

cause, had the 'libertine'<sup>1</sup> summoned before the House of Lords. It was not the nature of the poet to accept these strictures in a spirit of Christian forgiveness: from the date of the publication of his *Colasterion*, references to the Presbyterians in Milton's prose and verse are bitter in tone. 'From that time,' says Orme, 'he never failed to abuse the Presbyterians and the Assembly. It is painful to detract from the fair fame of Milton, but even he is not entitled to vilify the character of a large and respectable body of men, to avenge his private quarrel.'<sup>2</sup> Whether he was actuated by personal reasons or not, whether he loved himself rather than truth, in thus turning upon his former party, as Doctor Johnson avers,<sup>3</sup> it was not necessary for the author of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* to invent charges against the Presbyterian preachers and writers. No party ever laid itself more helplessly open to attack. And no controversialist ever fell more mercilessly upon a vulnerable enemy than Milton upon the men who were preaching and writing in a vain effort to save 'the Lord's anointed.'<sup>4</sup>

In addition to their sermons in the pulpits of London, the Presbyterian divines expressed their new-found loyalty to the king by sending out two tracts from Sion College. The first, which we have already mentioned, was signed by 47 ministers, including Case, Gataker, Gower, Rowborough, and Wallis of the Westminster Assembly, and was addressed to Lord Fair-

<sup>1</sup> Clement Walker calls Milton 'a libertine that thinketh his wife a Manacle,' *Hist. of Indep.*, pt. 2. 199.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Times of Rich. Baxter* 1. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Milton*, in *Works*, ed. Hawkins 2. 101.

<sup>4</sup> For a full discussion of Milton's relations with the Presbyterians, see Masson, *Life of Milton* 2. 377 and 3. 468 ff.