear arms, to remove hats before judges--the general reaction to such unconventionality may be understood. But what most infuriated the public and certainly the clergy of all churches was the Quakers' practice of interrupting regular services, to rail at the ministers as "hirelings, deceivers, and false prophets," breaking into the middle of a sermon to attack the preacher with: "Come down, thou deceiver, thou hireling, thou dog."<sup>1</sup> It was such fanatical unruliness as this which so often aroused the hostility of a quick-tempered mob who seldom were satisfied short of violence--a violence which Cromwell sought to forestall by this new resolution to enforce the known laws against disturbance of the peace. Even then, there was a good chance that when the Quaker was hailed before the magistrate, he would stubbornly refuse to remove his hat or show respect for constituted authority, contending that such marks of courtesy were contrary to Scripture and the sole authority of God. Fox refused to acknowledge any fellow mortal as important enough to prompt such obeisance. Other Quakers were frequently convicted either of blasphemy (usually for claiming Christ within them) or of disturbing the peace (speaking out in church), a practice which had reached such

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<sup>1</sup>Baxter, pp. 77, 116.

proportions as to become a public nuisance by 1655. Since this was deemed by Cromwell to come under the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, he now urged the local authorities to put a stop to such abuse of religious liberty.

During the time of the Major-Generals this enforcement was assisted by these officers who saw that the situation was reflecting discredit upon the Protector's entire toleration program. "We are extremely troubled in these parts by Quakers," wrote Worsley from Cheshire.<sup>1</sup> Again writing from Lancashire he reports, "They trouble the markets and get into private houses up and down in every town, and draw people after them."<sup>2</sup> While enforcement was the order of the day and for the most part needed less encouragement locally than other violations, sometimes the Major-General was a moderating influence to cool the tempers and mitigate the severity of the magistrate's sentence. The kindly Berry was responsible for liberating nine Quakers who had been imprisoned at Evesham for local disturbances.<sup>3</sup> The Protector himself was no less merciful when dealing directly with some cases of Quaker conscience. When Fox himself was sent up to London for judgment, he gained such favor in a short interview with Cromwell that the latter in bidding him farewell said tenderly, "Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but one hour a day together we should be nearer one to the other. I wish you no more ill than I do to my own soul."<sup>4</sup> Fox not only was released, but was freely permitted

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<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, IV, 315.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 613.

<sup>4</sup>Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, III, 110 f.

to address meetings which had been forbidden by special order only a few days before.

Less consideration was shown to James Naylor, a convert of Fox's who was an example of the more fanatical type of Quaker who brought much opprobrium upon the sect and whose cruel punishment illustrates the lengths to which most authorities were prepared to go in punishing heretics in that day. As a mystic with extraordinary ideas of how far he was endowed by the Spirit, Naylor attracted a fanatical following, many of whom believed him actually to be the Messiah. At Bristol he was accorded a triumphal entry into the city with waving of branches and strewing of clothing in his path to the singing of "Hosanna in the highest." Fox himself regarded Naylor with some misgivings<sup>1</sup> and sensible Quakers lamented his actions, many of which Naylor himself later repented, though he denied many of the more exaggerated reports of his claims. This, however, was not sufficient to save him from being sentenced by Parliament to two hours in the pillory, a whipping by the common hangman, and having his tongue bored with a hot iron. Later at Bristol he was to ride backward on a horse "bare-ridged" through the streets, climaxed with a second public whipping, thereafter to be imprisoned at hard labor at Bridewell in London.<sup>2</sup> However, before the latter half of this sentence was executed, Cromwell intervened on Naylor's behalf,

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<sup>1</sup>George Fox, Journal, ed. by Norman Penney (London, 1924), p. 137: "The night we came to Exeter I spake with James Naylor; for I saw he was out and wrong, and so was his company."

<sup>2</sup>Firth, Last Years of the Protectorate, I, 93.

thus challenging Parliament's authority in judging him, though he made it clear that he had no sympathy with Naylor's opinions, and thus was intervening not so much on humanitarian as on constitutional grounds. Later though he could not pardon him without provoking another quarrel with Parliament, Cromwell granted Naylor's wife's petition for more decent food for the prisoner, and even sent a committee of physicians to help care for him during his illness in prison.<sup>1</sup> In such acts of mercy the Protector often in practice showed himself more humane than his contemporaries, and tempered justice with mercy with regard to the Quakers.

The Socinians as heretics.--The case of John Biddle is an example of the prosecution of religious beliefs during the Protectorate in which Cromwell was in agreement regarding the theoretical grounds of limiting tolerance, yet was prepared to overlook the heresy in practice. Indeed, Cromwell usually felt bound finally to enforce the law up to its constitutional limits, though sometimes it was only when a dissenter caused considerable trouble and aroused public opinion to a high pitch that he supported the magistrates in their enforcement. It must be remembered that civil laws then covered such offences as blasphemy, heresy, and atheism, besides such general matters as disturbance of the peace. It was thus Cromwell's duty, despite his own broad views of toleration, to carry out the constitutional provisions which actually imposed many restrictions on the religious liberty of his subjects, as measured by modern standards of toleration.

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<sup>1</sup>Burton, Diary, II, 131. Cf. Masson, V, 22-28 on the treatment of Quakers.

John Biddle was a mild-mannered Gloucester schoolmaster who had aroused violent opposition ever since his first books were published, upholding their anti-Trinitarian doctrines. He had become famous not only in England but all over the Continent through these Socinian writings, though it was not until his publication of A Two-fold Catechism in 1654 that the uproar came to its peak. At this time, Parliament, after hearing with horror certain extracts from his books, ordered them burned by the common hangman, then prepared an indictment against him. Soon after, while liberated on bail, the irrepressible Biddle was not content to remain quiet but in the summer of 1655 was rash enough to accept a challenge to a public disputation in St. Paul's with a Baptist named Griffen. Thereupon he was again arrested and proceedings begun on the dubious basis of the old Presbyterian Blasphemy ordinance of 1648, which carried a death penalty. When petitioned for Biddle's release by his followers, on grounds that the articles of the Instrument protected all who professed faith in God by Jesus Christ, Cromwell replied that "the liberty of conscience provided for in those articles should never, while he hath any interest in the government, be stretched so far as to countenance them who deny the divinity of our Saviour, or to bolster up any blasphemous opinions contrary to the fundamental verities of religion."<sup>1</sup>

That this represented a shrinking of the earlier toleration accorded by Cromwell during the wars cannot be denied, but

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<sup>1</sup>Mercurius Politicus, I, 854, cited in Gardiner, History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, III, 210.

he too had reacted from that absolute libertarian position whose fruits had been demonstrated in the examples of heresy which he had seen recently. Such heresy could be punished by civil authority, as under the Tudors and Stuarts it had been punished, but now Cromwell recognized the urgent necessity for Parliament to define such heresies carefully rather than leave it to the lower magistrates who were sure to give such laws a rigorous and often highly irregular interpretation. Cromwell himself was inclined to prosecute only in flagrant cases, and only then when public clamor was insistent. In the case of Biddle, he ordered the prisoner removed to the Scilly Isles where he remained in confinement without further punishment until 1658, when upon a renewal of his friends' petition, the Protector released him.<sup>1</sup>

The Baptists and Fifth Monarchy men as conspirators.--

Whereas the limits of toleration with Quakers were reached at the point where liberty lapsed into disturbance of the peace, with the Baptists and the more radical Fifth Monarchy men those limits were reached when sedition was involved. In the years 1655-56 especially the threat of insurrection and invasion was too great to permit the advocates of the personal reign of Christ the privilege heretofore enjoyed of uninhibited denunciation of the Protector and the government. Cromwell had served notice on the All-hallows preachers in his opening address of the Parliament that they followed "a mistaken notion," and that to advocate "bringing in Judaical law," thus subverting the known laws of the people would bring disaster in its train. Such warnings were

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<sup>1</sup>Masson, V, 64-66.

prompted by rumors that in Wales Vavasor Powell was recruiting an army and stirring up sedition.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Protector deemed the danger great enough at this time to call in Harrison to dine with him, to ascertain if he had any subversive intentions, and to admonish him in a friendly way to give up "those deceitful and slippery ways whose end is destruction."<sup>2</sup> He then set him at liberty, reassured as to his innocence of any conspiracy.

The earlier discovery of the plot of three Baptist colonels in the autumn of 1654 (Alured, Saunders, and Okey) had underlined the possibility that such a conspiracy, in league with certain Levellers, could attract a considerable response in both army and navy, and thus undermine the very centers of Cromwell's greatest power. It was to forestall this that Cromwell thought it time to come to an understanding with some of his chief critics among the Fifth Monarchy preachers now in prison, to prove to the outside world that he was not holding such men as William Allen, Feake, and Rogers for reasons of purely religious dissent. Also loving a theological argument as he did, he doubtless welcomed the opportunity to justify himself--in his own eyes, in the eyes of the public, and in the eyes of his prisoners if possible. Accordingly when several members of Rogers' congregation came to him demanding the release of "the Lord's prisoners . . . whom ye have so unchristianly rent and torn from us,"<sup>3</sup> Cromwell called

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<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, II, 44.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Rogers (ed.), Some Account of the Life and Opinions of a Fifth Monarchy Man, John Rogers (London: Longmans Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), p. 175.



Rogers before him and proceeded to argue the case against him in the hearing of his friends.

While the Protector attempted to persuade them that "his work was to preserve the people of God from destroying one another" and "to keep all the godly of several judgments in peace," he charged Rogers with being "a Railer, a Busybody in other men's matters, and a Stirrer up of Sedition."<sup>1</sup> He denied sharply that any man in England suffered under him for the Gospel.

I tell you there was never such Liberty of Conscience, no, never such liberty since the days of Antichrist as is now--for may not men preach and pray what they will? and have not men their liberty of all opinions?<sup>2</sup>

It may be understood, if Rogers, standing in chains at this moment, failed to be impressed with this statement. He demanded to know what specific charges were brought against him, after having been a prisoner for twenty-seven weeks and Feake for over a year with no formal charges preferred against them. If he was only charged with "evil-doing," was not the real objection that he had too faithfully preached the Gospel? This was "to make a man a traitor for words"--for preaching against sin.<sup>3</sup> When Cromwell demanded to know who would prevent him from speaking against sin as much as he wished, the indomitable Rogers replied: "You do, from preaching that part of the Gospel which decries the public sins of the times, or of men in power, armies, etc."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 607.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 608.

<sup>3</sup>E. Rogers, A Fifth Monarchy Man, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

This was precisely the issue and one to which Cromwell had no satisfactory refutation. Rogers had only a charge of railing and stirring up sedition against him, and that only the Protector's verbal charge. Yet Cromwell felt justified in holding him because his inflammatory utterances were a perpetual incitement to revolt, among a soldiery much given to sympathy for such sensational preaching. Still another soft spot was found in the Protector's armor when Rogers charged that the army had broken its most solemn commitments, such as that to abolish tithes. Cromwell hotly denied that he had ever promised such a thing, but at the same time, he maintained the justice of such tithes at present. Rogers drove home another thrust in accusing him of ruling with absolute power, the power of the "long sword." When Cromwell denied this too, the debate descended into an acrimonious and childish wrangle, with both parties indulging freely in insults. At last the prisoner summarized the gulf between them in one brief statement: "The controversy . . . is now between Christ and you, my Lord, Christ's government and yours; and which of these two are the higher Powers for us to side with and be obedient unto, judge ye."<sup>1</sup>

This was exactly the Fifth Monarchy position, and the fanatical Rogers was not to be moved by arguments, threats or pleas. He left the interview still quoting Latin and Greek in his voluble manner, his position wholly unaltered. The Protector watched him go, relieved to be rid of him--undaunted in his own righteousness, but perhaps somewhat uncomfortable with the smart

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

of such accusations as "apostate" and "anti-christian" still burning, and irked by such candid retorts as Rogers' "Who made you a judge over me?"<sup>1</sup> The Protector could not have enjoyed such stinging remarks from those who had once been his followers. Nor could he have rejoiced in the disillusioned comment of another of Rogers' followers who summed up his reaction in the following manner, when the argument had simmered down:

My Lord, we are very much dissatisfied with what you have done against these prisoners of the Lord Jesus. . . .

To which the Protector could only answer rather sharply, "I cannot tell you, then, how to help it." To which again the man replied,

For my part I must declare against you, and will venture my life, if I be called to it, with these our brethren that suffer.<sup>2</sup>

However necessary was such imprisonment, then, Cromwell was desirous of freeing these men as soon as possible. He could not consent to prolonged harsh treatment of men whose opposition to him was conscientious, however misguided. None realized better than he that there is nothing like persecution to make a cause flourish. He preferred if possible to admonish or to convert his opponents, or at most to restrain their power of causing trouble. This he often effected, as in the case of Harrison earlier, by persuading a man to promise to refrain from conspiracy during a specified term of probation, and then to free him, subject only to the eagle-eyed surveillance of Thurloe's agents.

His continuing dilemma in dealing with the Baptists especially was in deciding whether they belonged to the passive

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 610.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 615.

resistance wing of that movement or to those who urged active rebellion to hasten the promised kingdom. When such leaders as Harrison, Carew, Rich, and Courtney, who were next to be seen on the same day he interviewed Rogers, refused even to answer his summons on grounds that such would have implied recognition of a government they considered anti-Christian and Babylonish, when they objected even to Parliaments on the ground that power belonged to Christ and not to the people; and when they refused to promise to live peaceably--Cromwell could not but suspect them of hidden designs. Thus on special offenses which he took pains to delineate, he committed each of these four to prison. For even those advocating passive resistance were not opposed to force on principle and might decide at any time that the moment for action had come, and rise up in armed rebellion. It was better in the Protector's view to remove such men from the scene of temptation during this time of tension.<sup>1</sup>

However, by the summer of 1656, it appeared that the principles of the moderate wing of the Fifth Monarchy were winning out. William Aspinwall was holding that the Fifth Monarchy men are "the best and truest friends unto Government, and count it their duty to be faithful unto their trust, be the Rulers what they may, or the form of government what it will."<sup>2</sup> Upon this and other signs that the storm of opposition might be subsiding, Cromwell thought it timely to sound out his prisoners' intentions, sending Cradock to interview Harrison, and Fleetwood to see his friend and fellow-Baptist, Rich. The latter mission evoked some

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

significant remarks in a letter from Rich clarifying his position. Still maintaining the unlawfulness of his imprisonment, he added this pointed judgment upon those who had imprisoned him:

I leave them to the Lord; he is the best judge of his own [his persecutors'] wrong or mine if any be; if they fear us raising armies surely it could not be in the clouds; their courage, wisdom and conduct are more honourable guards from new or old enemies, then putting friends in durance. If it be not such an outward but a more spiritual, invisible and inward appearance that is suspected, alas, what walls or force can confine the anointing?<sup>1</sup>

That Cromwell must have been moved by this rebuke from an old friend is indicated by the fact that all four were soon thereafter (about March 22) released without pledges of any kind whatever.

Not all the Fifth Monarchy men were of this peaceable spirit. Together with other disaffected spirits of the Commonwealth (or republican) faction, this violent wing conspired through the spring of 1656 in their meetings at Swan Alley in Coleman Street to stage an armed revolt. Led by Thomas Venner, a wine cooper, they sought to enlist the aid of such hardened parliamentary republicans as Admiral Lawson and Colonel Okey but failing to agree on objectives, decided to lead the rebellion on their own. An attempt had been made also to enlist the support of Harrison, Carew, and Rich but these all refused to endorse the proposed insurrection, though all were now free and technically unhindered by any personal pledge to the government. When the appointed day came, on April 9, 1657, their rendezvous at Shore-ditch was quickly surrounded by a party of government horse and with the capture of the twenty armed rebels and ten loads of arms

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<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, VI, 251.

and ammunition en route to Mile End Green, the uprising was speedily crushed. The failure of the Fifth Monarchy men to convert many of the Baptists to their scheme of resistance marked the end of their influence upon the left-wing sectarian movement. Many of these Baptists were still as bitterly critical of the government afterward as before, but they believed in a patient obedience of their ills rather than in following the rash impulses of the hot-headed revolutionaries. They would have echoed the words of Rich in the above-quoted letter:

I envy not those in power but pity and pray for them, but it is that their workes may be burnt and their soules saved so as by fire, which if such fooles as I am should attempt to kindle <sup>it</sup> twould perhaps scorch me as much or more than them.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this refusal to join the insurrectionists in their conspiracies, the defection of so large a part of the Baptist and extreme Independent parties could only weaken Cromwell's Puritan following. Though he had placated the more orthodox Presbyterians and the right-wing Independents by his policy of suppressing the Quakers, Soc<sup>u</sup>ians, and Fifth Monarchy men, he had seriously alienated that large body of former followers who had looked up to him not only as a successful liberator from Stuart tyranny but as the guarantor of their religious liberties. Now he seemed to them to be more interested in defending the tithe system, in curbing the liberty of preaching by his system of Triers, and hedging their freedom about with fine points of dogma. Thus large numbers of the former faithful no longer looked to Cromwell as their saviour. He was now a "lost leader" in their eyes.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

The Rift with Sir Henry Vane:  
Further Spiritual Isolation

Besides those who had fallen away on purely religious issues, a more serious rift with an old friend had developed on a combination of religious and political differences, in the case of Sir Henry Vane the younger. Though the breach had first occurred in his dismissal of the Long Parliament in 1653, its effects may well be considered here.

When at the forcible dissolution of that assembly, Cromwell had cried out in his distress, "O Sir Henry Vane, Sir Henry Vane, the Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane,"<sup>1</sup> he was once again literally calling the Almighty to judge between him and another. Convinced as he was of his own righteousness, he could only look upon his friend as standing now on the farther side of an impassable gulf. There is no question that he regarded Vane as having failed to prevent this forcing of the issue involved in allowing the bill for the perpetuation of the Long Parliament to be called and pressed on that fateful morning of April 20, 1653. Carlyle assumes perhaps unjustly that it was Vane to whom Cromwell alluded when he spoke of "one of the chief" members of Parliament who promised to keep back the bill, only to break his word.<sup>2</sup> Cromwell's words as reported by Lord Lisle to the effect that Vane "might have prevented this extraordinary course" would seem to imply that Vane was not the chief offender but rather had

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 644. Also Ludlow, I, 351-55.

<sup>2</sup>Carlyle, II, 330-31.

stood aloof and let matters take their ruinous course.<sup>1</sup> This view is reinforced by what we know of Vane's character, which as Cromwell says in an early letter during the war, inclined always to the "passive" rather than to the active course.<sup>2</sup> Likewise this interpretation is supported by the fact that Cromwell within a few weeks invited Vane to be a member of the Nominated Parliament, a step which he would scarcely have taken had Vane been guilty of outright treachery to him.

In any event, their relations were virtually cut off during the next three years, while Vane retired from public life almost completely, to busy himself at his house at Belleau in Lincolnshire in writing his theological speculations and observing the political scene from afar. His sardonic reply to Cromwell's invitation to join in the Nominated Parliament could only have made relations with him more strained when he cryptically remarked that so far as the "reign of the saints" was concerned, he was willing to "defer his share in it until he come to heaven."<sup>3</sup>

When at the death of his father in May, 1655, Vane came into the possession of Raby Castle, he had some correspondence with the government concerning the removal of a garrison of soldiers stationed there. A more congenial note in the relations of Cromwell and Vane appears here momentarily with the enclosure of

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<sup>1</sup>Sydney Papers, Consisting of a Journal of the Earl of Leicester, and Original Letters of Algernon Sydney, ed. with notes by R. W. Blencoe (London: J. Murray, 1825), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, I, 644. Cf. John Willcock, The Life of Sir Henry Vane the Younger, Statesman and Mystic (London: The Saint Catherine Press, 1913), pp. 241-42.

<sup>3</sup>Thurloe, I, 265.



a personal letter from the Protector along with the official one from Thurloe. This in turn elicited a friendly but guarded reply from Vane which throws some light on his feelings at that time.

I desire not to be insensible of the civility intended me in it by the first first hand [Cromwell's], which accordingly I desire you to represent in the fittest manner you please, from one, who upon those primitive grounds of public spiritedness and sincere love to our country and the godly part in it, am still the same as ever both in true friendship to his person, and in unchangeable fidelity to the cause so solemnly engaged in by us.<sup>1</sup>

Vane's subtle reference to his "unchangeable fidelity to the cause so solemnly engaged in by us" is obviously a thinly-veiled rebuke to one whom he and most other republicans believed had deserted "the old cause" of which he was soon to write so persuasively. The subtlety of the reference probably did not escape Cromwell, who while far from being unduly sensitive as a rule either to public or private criticism always was more vulnerable to the shafts of friends than to those of his foes, and who must have been especially sensitive to the barbed comments of one whom he had esteemed so highly as Vane.

Despite Vane's apparent seclusion at Raby Castle and his distance from the political turmoil of the time, he was being closely watched by the government as the more ardent republicans and the Fifth Monarchy men continued to plot its overthrow, as we see in a letter from Henry Cromwell to Thurloe. He has heard rumors from England, he says, that "Sir H. Vane goes up and down amongst these people and others, endeavoring to withdraw them from their submission to the present government."<sup>2</sup> There was no

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., IV, 329.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 509.

substance to the rumor, as Vane at that moment was occupied in publishing his most elaborate theological treatise, The Retired Man's Meditations, Or, The Myserie and Power of Godlinesse. It was not until 1656 that Vane came once more into the political arena and even then it was to be with the publication of a pamphlet rather than as a direct participant in the plots and counter-plots of the time.

Cromwell had issued on March 14, 1656, a proclamation for a day of fasting in which he made reference to possible sins which he had committed and to national evils which might have provoked the Divine anger and required confession on such a day of humiliation. Taking him at his word in his desire to "find out his provocations," Vane soon after published a pamphlet entitled: A Healing Question Propounded and Resolved. . . .<sup>1</sup> The circumstances surrounding its publication are nearly as puzzling as are those of its reception and condemnation. Before publishing it, Vane had, thoughtfully enough, submitted the manuscript to Cromwell through Major-General Fleetwood. Since it was returned to him after a month without comment, and in view of Cromwell's violent reaction to it when it was published, there is ground for supposing that Cromwell never saw the manuscript.

In this unsigned political manifesto, Vane sets out to heal the breaches in "the good cause," for which so much blood and treasure had been expended, by proposing a plan whereby a

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Henry Vane, A Healing Question Propounded and Resolves, upon Occasion of the Late Publique and Reasonable Call to Humiliation, in order to Love and Union amongst the Honest Party; and with a Desire to Apply Balsome to the Wound, before It Become Incurable (London: T. Brewster, 1660).

"general council or convention of faithful, honest and discerning men" chosen by the adherents of that cause should draw up a written constitution for the government of the land. As a statesman-like approach to the serious constitutional problems the country then faced, Vane's pamphlet ranks among the most important documents of the period. Thoughtful in tone and temperate in spirit for the most part, it nevertheless contained criticisms of the government and of Cromwell himself which were presently to bring down wrath upon their author. Particularly in his references to the desertion of "the old cause" Vane was outspoken, and his words must have struck a nerve. He declared that the cause is still supported by the same omnipotent God, whose great name is concerned in it, as well as his people's outward safety and welfare, a God "who knows also how to give a revival to it, when secondary instruments and visible means fail or prove deceitful."<sup>1</sup> These last words struck at the very heart of Cromwell's faith--that he was an obedient instrument of the divine in carrying out all the changes of these last years. Vane significantly adds that it seemed "as if God were pleased to stand still, and be as a looker-on" while men in these past three years "have had the active and busy part and have like themselves made a great sound and noise."<sup>2</sup> After elaborating on the glory of the "old cause" he pressed his personal indictment in these terms:

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<sup>1</sup>John Forster, *Sir Henry Vane the Younger*, Vol. XXX of *Lives of Eminent British Statesmen*, in Lardner's *Cabinet Encyclopedia* (London, 1831-39), p. 378.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

But of late a great interruption having happened unto them [the people] in their former expectations, and instead thereof, something rising up that seems rather accommodated to the private and selfish interest of a particular part . . . hence it is that this compacted body is now falling asunder into many dissenting parts (a thing not unforeseen, nor un- hoped for by the common enemy all along as their last relief); and if these breaches be not timely healed, and the offences . . . removed, they will certainly work more to the advantage of the common enemy, then any of their own unwearied endeavors, and dangerous contrivances in forreign [sic] parts, put all together.<sup>1</sup>

The instant acclaim accorded the pamphlet was evidence that it gave expression to a widespread public opinion and that it immediately caused a grave apprehension in government circles. Thurloe notes on June 11 to Henry Cromwell that "at the first coming out of it it was applauded. . . . It is certain it doth behove us to have a watchful eye upon that interest."<sup>2</sup>

Two months passed before the authorities acted, then a summons was issued to the suspected author to appear before the Council. Vane proceeded to obey, but taking his time in doing so, as he still refused to recognize that government or its right to issue such a summons. When he appeared on August 21, 1656, and acknowledged himself to be the author of the book in question, it was branded "seditious," "tending to the disturbance of the present government and the peace of the Commonwealth."<sup>3</sup> He was thus ordered to give security of £5,000 by the following week and thus pledge to do nothing to the prejudice of the government. Indignantly refusing to give such security, which treatment Vane scathingly terms his "recompense of former services" from those

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 362-63.

<sup>2</sup>Thurloe, V, 122.

<sup>3</sup>Willcock, p. 266.

who were once his friends, he was committed to custody in Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight. There he was confined for four months, until the elections were safely past. Though Vane's name was polled for in three places in the election, and despite Major-General Whalley's fear that by summoning Vane, the Council might materially assist his election, he was not returned to Parliament from either constituency, and thus on December 31 was released from confinement.

Vane's bitterness at such treatment as was meted out to him through this humiliating episode and his profound disappointment in Cromwell are plainly set forth in a Testimony written about this time as a personal message to the Protector. In its aggrieved yet temperate tone is reflected the deep disillusionment which many of Cromwell's former Puritan colleagues now felt, made all the more bitter in Vane's case because of their close friendship in earlier years. In this letter he appeals strongly to the conscience of the Protector, obliged though he is to remind himself that the treatment he has received comes not from enemies but "from equals and friends that have gone into the house of God in company, and taken sweet counsel together in all their concerns."<sup>1</sup> He recalls Cromwell's letter in former days expressing his dissatisfaction with Vane's passive principles and adds:

Indeed, I must crave leave to make you this reply at this time, that I am as little satisfied with your active, and self-establishing principles, in the lively colours wherein daily they show themselves, as you are or can be with my

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Bayley Howell (ed.), A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors, to the Year 1783 (34 vols.; London: Longman, 1816-26), V, 796-97.

passive ones, and am willing in this to join issue with you, and to beg of the Lord to judge between us and to give the decision according to truth and righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

But Vane is not content solely to appeal to the Almighty to judge between them, realizing as he does that Cromwell may only interpret his superior power as a mandate from on high. He pointedly reminds him that legally he is still only the General of the army, "kept up by a derived authority" from Parliament. "To use this power lawfully is your honour, your duty, your safety, as well as their welfare and preservation, for whom it was raised and is still paid."<sup>2</sup> But he goes on to this further sharp personal assault on Cromwell's pride:

For you are not able to bear the reproofs of the Lord, nor the faithful witness and advise of his saints and people that in love and true friendship dissuade you from going on in this way, as foreseeing and foretelling your ruin and destruction therein. . . . Nor doth the witness of the saints . . . rest here; but it is too evident to all of them, that have a spirit of discerning, that in reference as well to Christ your heavenly head, as to the good people of this nation in parliament assembled, and rightly constituted, who were, and ought to be your earthly head: you lift up your heel, and harden yourself every day more than other . . . aiming at the throne in spirituals, as well as temporals.

Take then in good part before it be too late, this faithful warning and following advice of an ancient friend, but is now thought fit to be used and dealt with as an enemy.<sup>3</sup>

Rising then to heights of prophetic eloquence, Vane proceeds to admonish the Protector in a final peroration:

Instead of causing the vessels of his house, even his most precious saints to be brought before you, as you do daily, for to exercise public scorn and triumph over them, see that your true interest lies with them and in them, as well now as heretofore, and endeavor to recover their hearts to you, and their prayers for you, lest your God in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways, whom you have not cared to glorify as you ought, should arise and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 797.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 797-98.

suddenly tear you in pieces by the immediate stroke of his own vengeance. . . . But behold the Judge standeth at the door.<sup>1</sup>

There is no record of any reply from Cromwell to this frank indictment from the pen of his former intimate friend, nor is there any suggestion of further communication between them. Its effect upon the Protector can only be imagined. It cannot have been other than a stab at his heart and a further step in his spiritual isolation in these latter years of his life. The thought of estrangement from "his most precious saints" was a growing concern to him, for which we shall see further evidence later. There is no reason to believe that he ever gloated in triumph over them, as Vane accuses him. Coming as he did, however, from a prison where he had heard the vilification of Rogers and Feake, Vane was no doubt in a position to view Cromwell's treatment of these "saints" sympathetically. The sad fact of the matter was that Cromwell had been obliged by his own policy of "toleration but not disorder" to suppress more and more disturbing criticism from those who had once been his strong supporters in order to maintain his place in a precarious state of emergency. The tragedy was that while it subsided at times, the emergency was never to end as long as he ruled. Meanwhile the sting of his rod was to fall at times more sharply upon former friends like Vane than upon his avowed Royalist foes. Even his Fifth Monarchy attackers with all their violent epithets were accorded more right to defend themselves than were the gentle-spirited Vane, whose summary treatment can only be considered on the one hand an

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 798.

indication of Cromwell's fear of him as a potential political rival, and on the other, an illustration of the maxim that hate is ever much akin to love. Cromwell was another Caesar and Vane a potential Brutus.

Justification of actions before Parliament.--The circumstances surrounding the calling of Cromwell's second Parliament of the Protectorate have already been noted. The war with Spain had put a serious drain on finances and only a Parliament could provide the necessary revenue and at the same time pacify public opinion. The elections were held in August, 1656, and by September 17 the four hundred members met to hear a sermon by Dr. John Owen, and following that, the Protector's opening address. The occasion furnished an opportunity as usual for him to recapitulate recent events with a view of justifying his own actions, as well as setting forth the most pressing issues Parliament would need to face.

The speech was very long, two or three hours some said, and the pervading topic was the war with Spain--"the anti-Christian Hydra" of the world, while France was given a glance of approval as being less under the Pope's dominion and altogether a more reasonable power. In connection with the Spanish threat, the Protector gave detailed intelligence of a Royalist-Spanish plot, abetted by the machinations of an Anabaptist Colonel (the former Leveller Sexby). He absolved some of the noisy opponents of his government of any intentional complicity in these plots, though he branded the Fifth Monarchy men ("a poor headstrong people") and the republicans as misguided but dangerous. He knew the system



of Major-Generals had been much criticized, but he believed "it hath been more effectual towards the discountenancing of vice and settling religion than anything done these fifty years."<sup>1</sup>

Under his domestic program, he recommended further legislation under the general head of "reformation," for the most part along lines already begun. His religious policy was based upon two principles. One was to maintain liberty of conscience, while allowing no one to "make religion a pretext for blood and arms." He held that he had tried to maintain impartiality between the different sects, and as a result had been abused by some as too favorable to Presbytery, by others as "an inlet to all the sects and heresies of the nation." His second principle had been to maintain a National Church based upon a tithe-supported "public ministry." ("God hath blessed it to the gaining of very many souls.")<sup>2</sup>

Turning to social reform, he urged stricter enforcement of the laws.

Make it a shame to see men bold in sin and profaneness and God will bless you. . . . The mind is the man. If that be kept pure, a man signifies somewhat; if not I would very fain see what difference there is betwixt him and a beast.<sup>3</sup>

In closing he urged close cooperation between Protector and Parliament, to carry on the work without delay that required to be done. Both must be "knit together in one bond to promote the glory of God against the common enemy, to suppress everything that is evil, and encourage whatsoever is of godliness."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 274.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 271-72.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 273-74.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

It was a rambling speech, revealing an increasing concern with foreign affairs, but a determination to hold fast to the domestic policies already begun. He did not try to ignore his own violations of individual liberty entirely--some arrests had been necessary for the public safety. On the religious scene, he meant to keep order and to act as an umpire between contending groups. He clearly indicated that whatever hopes he had once entertained for abolishing the tithe system, he now considered some form of state-maintenance essential. This was certain to increase apprehension among those separatist groups who still hoped for a voluntary system throughout the nation and who had frequently called Cromwell to account for his alleged earlier promise to abolish tithes.<sup>1</sup> He was soon to grieve such people even more as he moved further along the road toward a return to monarchy.

#### The Offer of the Crown

Cromwell had not exaggerated the extent of the conspiracies upon his life and against the government itself. Within the next few months it became clear that his life was in constant peril. The Fifth Monarchists attempted their abortive uprising in April, 1657. The renegade Sexby was still conspiring with the Royalists to rid the country of its head, and was soon after this to give encouragement to all Cavaliers and disaffected republicans with his Killing No Murder published a few months later. An even more brazen attempt was concocted by one Miles Sindercombe who was

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<sup>1</sup>Nickolls, p. 141: "The Anabaptists sayes you are a perfidious person, and that because you promised them att a certaine day to take away tythes, but did not perform with them."

apprehended only after he had trailed the Protector daily on his rides in Hyde Park, with loaded pistol awaiting an opportunity to assassinate him, and failing that, had planted a charge of powder in Whitehall where a sentinel finally apprehended the culprit. Meanwhile these dangers to the Protector's life had raised a new ferment of loyalty for his Highness on the part of many in Parliament, as well as arousing renewed concern over the succession. On January 20, 1657, a large group of Parliament members waited on the Protector in a body to congratulate him on his deliverance. For months there had been heated discussions going on in the corridors of the House as to the advisability of renewing the offer of the crown made earlier--first of all in December of 1653, by Lambert and the officers in the first sketch of the Instrument, then again in December, 1654, during the sitting of the first Parliament of the Protectorate. Not only was the precariousness of the Protector's life an issue, as was underlined by the recent plots, but many believed that only by a return to monarchy could the arbitrariness of the Protector be curbed and the nation restored to a stable constitutional government again. Thus when Parliament met on February 23, Sir Christopher Pack, a London merchant, introduced a bill to revise the constitution and permit the assumption by the Protector of the "name, style, title and dignity of King."<sup>1</sup>

Cromwell's religious scruples as a factor in his refusal.--

The motives which prompted Cromwell to entertain and finally to reject the offer of the crown are among the perpetual mysteries

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<sup>1</sup>Gardiner, Constitutional Documents, p. 449.

of his character which will furnish historians material for debate for generations to come. It may prove useful, however, from the standpoint of our present subject, to ask whether Cromwell's religious convictions influenced his decision in any way; and whether the opinions of Puritan people generally (and certain ones in particular) had any special bearing upon that decision; and if so, in how far that throws light on his final decision to reject the crown.

From the first outburst of Lambert's wrathful opposition to the proposal, it was apparent that the majority of the army officers opposed the acceptance of the crown. It was also apparent that, in so far as the army still represented Puritanism, an appeal to Puritan opinion would play a part in the controversy. Wrote Thurloe to Henry Cromwell regarding Lambert: "He will put the army in a ferment if he can."<sup>1</sup> It was also noted by other observers that pretences of religion played a large part in his speech, by which Lambert apparently hoped to arouse the Independent against the Presbyterian party. As Lambert was not regarded as among the more ardent Puritans, this was considered by many a purely political maneuver.<sup>2</sup> What is significant, however, is that from the first it was assumed that a large body of loyal, pious opinion could somehow be marshalled to oppose the kingship, whether upon the basis of a simple antimonarchical sentiment remaining from the wars, or on grounds of conscientious objection to any

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<sup>1</sup>Thurloe, VI, 74.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Firth, The Last Years of the Protectorate, 1656-58 (2 vols.; London: Longmans, 1909), I, 133.

man's assuming such authority for himself. The mixture of these was to prove throughout to have a strong bearing on Cromwell's consideration of the kingship.

First it would be well to ask, what were the parties that now lined up for the kingship and who opposed it? We may go on to ask further what were the reasons for this division of opinion and what were the motives involved, before considering Cromwell's own fluctuations of feeling upon the issue.

As has already been seen, the heartiest opposition to the move came from the Cromwellian army-men in Parliament. Not only Lambert, who led the attack, but Desborough, Fleetwood, Sydenham, and Strickland, as well as most of the Major-Generals opposed it, besides about half the active members of the present Council. These had the greatest stake in the present government and naturally opposed anything which seemed to undermine its power or subject them in any way to an absolute House. Opposed too were the old republicans, some of them like Vane, Haselrig, and Scot now without a voice in Parliament, but still making their influence felt among those who remained, while they awaited their next opportunity to find seats in the House again. Also opposed were many unyielding Royalists who hated any elevating of the "usurper" to the throne of the Stuarts. Beyond these, lay the lower officers and ranks of the army, who steadfastly opposed, for the most part, any suggestion of monarchy, steeped as many still were with the Levelling principles which had become almost the uniform of the army. As for the Puritans of the churches, a further word must be said in a moment, but in them too lay a potent source of opposition.

Among the advocates of kingship, the lawyers were from the first among its staunchest supporters. Such lawyers as Whitelocke, Glynne, Lisle, and Lord Broghil had long believed that only in the restoration of a constitutional monarchy could law and property be made secure. The Presbyterians generally were also believed to favor the proposal, as did many of the more conservative Independents. Many of these saw in Cromwell a better bet than a return to the House of Stuart, especially the merchant class which had learned that a strong monarchy was a bulwark against revolutionary movements, and might be preferable to a Protector whose arbitrary decrees and high high taxes were so onerous to them.

Of these opposing parties then, it is clear that the greatest pressure in favor of the kingship was exerted by the lawyers, many of whom were very close to Cromwell and for whose judgment he had an increasing respect. On the negative side, the influence of the army is easily the dominant one, representing Cromwell's chief source of strength and most consistent support since the days of the civil wars. Its higher officers especially had been his close advisors, the backbone both of his Councils and of his parliamentary party. In these latter days there had been a noticeable trend toward the so-called "court party," made up of such men as Lord Broghil and Whitelocke. It is noteworthy that shortly before this issue arose, Cromwell had sided with them in abandoning the Major-Generals to the tender mercies of Parliament, to the intense displeasure of Lambert and most of those officers.

Such was the balance of forces in those first days after the presentation of the resolution to make Cromwell king. Little was known of the Protector's attitude except that he had on previous occasions turned down the same offer. Yet with the tide running against them, the army officers were not prepared to take chances, so they organized for action. On February 26, the officers of the regiments quartered in London met for weekly prayer and to discuss the question of kingship, in a joint meeting with the Major-Generals who pointed out to them the desirability of common action if the proposal was to be defeated. Next day, a hundred officers waited upon the Protector to express their protest in person. Cromwell answered them vigorously and bluntly. His words and manner are further evidence that he was no longer prepared to consider only the opinions and desires of the army.

He reminded them that though the title of King meant nothing to him, they had themselves once been so far from averse to kingship as to press the crown upon him. Then, reviewing the policies of the past few years he proceeded to describe what a "drudge" of army policies he had been, throwing upon them in unequivocal terms the blame for every major mistake of recent times. It was for them he had dissolved the Long Parliament, for them he had called the Little Parliament, allowing them to name its members. It had been the officers who had drawn up the Instrument of Government and pressed it upon him. When it proved inadequate in 1654 they refused to allow Parliament to mend it. Even this present Parliament was called at their pleasure, excluding whom they pleased. All the responsibility for their actions had fallen

upon him. "I am sworn to make good all you do, right or wrong."<sup>1</sup> Now when it is high time to come to a settlement, and others suggest a way, through this new constitution, they stubbornly stand in the way. At this point Cromwell threw down the gauntlet:

I never courted you, nor never will. If the members do good things, I must and I will stand by them. They are honest men and they have done good things. I know not what you can blame them for, unless because they love me too well.<sup>2</sup>

The officers were completely dumbfounded by this bitter tirade. Their shocked silence was ample evidence that they were not accustomed to such outspoken defiance from the Protector. Yet so great was his prestige with them that the rebuke was largely accepted without open protest, though no doubt with much anxious discussion behind doors. On March 5 another committee of them called upon him and a reconciliation took place, the officers pledging their steadfast loyalty to "what he should think good for the good of these nations."<sup>3</sup> It was even reported that three of the Major-Generals were converted by his plain dealing--probably including Whalley and Goffe among them.

The opposition in Parliament seemed to fade then for a time and in their debates on the proposition, progress was made in the next few days. Even the proposal for a House of Lords, which Thurloe had told Henry Cromwell would prove "a very hard and doubtful question" passed unanimously. Yet when the clause regarding the kingship came to be debated on March 24, the opposition again rallied and gave a spirited account of itself, with

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 418-19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>3</sup>Clarke, III, 94.



Lambert, and Desborough leading the attack, and Fleetwood in a tearful speech professing his earnest belief, as he wrote Henry Cromwell, that the kingship would be a "sad grief to the hearts of all good people."<sup>1</sup> Some observers thought these higher officers were not so much interested in opposing the kingship as in affecting an exaggerated repugnance to it in order to maintain their reputation for piety and their influence over the lower officers. In view of this, it might be instructive to inquire at this point into the exact composition of the conscientious opposition whose feelings the Major-Generals professed to represent.

Puritan opinion plus army pressure.--Outside Parliament itself, most of the strength of this opposition was in two groups: the "gathered" churches, and the rank and file of the army. Fortunately some record of this sentiment has been preserved for us. There is, for example, the letter of twelve Anabaptist congregations urging Cromwell to reject the title, written in February, 1657. Such a move, it was held, would "generally rejoice the hearts of the profane party" and would give them cause "to reproach the saints with self-seeking and hypocrisy, and that they fought not for the exalting of Jesus Christ as they pretended, but themselves."<sup>2</sup>

A similar protest came from nineteen Anabaptist ministers in London, dated April 13, 1657. They stated:

We cannot but spread before your Highness our deep resentment of, and heart bleedings for, the fearful apostasy which

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Firth, "Cromwell and the Crown," English Historical Review, XVIII (1903), 64, citing Lansdowne MS.

<sup>2</sup>Nickolls, p. 140.

is endeavored by some to be fastened upon you, upon plausible pretences, by such who for the most part had neither heart nor hand to engage with you, and the good people of the nation, in the day of straits and extremities. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Such petitions from the more devoted sectarian followers of Cromwell seem to have been numerous. The more extreme among them were even more bitterly hostile to the proposed change. Among these was George Fox who now took it upon himself to apprise the Protector of his own forthright opinion on the matter. He not only warned Cromwell in a personal interview against the perils of the crown, but soon after penned another message in which he wrote:

O Protector,

Who hast tasted of the power of God, which many generations before thee have not so much, since the days of apostacy from the apostles, take heed that thou lose not thy power; but keep kingship off thy head, which the world would give to thee; and earthly crowns under thy feet, lest with that thou cover theyself, and so lose the power of God. . . . O Oliver, take heed of undoing theyself, by running into things that will fade, the things of this world that will change. Be subject and obedient to the Lord God.

George Fox<sup>2</sup>

But more influential at this moment with Cromwell than the views of the left-wing sectarians, whose advice on political matters he had long since learned to take with a grain of salt, or the arguments of professional soldiers whose personal fortunes were so much at stake in the controversy, were the sentiments of his old comrades in arms, especially those of the more devout among them. One such was a certain Captain William Bradford who addressed an appeal to him which deserves to be quoted at length:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>Willem Sewel, The History of the Rise, Increase and Progress of the People Called Quakers (Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1856), I, 234.

I perceive that there are a number in Parliament that have voted kingship for you. I likewise perceive that there is a number there (though the less) that voted against it, and that the greatest part of the officers of the army now near you, are against it. . . . Those that are for a crown, I fear you have little experience of them; the other, most of them, have attended your greatest hazards. . . . My Lord, though the major part in Parliament hath voted this upon you, yet those that loved you, hoped you would have disowned it. . . . I am of that number my Lord, that still loves you, and greatly desires to do so, I having gone along with you from Edgehill to Dunbar. The experiences that you have had of the power of God at these two places, and betwixt them, methinks, should often make you be at a stand in this thwarting, threatened change. Good my Lord, remember you are but a man and must die, and come to judgment; men of high degree are a vanity, men of low degree are a lie. My Lord, those in power having parts and near unto you, I fear have much injured you, in not dealing freely with your Lordship, but rather feeding that in you, grasping after greatness, and aiming at their own self-interest; and so those now free with your Lordship in never so much love, may run the greater hazard. My Lord, neither my life, estate, nor relations were ever anything to me in comparison of the public, nor yet is; yet I would not be prodigal of them or your Highness's favour. My freedom proceeds from a large proportion of love and no bye-ends.<sup>1</sup>

It was this genuine sorrow among the simple, godly rank and file of the army which perhaps moved Cromwell most. Increasingly he had become isolated from the opinions of such people, with whom it had once been his greatest joy to work and fight and pray. Now, as Bradford reminds him, he is surrounded mostly by those in his administration who had had no part in the recent conflict--some, like Lord Broghil, who had originally been Royalists. Perhaps these had not been "dealing freely" with him but rather "feeding that in you, grasping after greatness," when he should of all men realize that "men of high degree are a vanity." Mingled in this letter are all the sentiments which most deeply affected Cromwell in his most tender moments: the reminder of their

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<sup>1</sup>Nickolls, p. 141.

comradeship in arms (from Edgehill to Dunbar), the reminder of his present involvement with worldly men of power with its attendant isolation from the pious souls he once knew, and finally the thrust at his conscience in the reminder of his pride and finiteness ("Remember, you are but a man, and must die, and come to judgment.")

While we have no evidence that this particular letter was decisive, it presents the kind of arguments which were capable of reaching the Protector's heart. It is significant that within a month (on April 3) he replied to the petition addressed to him by the committee of Parliament pressing the kingship upon him, saying that in spite of the many good things contained in the new constitution, because he must accept all or nothing, he must decline the offer. His words were:

Seeing that the way is hedged up so as it is for me (I cannot accept the things offered unless I accept all), I have not been able to find it my duty to God and you to undertake the charge under that title.

. . . Nothing must make a man's conscience his servant, and really and sincerely it is my conscience that guides me to this answer.<sup>1</sup>

Central issue: Puritan cause vs. national welfare.--It is worth noting that while Cromwell does not offer any detailed defense for his refusal of the crown at this moment, his reasons do emerge to some extent in the subsequent replies to the persistent efforts of the committee to that end. To be sure, his speeches on the subject are wordy, wandering and often obscure, reflecting both his prevailing illness and his overwhelming desire to postpone any final decision on the issue. Yet despite his efforts to

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 446.

avoid stating his whole mind on the matter, certain factors that weighed with him in the long inner struggle are to be discerned through the muddy waters of his recorded utterances and his broad pleas of conscientious objection to the crown.

First, he argues again and again that a man ought not to be obliged to accept such a burden unless he is completely convinced that he can and ought to bear it. Thus when their petition is renewed on April 6 after the first refusal, Cromwell asks time and leave to seek "counsel in the word of God . . . to know what might be my duty at such a time as this."<sup>1</sup> He summarizes his position thus:

And therefore, to speak very clearly and plainly to you, I had, and I have, my hesitations to that individual thing. If I undertake anything not in faith, I shall serve you in my own unbelief, and I shall then be the unprofitablest servant that ever a people or a nation ever had.<sup>2</sup>

In the series of conferences that follow, this theme of hesitance to accept a title of whose rightness he was still unconvinced recurs frequently. Not until the conference of April 31 do his underlying reasons for reluctance to assume the title emerge again into daylight. Not only is there no necessity for such a title, he argues ("for other names may do as well"), but also there is "somewhat of conscience" at issue in the matter. He proceeds then, in the sort of informal digression that often reveals more of a man's inner motives than formal statement, to reminisce upon his early days as a captain of a troop of horse and how he came to the conclusion that none but conscientious and godly men would ever be able to encounter the gentlemen who fought for the King.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 454.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

And truly I must needs say that to you . . . I raised such as had the fear of God before them, and made some conscience of what they did. And from that day forward I must say to you that they were never beaten; wherever they engaged the enemy they beat them continually. And truly this is a matter of praise to God; and it has some instruction in it,-- to own men that are religious and godly, and so many of them as are honestly and peaceably and quietly disposed to live within government, as will be subject to those gospel rules of obeying magistrates and living under authority.<sup>1</sup>

There were many such men in the nation still; and while they kept their integrity, men of a worldly or carnal spirit would never beat them down. He goes on:

I deal plainly and faithfully with you, I cannot think that God would bless me in the undertaking of anything, that would justly and with cause grieve them.<sup>2</sup>

Here he has reached the heart of his objection to the acceptance of the crown, stated quite plainly. He commends the committee again for the excellent provision for the civil and religious liberties of the people in the Petition and Advice, but continues:

But if that I know, as indeed I do, that very generally good men do not swallow this title, though really it is no part of their goodness to be unwilling to submit to whatever a Parliament shall settle over them, yet I must say that it is my duty and my conscience to beg of you, that there may be no hard thing put upon me, things I mean hard to them, that they cannot swallow.<sup>3</sup>

He goes on to yet another consideration, the witness of Providence that has been borne in past events and thus has to be taken into account: "for who can love to walk in the dark?" He confesses that he has had a great deal of experience of Providence, and "truly the providence of God has laid this title aside providentially."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 472.

God hath seemed to deal so. He hath not only dealt so with the persons and the family but he hath blasted the title.<sup>1</sup>

When he reflects how the crown has thus been laid in the dust, and how the book of Jude admonishes the saints that they should "hate even the garment spotted with the flesh," he is deeply impressed with the divine judgment upon the very title of king. Yet even at this point he acknowledges that it is not only his own opinion that is involved (for as he said earlier, "I am not a man scrupulous about words or names or such things")<sup>2</sup> but if such mighty events can "make such strong impressions upon such weak men as I am," then one should surely consider how much greater has been the impression upon men weaker still. He has pleaded earlier for them to be "patient unto the weaknesses and infirmities of men that have been faithful, and have bled all along in this cause."<sup>3</sup> So now he would not "seek to set up that that providence hath destroyed and laid in the dust, and I would not rebuild Jericho again."<sup>4</sup> Thus Cromwell states his position in the same Biblical terms used by Puritans since the beginning of the conflict with Charles I.

He closes significantly with a strong plea for peace and settlement. "I would rather I were in my grave than hinder you in anything that may be for settlement, for the nation needs it and never needed it more."<sup>5</sup> He expresses the forlorn hope that his decision not to accept the crown may not jeopardize that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 472.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

cause: "I would have you lose nothing that might stand you in stead in this way." Finally he apologizes for being unable "to speak out all my arguments" and for the "poor account I am able to give you of myself in this thing."<sup>1</sup>

The total effect of the speech, especially at its close, is to raise a question as to whether Cromwell is quite convinced that Providence has cast down the crown finally, or whether that may only be the opinion of those "eaker ones" whose opinion he seems most anxious to placate. If it is equally God's will that a settlement be reached, as the committee maintained and as he partially admits, and this can only be accomplished by his accepting the crown, his decision is still in doubt. For the moment, he is unable to overcome these scruples of the godly, or to see that the loss of their support is justified or necessary, but he is mightily tempted by the thought of settlement, when all is said and done--"and where I meet any that is of another mind, indeed I could almost curse him in my heart."<sup>2</sup>

One further question may be raised regarding this speech, namely, whether in Cromwell's concern for the opinion of the faithful "who have fought and bled for the cause" he is thinking primarily of the rank-and-file of militant Puritans, like Bradford, or the higher officers like Lambert and Desborough who are leading the opposition in Parliament. It would probably be true to answer, both. But in the context of his reminiscences of early days of the war in this speech, it would seem that Cromwell was thinking more of the simple rank-and-file, even these "weaker ones"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 474.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 473.



he refers to, who however mistakenly, held strong convictions and for all by this defeat at the hands of the "humble godly party." He scarcely seems to have consciously in mind the objections of his colonels and generals, who were hardly weak in terms of position, though conceivably in the Pauline sense that their scruples ought to be considered lest they be offended. Or perhaps their sentiment of opposition is one of the thoughts Cromwell entertains but does not see fit to express on this occasion. Probably he is considering the opposition in both the higher and lower ranks of his army but not unnaturally prefers to think himself more swayed by consideration for the common man than by the arguments of his colonels and generals.

The dual nature of this speech was apparent in the fact that both sides were equally encouraged by it. Wrote one adherent of kingship:

It seems to me that since he allows an indifferency in the thing, his great reason will not permit him to balance the resolves of Parliament, made upon so great a debate and consideration, with the humour of persons without, that can give little of reason besides this, that godly men are dissatisfied.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the opposition were heartened by Cromwell's references to the "old cause" and Fleetwood believed that it gave "a full and signal witness-bearing to the interest of the people of God."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the House continued to press the issue without respite, in spite of several days of illness which incapacitated the Protector for business. Even when he came out

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<sup>1</sup>Firth, Last Years, I, 175, citing Vincent Gookin letter in Landsdowne MS.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

from his chamber on April 16, ill-kempt and with a black scarf around his neck, the committee insisted upon pressing their arguments with him. Nearly all the seven members attempted some refutation of Cromwell's main point--that the title would dissatisfy many pious men. Many of these same people, they said, had objected just as strongly to his assuming the title of Protector and yet that had proved no insuperable obstacle. Further, it was argued:

There is a certain latitude whereby respect may be had to friends; but when the public good of the whole nation is in question, other considerations than that ought not to take place.<sup>1</sup>

Not only that, argued Lord Broghil, but it was not reasonable to argue that the Providence of God had blasted the kingly title, for if so he could not believe that Parliament would advise and petition him to take it up. Furthermore, "if regal government be blasted [by Providence] then the supreme magistracy in a single person is as much so," and since Cromwell had proved by his acceptance of that title that it was not so blasted, what was to hinder acceptance of the kingly title?<sup>2</sup> The argument was sound, though however convinced Cromwell might himself have been, he still could doubt whether many of his army friends would accept it. He therefore begged for further time to consider, protesting his illness as excuse. At their next meeting on April 21, he spent most of his time elaborating his criticisms of other articles

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<sup>1</sup>William Cobbett (ed.), The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803 (36 vols.; London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-20), XXI, 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

of the Petition, though admitting that the civil and religious interests were better secured in this than in the old Instrument. Parliament now diligently set about correcting the weaknesses enumerated by the Protector and by May 1, with their results before him, Cromwell was once again faced with a final decision.

For days he wrestled with his doubts, while those nearest him were in complete uncertainty as to what he would do. The prevailing opinion was that he would not have taken the trouble to outline such detailed criticisms of the Petition and Advice unless he had meant to accept in the end. All indications were that the opposition was subsiding, and Cromwell even told several of the members that he would accept the petition in its entirety.

Then on May 6, the old opposition seemed to flare up again from its ashes. The story in brief was that three of his staunchest army grandees, Desborough, Fleetwood, and Lambert, getting wind of Cromwell's decision to accept the kingship, made known their intention to withdraw from the government and gave their opinion that "several other officers of quality" would follow suit.<sup>1</sup> A further petition of several lower officers, drawn up by Dr. John Owen at Colonel Pride's urgent request, was submitted to the House on May 8. On that same day the Protector delivered in the Banqueting House at Whitehall his decision not to "undertake the government with the title of King."<sup>2</sup> Though he was to accept all the rest of the Petition and Advice on May 25, the verdict against the crown was delivered once and for all.

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<sup>1</sup>Firth has a complete account in Last Days, I, 189-94.

<sup>2</sup>Thurloe, VI, 281.

What may be said in summary of Cromwell's reasons for taking this momentous step? Briefly, he did not want the title of king in the first place, as seen by his several refusals of the title earlier. Then up to the time of his first formal refusal (on April 3, 1657) he was dissuaded from its acceptance by the antimonarchic sentiment in the "gathered churches" and in the army, particularly in its lower ranks. He felt the title was unnecessary and saw no reason to split the ranks of his supporters over such an issue. Only when the pressure of the "court party" in Parliament increased and he felt that settlement was impossible without it, an interest transcending the interests and scruples of his Puritan followers, did he move toward an acceptance of the crown. This, it appears, was effectively blocked by the last-minute boycott and threatened split in the army led by Desborough, Lambert, and Fleetwood.

Place of Providence in his refusal.--What may be concluded regarding the part played by Cromwell's religious convictions in deciding this issue of the crown?

Here as in most of the major decisions of his life, Cromwell's conception of Providence was of central importance. While he discovered no clear-cut word of the Lord such as appeared in the decisions of the battlefield, he believed that Providence was guiding him through this prolonged period of uncertainty to a definite answer to his dilemma. For greater clarity it may help to distinguish three different phases of Cromwell's search for an answer in the midst of the general debate over his acceptance of the crown.

The first phase was one in which he was decisively influenced by the protests and petitions of Puritan churches and army men, and climaxed in his rejection of the crown on April 3. Cromwell had come at this time to believe so thoroughly in the mission of this army and their Puritan supporters that he was ready to give conclusive weight to their opinions. Providence had so witnessed against the Stuart family in England as to blast the very title of king in the eyes of most faithful Puritans who had fought at his side through the wars. He admits that this interpretation of Providence may not be infallible, but holds that so long as it is able to "make such a strong impression on such weak men as I am," the impression must be even greater upon other Puritans. Therefore he cannot believe it is God's will for him to accept the crown in the face of so much conscientious objection among the faithful.

I cannot think that God would bless me in the undertaking of anything that would justly and with cause grieve them.<sup>1</sup>

The second phase of the debate was one in which he was gradually won over by the arguments of the "court party" led by Lord Broghil. The substance of these arguments was as follows:

a. That a statesman must sometimes choose between the opinions of his friends and the good of the whole nation, which is more nearly in accord with God's will than the former.

b. That God's will was manifestly for the settling of the kingdom on a sound foundation, which could only come about through the reestablishment of the monarchy.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 471.

c. That the same conscientious protests of the faithful had not presented his earlier acceptance of the title of Protector. Further there is no difference in principle between a Protectorate and a monarchy.

d. That this same Puritan minority would again be constrained to accept his decision as final, and would not rebel.

The third phase of the controversy came after Cromwell had apparently yielded reluctantly to the arguments of the "court party" and agreed to over-ride the sentiments of the opposition in favor of this larger cause of peace and settlement, only to be compelled by the threatened withdrawal of the army leaders to reverse himself and again to reject the crown.

In summary, it may be said that Cromwell's first decision represents most accurately his own conviction and personal desire, strongly influenced by his interpretation of providential leading in this matter. Even in the second decision it may be argued that Cromwell was convinced that a providential ordering of events favored a settlement on the basis of monarchy, despite the scruples of the faithful to the contrary, as in the public interest. The third and final action can only be interpreted as a forced retreat to his earlier position, under threat of a break with the army officers, whose support at the time appeared essential to the very continuance of the government.

Thus Cromwell's final position, like most of his political decisions, was one in which conviction was ambiguously intertwined with expediency. He was genuinely persuaded that Providence had raised up the army as an instrument of his will and as the militant

spearhead of the "chosen people." He was extremely reluctant to grieve these "people of God" by the acceptance of a crown which they deemed to have been cast down by God himself. Yet this alone would not have prevented his acceptance of the crown, but only when persuaded that a peaceful settlement depended upon such action, and when persuaded that this might be accepted without an open rebellion by the army. It was only when such a split threatened that he was forced once again, unwillingly now, to the very act of rejection which he had originally chosen both on grounds of expediency and principle.

In so far as he had been able to see Providence leading him to a decision, it had been against acceptance of the crown. Thus ironically, he was finally bound to his own interpretation of Providence more by force than by choice, after being persuaded by the "court party" to abandon that position and accept the crown. Cromwell had survived the loss of one after another of the component parties of the original revolutionary coalition--Presbyterians, the Republicans, the Levellers, and the Fifth Monarchy men. Whether he could have survived an open revolt in the army that was still his chief source of power can never be known. Without the support of that army he might easily have become a leader without a cause, or at worst might have fallen from power completely. The fact remains that by refusing the crown he reaffirmed his solidarity with the army that had ever been his strong right hand, even though the act cost him whatever permanence might have been achieved by establishing a Cromwellian dynasty upon the throne of Great Britain.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### View of the Bible

Cromwell was so preeminently a man of one book that we look with special interest at his view of the Bible. What was his conception of the Scriptures? How did he use the Bible? How did the Bible speak to his situation, through the changing experiences of his life? To answer these questions, we will look at his interpretation of the Book which exercised such a dominant influence over his entire life.

Scripture as revelation.--That the Bible is divinely inspired and represents a literal revelation of God's will, Cromwell would have wholeheartedly affirmed together with most others of his generation. The seventeenth century was as yet troubled with few doubts as to the authority of the written Word at the time Cromwell lived and thought and worked. Even at his death, scientific naturalism had scarcely gained a foothold, higher criticism of the Bible was unheard of, and the world view of the seventeenth century was only beginning to foreshadow the doubts and uncertainties of the modern world.<sup>1</sup>

According to Cromwell's theological view, the revelation

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<sup>1</sup>Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), pp. 57-75.



of God's will comes to men in three ways: through the Scriptures, through events, and through the inner experience of the Holy Spirit. None of these ideas is ever fully elaborated, though there can be no doubt that he firmly believed that God had spoken decisively through the Old and New Testaments.

Cromwell clearly believed further that all divine revelation is of a piece, consistent because it derives from a single source. God might sometimes choose to speak through the written word, and sometimes outside it, but his Word is never contradictory, but one and indivisible. He told his First Protectorate Parliament:

God who speaks sometimes without a Written Word, yet according to it: God hath spoken heretofore in divers manners, let Him speak as he chooseth. . . . He doth speak to the hearts and consciences of men, and leadeth them to his Law and Testimonies, and there he speaks to them; and so gives them double teaching. . . . Thus the revelation in the Bible is supplemented by that in men's inner experience of the Spirit and illumined.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the revelation in the Bible is supplemented by that in men's inner experience of the Spirit and illumined by it, but both are God's chosen means of revealing himself. Similarly, he sees events as another mode of revelation. He says in speaking of the mysterious leadings of Providence in history:

As I have the Word of God, and I hope I shall ever have, for the rule of my conscience, for my information, so truly men [that] have been led in dark paths through the providence of dispensations of God. . . . I must say that I have had a great deal of experience of providence, and though it is no rule without or against the Word, yet it is a very good expositor of the Word in many cases.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 592.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., IV, 472 f.

In holding that the Word is not self-explanatory, but requires the Holy Spirit acting in both inner and outer human experience for its interpretation and illumination, Cromwell repudiates any static conception of the Bible in which the Scriptures are literally conceived and interpreted. They cannot be understood except by the Spirit.

Scripture as illumining and informing experience.--Cromwell made constant use of the Scriptures in daily life, and seldom opened his mouth without quoting a Biblical passage. Yet he used the Bible more as an expository source than as an infallible authority in the settling of knotty human problems. For all his use of proof-texts, whether in writing or in speaking, he does so more often by way of illustrating a point than to drive home an argument. He realized only too well that "the devil can quote Scripture for his own purposes." Consequently, when pressed for an ultimate authority he more often cited the providential ordering of present events than the authority of a written Word in support of his views.

Cromwell is first and always a pragmatist, for whom the test of experience is final, although he would add: experience ordered by Providence, guided by the Holy Spirit, and informed and confirmed by the Scriptures. Because Cromwell's use of Scripture rises naturally out of the practical situations he faces, his favorite passages of Scripture inevitably reflect both the dominant issues of his times and his own personal experience. He turns to the Bible most often for suggestive parallels to the events of his own time, finding there insights into God's purposes and illumination on the ways of men.

Use of Psalms.--It is, therefore, not surprising that

Cromwell as a warrior and a fierce partisan finds in the Lord of Hosts of the Old Testament the deity who is supremely equipped to vindicate the cause of Puritanism upon the battlefield. The Psalms are his constant companion and favorite source of inspiration throughout the period of the war years and even through his later life as well. Passages come readily to his lips in every situation. Beginning with his earliest skirmishes, he looks to the Lord of Hosts, "who will yet save his people and confound their enemies."<sup>1</sup> At the siege of Basing House, he saw the images of his Catholic foes and cried in the words of Psalm 115:

They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.<sup>2</sup>

Significantly at Dunbar, the password of Cromwell's army before and during the fight was "The Lord of Hosts." When the sun rose over the sea the fateful morning of the attack, he cried in the words of Psalm 68: "Let God arise. Let his enemies be scattered."<sup>3</sup> At Bletchington and again after Dunbar he sang as a favorite song of thanksgiving:

This is the Lord's work; it is marvelous in our eyes.  
This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.<sup>4</sup>

In the midst of the hot pursuit at Dunbar he halted his troops to sing the triumphant Psalm 117:

O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.  
For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 619.

<sup>2</sup>Ps. 115: 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ps. 68: 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ps. 118: 23-24.

<sup>5</sup>Ps. 117: 1-2.

Likewise when his own life was in the balance and sickness came near to overwhelming, Cromwell recovered with a burst of thanksgiving: "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee and thou hast healed me."<sup>1</sup> In his own rendering of this psalm, Cromwell declared: "He hath plucked me out of the grave." Never was deliverance more real to him than on these frequent occasions when he nearly succumbed upon the sick-bed.

In the course of his many public addresses to Parliament, Cromwell often lapsed into Puritan sermonizing which usually consisted of exposition of a favorite Biblical passage. Psalm 85 was such a favorite that he quoted from it on several occasions:

Lord, Thou hast been very favorable to Thy land. . . .  
Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people. . . . Wilt  
Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in  
Thee? . . . O, that glory may dwell in our land! Mercy and  
Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed  
each other!<sup>2</sup>

In the same speech, the Protector expounded at length on Psalm 46, "Luther's Psalm" as he calls it, stirring Parliament to the work of reform, and bidding the nation put its trust in the Lord, though Pope and Spaniard compass them about: "We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."<sup>3</sup>

Use of Isaiah.--Next to the Psalms, Isaiah was perhaps Cromwell's favorite book. Especially in dealing with the Scots he used Scripture as a propaganda weapon of no mean effectiveness. He could hurl at them the words of the prophet:

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<sup>1</sup>Ps. 30: 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Ps. 85, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Ps. 46: 2.

Take counsel together and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.<sup>1</sup>

Later, during his second campaign in Scotland in 1650, he addressed an open letter to the General Assembly, bidding them read Isaiah 28: 5-15, and likening certain of them unto the prophets and priests who reel and stagger in spiritual drunkenness, claiming to preach the Word unto their people, only to find that it is a "Word of Judgment, that they may fall backward and be broken, and be snared and be taken."<sup>2</sup> This was later to provide a text against his internal enemies of the Commonwealth as well.

But in Isaiah he found too the poetic splendor for some of his most rhapsodic visions of the new day that he depicted as dawning with the Puritan Revolution. Hailing the Barebone Parliament as called by God to a divine mission, he saw in them the Chosen People of which Isaiah had once sung. "This people I have formed for myself that they may show forth my praise."<sup>3</sup> Undaunted by their failure, he still exhorts the "People of God" in 1655 in the words of that prophet:

Since thou hast been precious in my sight and honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men in thy stead and peoples instead of thy life.<sup>4</sup>

Whenever he recapitulates the wonderful works of God in delivering England from the hand of the Stuart oppressor, Cromwell cannot help comparing this with God's deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt. While this was a common belief among Puritans, and provided the theme for more than one sermon before

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<sup>1</sup>Isa. 8: 10.

<sup>2</sup>Isa. 43: 21.

<sup>3</sup>Isa. 43: 4.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, III, 583.

Parliament during the Commonwealth, the concept of the Puritans as a Chosen People was one in which Cromwell passionately believed. He tells the Barebone Parliament that the prophecy in Psalm 36 has now been fulfilled:

He will bring His People again from the depths of the sea, as once he led Israel through the Red Sea.<sup>1</sup>

He saw the "Gospel churches" of Puritanism as a gathering of people "out of deep waters," a great company of those that will publish His word, ready to go ahead as Providence shall lead them to that "farther work of God," the governing and purifying of the nation and the world.

Nevertheless, though he might sometimes picture himself as a second Moses, leading a reluctant people through the wilderness, it is significant that Cromwell was never tempted, like the Fifth Monarchy literalists, to set up the Mosaic law as the law of the land. He knew that the destiny of England was not to be realized in a return to Deuteronomy. He had not so read his Bible. To abolish kings and magistrates in favor of a return to the Judaic law was to him a formula for anarchy.

Use of Paul's Letters.--In any discussion of Cromwell's use of the Bible it must be apparent that while his public life centers around the Old Testament, his private religious life pivots around the New Testament. It is likewise apparent to even a casual reader of Cromwell's writings that he finds in the Pauline epistles the real native air and the natural language of his own religious experience. The fact that he focuses his

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

attention more upon the Christ of the epistles than upon the Jesus of the Gospels is perhaps only a mark of his age, but indisputably true. The same might be said, not only of most Puritans, but of most other post-Reformation Christians up to the latter nineteenth century rediscovery of the Jesus of history. The Quakers may be a leading exception to this general rule in the seventeenth century.

Cromwell, in dealing constantly with the problems of divisive churches and an arrogant ministry, finds that the counsels of the Apostle Paul are full of wisdom and good sense. In this spirit he demands to know of the Scottish clergy why they are troubled with the preaching of laymen, so long as Christ is preached. In the heated controversy later in Parliament over the marks of a true succession, he exclaims:

The true Succession is through the Spirit--given in its measure. The Spirit is given for that use, "To make proper speakers-forth" of God's eternal truth; and that's right Succession.<sup>1</sup>

To the priests of Ireland, whom he considers only as a burden upon the people, he declares:

Would you had the spirit of Paul, who said "The Laborer is worthy of his hire," but chose rather to make tents than to be burdensome to the churches.<sup>2</sup>

As for his personal faith, Cromwell who had undergone so much the same sort of experience as the great Apostle, echoes Paul's words at every turn. His private letters reveal how far he was captivated by a sense of everlasting debt to Christ, and how nearly his expression parallels that of Paul. As we are

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, III, 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 199.

presently to consider the personal faith of Cromwell separately, it may suffice to cite one incident at the close of his life, as an example of his debt to Paul.

In the early stages of the illness that was to prove fatal, his valet relates<sup>1</sup> how he called for his Bible and asked that the following passage in Philippians be read to him:

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere, and by all things, I am instructed; both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me.<sup>2</sup>

He then went on:

This Scripture did once save my life; when my eldest son, poor Robert, died, which went as a dagger to my heart, indeed it did.<sup>3</sup>

Repeating the words of the text himself, of Paul's submission to the will of God in all conditions, he declared: "It's true, Paul, you have learned this and attained to this measure of grace; but what shall I do?" Then, relates Harvey:

Reading on to the thirteenth verse where Paul saith, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," then faith begun to work, and his heart to find support and comfort, and he said thus to himself, "He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too!"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., IV, 867.

<sup>2</sup>Phil. 4: 11-13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Harvey, A Collection of Several Passages concerning His Late Highness Oliver Cromwell, in the Time of His Sickness; Wherein Is Related Many of His Expressions upon His Death-Bed: Together with His Prayer within Two or Three Days before His Death, Written by One That Was Then Groom of His Bed-Chamber, in Cromwelliana: A Chronological Detail of Events in Which Oliver Cromwell Was Engaged from the Year 1642 to His Death in 1658, with a Continuation of Other Transactions to the Restoration (Westminster: Printed for Machell Stace, 1810), pp. 176-79.



### Personal Religious Experience

His conversion a free gift of God's grace.--Both his personal religious experience and his view of events guided by an omnipotent God reflect Cromwell's cominant conviction that God is sovereign over all and that "man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." Always Cromwell's view of Providence is fed by the springs of his personal faith, and that in turn is reinforced by his belief in a gracious Providence moving behind all history. His is one God, whether seen through the glasses of his inner experience or in the larger history of nations.

We have already seen how the experience of conversion left with Cromwell a lifelong sense of joyous thankfulness for that divine gift of grace which transformed his life. Many of his private letters, aside from that to Mrs. St. John which has already been cited, attest the nature of this experience, and throw further light on the exact nature of the faith he professed as his own.

That such an experience of grace should accentuate his sense of unworthiness was as true for a Cromwell as for an Isaiah whose vision of the Lord, "high and lifted up" was followed by the cry, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips."<sup>1</sup> Thus Cromwell saw himself in 1638 as one who had "lived in and loved darkness and hated light; I was a chief, the chief of sinners."<sup>2</sup> He wrote later to his daughter Bridget, reflecting upon the spiritual gropings of her sister Elizabeth (Claypole):

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<sup>1</sup>Isa. 6: 5.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, I, 97.

She sees her own vanity and carnal mind; bewailing it: she seeks after (as I hope also) what will satisfy. And thus to be a seeker is to be of the best sect next to a finder; and such an one shall every faithful humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker, happy finder! Who ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, without some sense of self, vanity, and badness?<sup>1</sup>

Such had obviously been his own experience, a humbling one.

Throughout his letters runs a continual refrain of thanksgiving to God for his "unspeakable gift" together with a sense of how undeserved is this gift, and a determination to commit himself to fulfilling the purposes God has for his life. As he wrote to Mrs. St. John: ". . . if I may honour my God either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad."<sup>2</sup>

He wrote on another occasion in the same vein:

I praise the Lord I am increased in strength in my outward man. But that will not satisfy me except I get a heart to love and serve my heavenly Father better; and get more of the light of His countenance, which is better than life, and more power over my corruptions.<sup>3</sup>

Again, in writing to Bradshaw, following a severe illness:

I thought I should have died of this fit of sickness; but the Lord seemeth to dispose otherwise. But truly, my Lord, I desire not to live, unless I may obtain mercy from the Lord to improve my heart and life to Him in more faithfulness and thankfulness, and to those I serve in more profitableness and diligence.<sup>4</sup>

Doubts and fears overcome.--The doubts and fears, the darkness of melancholy that had assailed Cromwell earlier in his life were not dispelled completely with his conversion, yet now they were overcome in principle and henceforth seen in a new light. No longer do these have the power of paralyzing him for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 416.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 404.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 400.

long periods of time and crippling his will. When such moods come upon him, they are viewed sometimes as evidences of his weakness, sometimes as tests of his faith, but never again as holding permanent power over him.

So too he habitually views personal adversity or illness as a test of his faith visited upon him by God in order to mortify the flesh and to strengthen the spirit. During a severe illness between campaigns, in the spring of 1648, he wrote to Sir Thomas Fairfax:

It hath pleased God to raise me out of a dangerous sickness; and I do most willingly acknowledge that the Lord hath, in this visitation, exercised the bowels of a Father towards me. I received in myself the sentence of death, that I might learn to trust in Him that raiseth from the dead, and have no confidence in the flesh. It's a blessed thing to die daily. For what is this world to be accounted of! The best men according to the flesh, and things, are lighter than vanity. I find this only good, To love the Lord and His poor despised people, to do for them, and to be ready to suffer with them-- , and he that is found worthy of this hath obtained great favour from the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The covenant of grace as the foundation of his faith.--

Cromwell spoke often and with great conviction of the covenant of grace by which he had been saved through the mighty work of Christ. This was, in fact, the foundation stone of his faith. He writes to Fleetwood, testifying of the grace wherein the sinner is saved without works and without merit simply through the overflowing goodness of God towards him.

What a Covenant between Him and Christ,--for all the Seed, for every one: wherein He undertakes all, and the poor Soul nothing. The new Covenant is Grace--to or upon the Soul, to which it [the Soul] is passive and receptive. . . .

This commends the Love of God; it's Christ dying for men without strength, for men whilst sinners, whilst enemies. And

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<sup>1</sup>Carlyle, I, 253.

shall we seek for the root of our comforts within us,--What God hath done, what He is to us in Christ, is the root of our comfort; in this is stability; in us is weakness. Acts of obedience are not perfect, and therefore yield not perfect Grace. Faith, as an act yields it not, but only as it carries us unto Him, who is our perfect rest and peace; in whom we are accounted of, and received by, the Father,--even as Christ Himself. This is our high calling. Rest we here, and here only.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, he saw love as the natural fruit of such faith, and since "perfect love casteth out fear,"<sup>2</sup> he knew that he had been delivered from his former fears by grace. These fears which once assailed him have been overcome through the peace and joy of life in Christ. He writes again to Fleetwood the following advice to his wife (Cromwell's daughter Elizabeth) who is suffering at the time from low spirits:

Bid her beware of a bondage spirit. Fear is the natural issue of such a spirit;--the antidote is, Love. The voice of Fear is: If I had done this; if I had avoided that, how well it had been with me.

Love argueth in this wise: What a Christ have I; what a Father in and through Him! What a Name hath my Father: Merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. What a nature hath my Father: He is Love;--free in it, unchangeable, infinite.<sup>3</sup>

Union with Christ brings growth in grace.--Not only did he find in God's gift of grace through Christ the ground of his assurance, but through union with God in Christ, Cromwell found the basis for all growth in the Christian life. Thus he writes to his new daughter-in-law, Richard's bride, Dorothy:

I desire you both to make it above all things your business to seek the Lord: to be frequently calling upon Him, that He would manifest Himself to you in His son; and be listening what returns He makes to you,--for He will be

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, II, 601 f.

<sup>2</sup>I John 4: 18.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, II, 602.

speaking in your ear and in your heart, if you attend thereunto. As for the pleasures of this Life, and outward Business, let that be upon the bye. Be above all these things, by faith in Christ; and then you shall have the true use and comfort of them,--and not otherwise. I have much satisfaction in hope your spirit is this way set; and I desire you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and that I may hear thereof.<sup>1</sup>

Again, writing to his daughter, Bridget, after her marriage to Henry Ireton, Cromwell urges her to take care even against putting love of husband before love of Christ, except as he bears the image of Christ.

Dear Heart, press on; let not husband, let not any thing cool thy affections after Christ. I hope he will be an occasion to inflame them. That which is best worthy of love in thy husband is that of the image of Christ he bears. Look on that, and love it best, and all the rest for that.<sup>2</sup>

Similar advice Cromwell writes to his son Richard, for whose spiritual life he never ceased to feel great concern, seeing his frivolous nature and his absorption in worldly pleasures.

"Except they be enjoyed in Christ, they are snares," was Oliver's caution. He writes to offer further spiritual counsel to his son as follows:

Seek the Lord and His face continually; let this be the business of your life and strength and let all things be subservient and in order to this. You cannot find nor behold the face of God but in Christ; therefore labor to know God in Christ; which the Scripture makes to be the sum of all, even Life Eternal. Because the true knowledge is not literal or speculative; no, but inward, transforming the mind to it.<sup>3</sup>

Universality of grace and toleration.--Furthermore, in the promises of this covenant of grace, given freely to all men, Cromwell found not only a source of strength but through the univer-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 416.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 236.

sality of this gift, a firm ground for his belief in toleration. For if this gift were promised for all believers in Christ, "for all the Seed," then why should not every believer have freedom to practice his religion?

Elsewhere he was to state this broad foundation of toleration explicitly in pleading with Parliament for a wider freedom for all believers in Christ:

Men who believe in Jesus Christ--men who believe the remission of sins through the blood of Christ; who live upon the grace of God; those men who are certain they are so,--they are members of Jesus Christ, are to Him the apple of his eye. Whoever hath this faith, let his Form be what it will; he walking peaceably, without prejudice to others under other Forms--it is a debt due to God and Christ; and He will require it, if that Christian may not enjoy his liberty.<sup>1</sup>

Again he underlines the divine imperative behind this duty of tolerance, when he admonishes the Independents of Newcastle to be considerate of the rights of Presbyterians as well as their own people, "knowing well that Jesus Christ, of whose diocese both they <sup>and</sup> are you are, expects it."<sup>2</sup>

That such tolerance was to be shown not only towards fellow-believers but a consideration given also to nonbelievers he brought out in addressing the opening of the Barebone Parliament:

Truly the judgment of truth it will teach you to be as just towards an unbeliever as towards a believer; and it's our duty to do so. I confess I have said sometimes, foolishly it may be, I had rather miscarry to a believer than to an unbeliever. This may seem a paradox, but let's take heed of doing that which is evil to either.<sup>3</sup>

Such tolerance is a requirement the Lord lays upon every Christian, but Cromwell also held that it is a mark of charity and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., IV, 271 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 62.

a grace which reflects on the human level the Lord's bounteous goodness to all:

The best of us are, God knows, poor weak saints, yet saints; if not sheep, yet lambs; and must be fed. We have daily bread, and shall have it, in spite of all enemies. There's enough in our Father's house, and he dispenseth it.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Development and Content of Cromwell's Belief in Providence

In Cromwell's conception of Providence is found the key to both his life and his religion. While he never works out this concept systematically, it is typical of the man that he does not, but rather assumes and points to the continual working of God's gracious will through the events of his own life and the history of the nation in these critical years of England's greatest internal conflict.

This study has sought to discover how far Cromwell's conception of Providence, shaped as it was by his own religious experience, and given content by his outward circumstances at all times, changes with the passing of the years, as he sees God using different individuals and groups as his instruments, and how this concept of Providence throws light upon both his life and the times in which he lived.

A Hebrew concept of God in history.--Cromwell's conception of Providence is drawn, quite naturally for one of the Puritan movement, from Biblical sources. Stated simply, it is that God is forever at work in history--redeeming and delivering his people, acting through them as his instruments, and ordering

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 646.

events to the end that his will may be fulfilled, and that what is not his will may be defeated.

So Cromwell sees all history as the Hebrew prophets saw it, as under the direct hand of God, who directs its movement, determines its victories, and manages its defeats. War is only the most violent of the ways in which the Lord intervenes in history to accomplish his purposes through the uplifting of some of his children and the casting down of their enemies, but it is nevertheless one of the most important means by which he works his will.

Implicit in such a view of history is the prophetic concept of God which had been given a new emphasis by the recent triumphs of Calvinism both on the Continent and in England and Scotland. This stressed the sovereignty of God's holy will, ruling in the life of nations, and working for the exaltation of righteousness and the punishment of evil-doers. While Puritanism professed to derive its doctrines and its political ethic from a direct reading of the Bible, this reading was strongly influenced by the prevailing Calvinist passion to bring every church and every government under obedience to the rule of Christ, and to reform his church in the light of the Word of God.

The Puritan interpretation of events in their time.--

While this belief in Providence was common to nearly every professing Christian, the peculiar content given to this belief by the Puritans as they interpreted the events of their own time in the light of Providence had a direct effect upon the history of the seventeenth century. The two main wings of Puritanism--the



Presbyterian and the sectarian--agreed in asserting that the revolution touched off in 1640 was a judgment of God upon an absolutist Stuart monarchy and an unreformed church whose episcopacy formed the pillars of that power. But these two major Puritan wings disagreed violently on the nature of the church that was to succeed the episcopal type--the Presbyterian maintaining that reformation must take place according to the Calvinist pattern in which doctrine and discipline were rigidly defined and upheld by a single authoritative church on the Geneva model; the Independents and other sects claiming the right of individual congregations to prescribe the form of church government for themselves, without a system of absolute uniformity.

Thus while there was no difference between any of the major seventeenth century parties--whether Anglican, Presbyterian, or Independent--in believing that their cause was providentially ordained, the uniqueness of Cromwell lay in what he deemed to have been divinely ordered for his time, and in the powerful impetus he gave personally to the fulfillment of those purposes. Always he professed to follow no preconceived plan, but discovered that divine will through the trend of events which were already set in motion from above.

Cromwell's sense of army's mission sealed by victory.--

Starting then with no hard and fast notion of what God was attempting to bring about, his first conclusion was that God had decreed the military defeat of Charles I, in order to save parliamentary government for England. In the series of remarkable events which set the parliamentary army in the field against the

King, and through a series of victories gave them an early advantage over the Royalists he saw Providence clearly at work. Here is a typical example:

For these things that have lately come to pass have been the wonderful works of God; breaking the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian,--not with garments much rolled in blood, but by the terror of the Lord; who will yet save His people and confound his enemies, as on that day.<sup>1</sup>

In this struggle and in these victories, Cromwell sees his men always as instruments of the Almighty, being used to His glory, and welded together in spite of outward forms to a spirit of unity in the common cause of Puritan reformation.

It's their joy that they are instruments of God's glory, and their country's good. It's their honour that God vouchsafes to use them. . . . Presbyterians, Independents, all have here the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same presence and answer; they agree here, have no names of difference.<sup>2</sup>

At times he saw divine action even when the tide seemed to go against them.

And give us leave to say, as before the Lord, who knows the secrets of all hearts, That, as we think one especial end of Providence in permitting the enemies of God and Goodness in both Kingdoms to rise to that height, and exercise such tyranny over His people, was to show the necessity of Unity amongst those of both Nations, so we hope and pray that the late glorious dispensation, in giving so happy success against your and our Enemies in our victories, may be the foundation of Union of the People of God in love and amity.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless this unity as against royal supremacy and episcopacy was shattered even before the Royalists were defeated in the first Civil War, and the Independents saw that they might be obliged to defeat not only the Scots but the Presbyterians in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 619.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 377 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 653.

their midst if other sects were to be allowed any measure of toleration whatever. At this time, then, Cromwell saw the Independent party as the real instrument of God's purpose, and the New Model as the chief weapon in the hands of that party.

By the time of the Army debates, at the end of 1647, though Cromwell had been already thoroughly convinced of the mission of the New Model as the champion of the principle of liberty of conscience, he had still hoped to find a means of restoring Charles I to his throne upon his recognition of Parliament's rights and the rights of sects to worship freely. These negotiations having failed, Cromwell and the army were thrown into a second war by the alliance of the Scots with Charles I, and, blaming themselves for having "meddled with an accursed thing," set out in March, 1648, to shatter the power of the King permanently. Though Cromwell did not apparently plan the trial and execution of Charles I at the outset, by the time he had defeated the Scots, he had in so doing been further convinced of the divine favor upon his Cause. As he viewed the whole "chain of providence" in the events of the entire war in his letter to Robert Hammond, he was now practically convinced that "events hang so together; have been so constant, so clear, unclouded"<sup>1</sup> that God was plainly raising up the Puritan cause to judge the King for his treacherous conduct.

What think you of Providence disposing the hearts of so many of God's people this way,--especially in this poor Army, wherein the great God has vouchsafed to appear! . . . And all contrary to a natural tendency, and to those comforts our

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 697.

hearts could wish to enjoy as well as others. . . . Appearance of united names, titles and authorities all against us; and yet not terrified, we, only desiring to fear our great God, that we do nothing against His will.<sup>1</sup>

Thus when the last negotiations of Vane with Charles I proved futile, Cromwell accepted this verdict of Providence as the climax of the series of events that had steadily brought the New Model army to power and step by step had sealed the destruction of Charles I and his cause. Once convinced of the justice of this decision and its divine ordering, Cromwell was like a rock through the extended trial of the King, steadying the hands of the other regicides when they wavered, and wholly determined that nothing should stand in the way of this execution of judgment. He justified it not as a political necessity but as a just punishment of a war criminal who had brought unnecessary bloodshed upon the whole land.

Throughout the remainder of the war, Cromwell's conviction of the justice of the Commonwealth's cause was upheld both against Ireland and Scotland, when his frequent appeals to the God of battles seemed to turn the tide at crucial moments. Particularly at Dunbar, when the odds were so overwhelmingly against him, did the near-miraculous victory seem a seal of divine approval upon his cause. With the smashing victory at Worcester in 1653, his attention was turned from the battlefield to the problems of peace, where the complex issues and the ambiguous answers made the divine verdict in the knotty problems of the hour less clear-cut and certain.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 698.

Saints fail as an instrument of divine rule.--When the

Long Parliament failed of any solution to the pressing demand for reform of law, church, and constitution, Cromwell dissolved it in the belief that it was doing more harm than good in merely perpetuating itself. His natural propensity toward government by a faithful minority made him incline to the proposal of Major General Harrison for an interim government of godly men nominated by the Independent churches and sects. By the time of their meeting, Cromwell was rapturous in his high hopes for this body of picked Puritans, though after five months of their inept efforts to reform church and state immediately according to their ideal of the Saints' rule, he was only too willing to receive their surrender of power when the embattled moderates offered it back to him.

Thereafter his brief dream of a "rule of the Saints" was forever shattered, and while his conviction that God had raised up Puritanism for a special mission was not lost, he began to see that his own role was to be primarily that of a temporary constable, separating contending factions and enforcing order in the religious community. Soon though, the demands for a constitutional settlement made of him the executive head of the government, ruling as Protector with Parliament at times, but otherwise obliged to rule alone with his army as his only mandate, and his Council as his only check.

When his first Protectorate Parliament was called, he believed that a constitutional settlement along lines of the Instrument of Government could be worked out. Only when that Parliament

insisted on spending all its time arguing the terms of that constitution and disputing its division of powers was Cromwell obliged to reassert his authority, claiming that he had neither called himself to this place nor was he ruling without the express or implied consent of many higher as well as lower magistrates.

If my calling be from God, and my testimony from the People,--God and the People shall take it from me, else I will not part with it. I should be false to the trust that God hath placed in me, and to the interest of the People of these Nations, if I did.<sup>1</sup>

By January 22, 1655, Cromwell was so disturbed by the tendency toward what he called "dissettlement and division" which had multiplied during the five months of their sitting, that he dissolved this first Parliament of the Protectorate, with an emphatic reassertion of the divine sanction upon his calling, ridiculing those who questioned the providential origin of his party's mandate, and recapitulating the whole series of dispensations by which God had placed his stamp of approval upon the Puritan cause.

The Scriptures say, "The Rod has a voice, and He will make Himself known by the judgments which He executeth." And do we not think He will, and does, by the providences of mercy and kindness which He hath for His People and their just liberties, whom He loves as the apple of His eye? By this voice has God spoken very loud on behalf of His People, by judging their enemies in the late war, and restoring them a liberty to worship, with the freedom of their consciences, and freedom in estates and persons when they do so.<sup>2</sup>

Sense of transcendent divine purpose lacking.--It should be noted that Cromwell did not often seek for the hand of Providence in adverse events. In fact, when judged by any full-fledged Christian standard, this is the most serious weakness in his entire faith. Cromwell for the most part failed to see Providence

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 452.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 583.

judging his own policies and actions. Similarly, he failed to discern that the purposes of God transcend the interests of either side in time of war. In the test of battle Cromwell constantly finds God rendering a decisive verdict in favor of one side or the other. As he says to the Scots:

But did not you solemnly appeal and pray? Did not we do so too? And ought not you and we to think, with fear and trembling, of the hand of the Great God in this mighty and strange appearance of His; instead of lightly calling it an "event"? Were not both your and our expectations renewed from time to time, whilst we waited upon God, to see which way He would manifest Himself upon our appeals? And shall we, after all these our prayers, fastings, tears, expectations, and solemn appeals, call these bare "events"? The Lord pity you!<sup>1</sup>

It may be said that Cromwell's very successes may have prevented his developing any real doctrine of divine judgment, for he never experienced defeat in any major battle in the field. Nevertheless, he frequently knew defeat for his policies as a statesman and still one searches almost in vain for any interpretation of divine judgment he placed upon any reversal he experienced. One possible exception to this generalization is his confession of sin at the Windsor prayer-meeting, when, together with others of the officers who had held hopes of a negotiated peace with Charles I, he had to confess that Providence had visited him with punishment for this iniquity. These officers were led to "search out" their iniquities by an inquiry into their past actions, particularly their part in pressing the negotiations with the King. William Allen reported:

By which means we were, by a gracious hand of the Lord, led to find out the very steps . . . by which we had departed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 339.

from the Lord, and provoked Him to depart from us. Which we found to be those cursed carnal conferences our own conceited wisdom, our fears, and want of faith had prompted us, the year before, to entertain with the King and his Party.<sup>1</sup>

One might suppose that Cromwell's repeated calls for Days of Humiliation suggest some trace of a sense of judgment in his conception of Providence. However, regardless of how full of pious phraseology and self-abasement were these proclamations, they seldom indicate any profound searching of heart or change of policy on Cromwell's part. In fact, as has been pointed out above, one such proclamation was the cause of his break with an old friend. When he called a Day of Humiliation on March 20, 1654, in which he suggested that sins of the nation had provoked the divine anger, Vane answered with his pamphlet, A Healing Question, in which he obliged by naming Cromwell's ambition for power as the chief sin which required confession and remedy. Cromwell was so enraged that he apparently never forgave his former friend and colleague. It is always one thing to confess sins in general and quite another to be specific. Likewise it is one thing to confess one's own sins and quite another to have those sins pointed out publicly by another person. In any event, Cromwell seldom sounded the note of judgment in any of his writings or speeches and never betrayed any understanding of the profound view of Providence expressed by Lincoln two centuries later in the words--"The Almighty has his own purposes."<sup>2</sup>

Belief in Puritan cause is central.--Nevertheless, though Cromwell believed his authority to be given and approved by God,

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<sup>1</sup>Carlyle, pp. 264-65.

<sup>2</sup>Second Inaugural Address.



he did not conceive that authority to be absolute. He ruled on behalf of a Cause. When the Crown came to be offered to him in all seriousness and pressed upon him by the lawyers and leaders of Parliament, he still drew back from accepting it when he knew that a large number of the Puritan party, especially in the army, opposed it. In this steadfast determination to avoid offense to "the people of God," particularly those who had gone along with him from Edgehill to Dunbar, he believed that God was acting upon his conscience, and that to accept would be to go counter to the leading of Providence. When later he weakened, nearly accepted, and was then brought to time by his own officers, he reaffirmed his real doubts and conscientious objection to accepting the crown, or having it forced upon him against his better judgment:

And whilst you are granting others liberties, surely you will not deny me this; it being not only a liberty but a duty, and such a duty as I cannot without sinning forbear,-- to examine my own heart and thoughts and judgment, in every work which I am to set my hand to, or to appear in or for.<sup>1</sup>

Whether willingly or unwillingly, Cromwell was in this last major decision of his career re-establishing his identity with the cause for which he had come to believe he had a God-given responsibility, the cause of protecting and extending the Puritan interest, as he still saw it embodied in the army and in the "gathered churches" of the land. Again and again, Cromwell had shown that the advancement of this cause was the directing and controlling aim of his life. It was a consistent purpose throughout a shifting and varied career in which expediency seemed

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 513.

often the dominant principle of action and perpetuation of his own power a growing necessity as time went on. Yet so closely are ideals and expediency always intertwined in all political life that the man who dreams of lifting up a cause can do so only by first maintaining himself in power, and possibly also by using ambiguous means and instruments to attain his ends.

In his speeches especially, Cromwell reveals how important is this Cause in his total view. More than once he compares it to the deliverance of the Children of Israel:

The providences and dispensations of God have been so stupendous . . . the only parallel that I know in the world, which was largely and wisely held forth to you this day: To Israel's bringing-out of Egypt through a wilderness by many signs and wonders, towards a place of rest.<sup>1</sup>

These are the Chosen People, on whose behalf the Lord has done such great and marvelous works in their generation.

[Men] consider not that God resisted and broke in pieces the Powers that were, that men might fear Him; might have liberty to do and enjoy all that we have been speaking of. Which certainly God has manifested to have been the end; and so hath He brought the things to pass!<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Cromwell's most eloquent expression of his concern for the Puritan cause is heard in his vehement speech dissolving the First Protectorate Parliament when he says:

If I had not had a hope fixed in me, that this Cause and this Business was of God, I would many years ago have run from it. If it be of God, he will bear it up. If it be of man, it will tumble; as everything that hath been of man since the world began hath done.<sup>3</sup>

Here likewise Cromwell states his basic belief in God's action in history, the belief that underlay his confidence in a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 434.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., IV, 707.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 590.

providential ordering of events in his own time. He says:

And what are all our histories and traditions of actions in former times, but God manifesting Himself, that He hath shaken, and tumbled down, and trampled upon, everything that He had not planted.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it was Cromwell's extraordinary success both in war as a general and in peace as a ruler which, judged by this standard of a providential ordering of events, assured him that God was supporting him personally as well as this Cause and this People. No other explanation could do justice to the phenomenal rise of the Puritan party in Cromwell's view; no other could explain his own constant victories, and the singular set of circumstances in which in crisis after crisis, he had been entrusted with steadily mounting responsibilities at the head of the state.

This sense of high calling, furthermore, gave Cromwell a real consciousness of divine support in times of difficulty, conveying an amazing strength and determination which he attributed to God alone. Thus he writes to Richard Mayor:

I have not sought these things; I have been called to them, and therefore am not without some assurance that He will enable His poor worm to do His will.<sup>2</sup>

Concern for the "cause" uppermost in last hours.--By 1658, Cromwell was not unaware that he was declining in strength with his advancing years and the inevitable weakening of his constitution brought about by years of campaigning in all sorts of weather and the strain of governing through desperate times. When the death of his favorite daughter, Elizabeth, came on August 6, 1658, he too came down with fever. Possibly he sensed that this might well be his last battle.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 289.

Like the end of any hero, Cromwell's last days have been so fruitful a source of myth that it is difficult for the historian to disentangle fact from legend. The account left by Charles Harvey, his valet, though perhaps strongly colored by hero-worship, still offers almost the only detailed first-hand story of the Protector's final hours. It gains credence from the characteristic nature of the remarks he attributes to Cromwell and the typical incidents he records. His picture is true to character and probably brings out accurately what was uppermost in Cromwell's mind as he approached the end.

It was true to life, for example, that he was said to have discoursed brokenly during his last hours of the covenant of grace which had meant so much to him:

It is holy and true. . . . Who made it holy and true? Who kept it holy and true? The great Mediator of the Covenant. The Covenant is but one; faith in the Covenant is my only support, yet if I believe not, he abides faithful.<sup>1</sup>

In those last hours, between alternate fits of fever and chills, it is wholly possible that Cromwell was subject to such qualms as Harvey relates, when he used such expressions as "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>2</sup> He may also have had moments of despair of his very salvation, though the familiar story of his inquiring whether it was possible to fall from grace is one of many oral traditions that has been handed on by popular biographers, though without clear authenticity.<sup>3</sup> Such a fear of falling from grace might easily have found

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, IV, 871.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The story is reported by Morley, Buchan, and many others, but is completely omitted by Abbott, Firth, and Gardiner.

expression on his deathbed, though the evidence is scanty. Certainly such a fall had been often enough suggested in his latter years both by avowed enemies and by former friends and supporters. Yet Cromwell was not one to be easily shaken in his faith. He was thoroughly conscious of his sins of violence during his lifetime, yet he was still convinced that however many times he had sinned since his early experience of grace, God had forgiven and would be merciful. He said:

Whatsoever sins thou hast, doest, or shalt comit, if you lay hold upon free Grace, you are safe, but if you put yourself under a Covenant of works, you bring yourself under the Law, and so under the Curse, then you are gone.<sup>1</sup>

Again he was reported to have expressed great trust and confidence at times in those last hours:

The Lord hath filled me with as much assurance of his pardon, and his love, as my soul can hold. . . . Children, live like Christians, and I leave you the Covenant to feed upon.<sup>2</sup>

Again he said:

I would be willing to be further serviceable to God and His People, but my work is done, yet God will be with His People.<sup>3</sup>

Even more revealing of the man and this intense concern for the "People of God" is the famous deathbed prayer that also owes its transmission to the faithful Harvey. He prayed:

Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in Covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will, come to Thee, for Thy People. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service, and many of them have set too high a value upon me,

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<sup>1</sup>Cromwelliana, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

though others wish and would be glad of my death. Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the Name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much on Thy instruments to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short Prayer:--Even for Jesus Christ's sake. And give us a good night, if it be Thy pleasure. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Here in this sublime yet simple utterance is expressed Cromwell's central religious insights. Whether literally accurate or not it is a prayer that admirably sums up his religious faith, even while breathing the very spirit of the man. His belief in a Covenant of grace, his sense of personal unworthiness, his tenderness toward others, and above all, his sense of destiny for the Puritan people--all are here expressed with a classic simplicity and a nobility of spirit that make it one of the world's immortal prayers.

As a crystal-clear reflection of the man nothing could be more authentic. Conflict and a life of struggle are here; awareness of sin and the need for greater trust in God; the contradictions of pride and the corruption of power--all are mirrored here. But beyond himself, Cromwell sees the cause of his people, and beyond that the exalted aim "to make the name of Christ glorious in the world." That was the life mission to which Providence had called him.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

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