

Chapter 5.

Clarendon's Portrait of Charles I – Part A.

It has been argued in my previous chapter that when writing about contemporary figures involved in the rebellion, such as Hotham and Newcastle, Clarendon could portray character effectively, giving his readers an understanding of the essence of an individual's character. In this chapter I will discuss Clarendon's treatment of Charles I in the History of the Rebellion. My discussion of Clarendon's work will be considerably longer and more detailed than the other works on Charles I presented in my thesis. I have assumed that the reader will have some knowledge of Clarendon's History, and just as he gives a less than comprehensive treatment of his subject, my own discussion will be a selective presentation of aspects of the work. Royce Macgillivray makes two interesting comments on Clarendon's treatment of Charles I which I will take up. The first is, that in view of Clarendon's considerable acquaintance with the King, it is disappointing to find him such a 'dim figure' in the History.⁽¹⁾ While I agree with this contention, it is still possible to discern some view of Clarendon's first Royal master in the work, despite his guarded and often less than candid treatment of the King. The question to be answered here, is why this acknowledged master of the pen portrait does not provide his readers with a clearer picture of the King he served in a time of particular crisis in the reign. Macgillivray also draws attention to Clarendon's failure to present the most significant events in Charles's reign in any depth. It is indeed surprising that the King's trial and execution are given only ' cursory treatment' in the work.⁽²⁾ Possible explanations do spring to mind but this aspect of Clarendon's work will be considered in my next chapter. The theme of this chapter is that Clarendon's portrait of Charles is similar to that of his Royalist contemporaries, despite his obvious advantages and capability to present a more life-like picture. Indeed as we will see, his portrait of Charles I in the History of the Rebellion also conforms quite closely to the model of the 'good' prince found in traditional princely literature.

The History of the Rebellion begins in the year 1641, but there is reference to

¹ Macgillivray, op. cit., p. 216.

² ibid.

events preceding this time which do allow insight into Clarendon's perception of Charles's character. These events include the rise of the Duke of Buckingham, and the well-known journey to Spain to court the Infanta. (3) Buckingham's is the first of the many 'characters' included in the work, and Clarendon though aware of his faults, does treat him sympathetically, (4) but of interest here, is the references to the degree of influence which the Duke is seen as exercising over his first Royal master. Clarendon recognizes Buckingham as the instigator of the Spanish 'fiasco'. He says that the Duke's discourses to the Prince regarding this adventure made so deep an impression on his mind and spirit, that Charles was 'transported with the thought of it and impatiently solicitous to bring it to pass', (5) From their time in Spain began 'an entire confidence between them'. (6) This grew to such a degree that after Charles's marriage, the Duke still wishing to be foremost in Charles's affections, took great pains to lessen the King's affection for his young queen. (7) Clarendon deals with the Spanish episode at some length, with aspects of it drawn quite vividly, (8) but the most important aspects, the marriage arrangements, particularly in regard to the dissolving of it are not set down. The telling of the story, of the proxy left with the Earl of Bristol on the Prince's departure (9) does not enlighten the reader as to what actually occurred, even after several readings. The suspicion arises that Clarendon is being deliberately obtuse in order to hide the fact that Charles acted less than honourably in this matter. This suspicion is reinforced by the account of the Duke's relation of the whole affair to Parliament on his and the Prince's return to England. He told of the secret Spanish designs to persuade the Prince to become a Catholic, and he blamed the Earl of Bristol for concurring with the Spanish purposes. (10) Further, he said that James had sent for Bristol to return to England to account for his miscarriages, whereas the truth was that James had recalled the Earl to assist him against the Duke himself. (11) The Duke's account to Parliament was an attempt to absolve himself and the Prince from blame, but Clarendon makes no mention

3 Macray ed., *op. cit.*, Vol I, pp. 4-39.

4 Basically, Clarendon saw the Duke's character as flawed because of his quick rise to fame. *ibid.* Vol. I, p. 42.

5 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 14.

6 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 23.

7 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 48.

8 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 13-22.

9 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 45.

10 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 24-26.

11 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 26.

of Charles's reaction or response to this false account. The assumption therefore must be that Charles remained silent despite knowing the truth of the situation. Thus he was prepared to sacrifice Bristol to protect himself and his friend. Surely Charles's honour (as well as Buckingham's) could be questioned here but Clarendon does not do so. A more obvious case of the Duke's influence over Charles, with Charles's acquiescence in a matter pertaining to honour, is found in Clarendon's account of the fall of the Earl of Middlesex. The Duke, wishing to bring about the ruin of his rival for James's good opinion, caused an impeachment to be brought against the Earl. Buckingham prevailed on Charles to agree with this action and 'assured of his fast kindness' ⁽¹²⁾ was able to bring Middlesex down, despite James's attempts to stop him. ⁽¹³⁾ These two examples give some indication of the influence Buckingham had over Charles. It can be inferred also in regard to the wars with Spain and France, for which Clarendon blames Buckingham, though he does censure both James and Charles. He says these calamities sprang not only from 'the inordinate appetite and passion of this young man [but also from] the too much easiness of two indulgent masters'. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Thus the Duke's influence over Charles (and James), and the mostly disastrous nature of it is recognized by Clarendon. Yet as has been noted, in instances where criticism of Charles's behaviour could have been made, none is recorded, and at least on one occasion Clarendon is obtuse in his story. This accords with much of what follows in the picture of Charles I which emerges in the History. That is, Charles is seldom directly censured in regard to faults in his character. It is not expressed comment which allows the reader some perception of the less than favourable characteristics which Clarendon observed in the King. These the reader must discern for himself. However in contrast Charles's 'good' qualities are always directly pointed out on what seems to be every possible opportunity, and even at times when censure of his actions seems more appropriate.

The first reference to Charles's 'good' qualities in this context, is to be found at the beginning of the History in reference to the selling of Crown lands, and creating peers for money. At this time, Charles, although faced with the costs associated with the wars with Spain and France, and his father's debts, nevertheless gave 'many costly instances

¹² ibid., Vol. I, p. 27.

¹³ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 27-28.

¹⁴ ibid., Vol. I, p. 151.

of his favour to persons near him'.⁽¹⁵⁾ This action, Clarendon says sprang from 'the bounty of his majesty',⁽¹⁶⁾ this despite the fact that the necessary subsistence of the household was unprovided for.⁽¹⁷⁾ But some of the means used to raise money after the dissolution of the third Parliament are criticised, but not the recipient of the proceeds so raised. Of the dissolutions themselves, Clarendon says that no man could show a source more likely to have caused these 'waters of bitterness we now taste,than this unseasonable, unskilful and precipitate dissolution of Parliaments',⁽¹⁸⁾ but Charles himself does not share any blame for this. The cause was 'the passion, insolence and ambition of particular persons',⁽¹⁹⁾ though the King did have the disadvantage of harbouring persons who were 'industrious in informing, even exaggerating the Court's faults to the people'.⁽²⁰⁾ But some of the measures taken for raising funds were 'ridiculous, scandalous and all very grievous, the envy and reproach of which came to the King'.⁽²¹⁾ Yet again, there is no criticism of Charles himself, though there seems to be a hint of disapproval in regard to the imposition of ship-money. Clarendon sees its imposition as 'very impolitic, even destructive of the service intended'.⁽²²⁾ That is, though judged lawful, this proved of more advantage to the gentleman who lost the case (Hampden), than to the King's service.⁽²³⁾ But it is the political wisdom of introducing the measure, rather than the morality of the law which is in question here. Yet as if to make amends for what might be taken as criticism of the King, Clarendon shortly after presents a favourable reflection on Charles's character. In the context of a discussion of the times before the long Parliament, (with the country rich, the Church flourishing and the King's reputation high abroad),⁽²⁴⁾ he says that the blessings then enjoyed, were under the protection of a King 'of the most harmless disposition, and the most exemplar piety, the greatest example of sobriety, chastity and mercy, that any had been endued with'.⁽²⁵⁾ These are the same qualities which contemporary writers of eulogies of

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 4.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 5.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 85.

²² *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 86.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 95.

²⁵ *ibid.*

Charles I attributed to him, yet none of them had the same acquaintance with him as Clarendon did. These qualities are in fact the qualities of the 'good' prince written about as a model since times of antiquity, rather than the qualities of a living king, whom the writer knew over a long period.

It is interesting to note the number of occasions throughout the History where Clarendon invests Charles I with the virtues of the 'ideal' prince, familiar in the genre known as the Mirror-of-the-Princes literature. ⁽²⁶⁾ Firstly, immediately after the Bill for Triennial Parliaments, Clarendon says that the King's consent to it (and other acts, some of which had unfortunate consequences for the Kingdom), would be acknowledged by posterity 'as an everlasting monument of a princely and fatherly affection for his people'. ⁽²⁷⁾ So here he has not only absolved Charles from blame, he even manages to cover his actions with a cloak of virtue. Later after Prince Rupert took Bristol, the King made a declaration designed to bring about peace. Clarendon in referring to it, says that Charles expressed himself as 'an indulgent father to his most disobedient children'. ⁽²⁸⁾ Of the declaration itself, Clarendon says 'it was a most gracious and undeniable instance of his clemency and justice'. ⁽²⁹⁾ These qualities are frequently found in the list of those of the 'ideal' prince, as are the 'courage and magnanimity', ⁽³⁰⁾ which Charles exhibited when he originally refused to consent to the peace proposition put to Parliament by some of the Lords at the beginning of the war. ⁽³¹⁾ One further example will suffice to indicate considerable conformity to the model of the 'ideal' prince. This is seen in Clarendon's reflection on the misfortunes to the King's cause, which were brought about at least to some degree by Charles's own supporters. ⁽³²⁾ He says that Charles will be found to be not only 'a prince of admirable virtue and piety, but with great parts of knowledge, wisdom and judgement'. ⁽³³⁾

One of these qualities found in the 'ideal' prince, that of piety, is earlier brought to

²⁶ As in L. Born's The Education of a Christian Prince - See Note 22, p. 6.

²⁷ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 378.

²⁸ ibid., Vol. III, p.135.

²⁹ ibid.

³⁰ ibid., Vol. II, p. 303.

³¹ ibid.

³² ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 2-3.

³³ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 4.

the reader's attention in Clarendon's discussion of the King's first visit to Scotland in 1633. He says here that Charles was 'the most punctual observer of all decency in his devotions, [and] the strictest promoter of all the ceremonies of the Church'.⁽³⁴⁾ He was therefore scandalized by the disorder he found in the exercise of religion in Scotland, but in setting out to rectify the situation he does not appear to have shown those other 'ideal' qualities of knowledge, wisdom or judgement. Clarendon excuses the King, saying he was too much inclined to the Scots, having been born amongst them.⁽³⁵⁾ Yet Charles had no understanding of them as a people. He not only provoked envy and discontent by increasing the number of bishops, already thought to be too many, but he heaped honours on them not commensurate with their functions.⁽³⁶⁾ Yet he was unaware of the damage done to him by these actions, and left Scotland believing the people were full of affection and duty towards him. This led him to mistakenly think that the Scots were inclined to accept the Liturgy at the time he wished to introduce it.⁽³⁷⁾ Clarendon by his tone obviously realized Charles's mistakes. He speaks of the 'unseasonable accumulation'⁽³⁸⁾ of honours on the bishops, and thinks that 'it had been better that envious promotion had been suspended [till a later time]'.⁽³⁹⁾ Thus he makes his meaning clear through his choice of words, but does not censure Charles directly. Even when Charles raised an army against the Scots, and Clarendon had misgivings on more than one aspect of this, he is careful not to judge the King too harshly. He thought Charles mistaken in calling the nobility together, to join in this expedition without any consideration of how their affections were disposed to that service. Not only would some of them not wish to fight against the Scots, but Clarendon saw them as coming together without public interest and thus providing them with the opportunity to later divide into factions, as 'have always arose which have threatened and ruined the peace of nations. And it fell out no better here'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ As to the war itself, Clarendon thought that the King should have pursued it with more vigour, then it would have ended as soon as it had begun.⁽⁴¹⁾ But this criticism is tinged with the reminder of the King's 'good' qualities. Clarendon here says,

³⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 109.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 114.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 117.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 154. Clarendon here is speaking with hindsight, as is of course the case throughout the work.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 153.

‘it was the fatal misfortune of the King which proceeded from the excellency of his nature, and the tenderness of his blood, that he deferred so long his resolution of using arms.....and that it was not [then] prosecuted with more vigour’. (42) Charles is again presented as the ‘good’ king, but his lack of political skills was not lost on Clarendon. He censures the King in regard to his handling of the Scots, when at the time of the treaty at Ripon (43) he allowed the Scottish commissioners to reside in London, after the signing of it. (44) This ‘the last and most confounding error’ (45) gave them the opportunity to publish all their counsels in sermons to the English people (who flocked to them in incredible numbers). (46) Thus they directly influenced English perceptions of the Scottish cause. Further, Clarendon thought that the Parliament then called by Charles should have been made conditional on the Scots leaving England. The reason he gives is the standing army in Ireland, which he says was ready to visit their own country. (47) As regards advice on Scottish affairs, the King’s sole counsel was the Marquis of Hamilton, (48) apparently an unwise choice given Clarendon’s references to his suspected duplicity. (49) From the time when Charles first went to Scotland, Hamilton’s behaviour was at the very least difficult to understand, and his loyalty was suspected by the nobility in both Scotland and England. (50) Charles however continued to believe in his good faith towards the Crown right up to Montrose’s denouncement of him. Indeed even at that time, despite being assured by his advisers that Hamilton had betrayed him, Charles thought that there was not sufficient grounds to withdraw all trust from him. (51) Despite Clarendon’s own suspicions of Hamilton’s duplicity, (indeed he almost named him as one of the King’s ‘evil counsellors’ in June 1641, but was prevailed on to desist), (52) he does not directly criticise the King for his continuing support for Hamilton. But surely

42 *ibid.*

43 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 203-207.

44 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 215.

45 *ibid.*

46 *ibid.*

47 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p.211.

48 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 107.

49 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 188. Wherein he was suspected of obtaining Lord Loudon’s release from prison to endear himself to the Scots. *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 394.

50 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 108.

51 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 318.

52 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 361-362. I do however note Clarendon’s words at the time of Hamilton’s execution, when he says that he had been looked upon as ‘a worse and more dangerous man than he deserved to be’. *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 508.

there is some hint of criticism in his words the King was 'never disposed to jealousy of any man of whom he had once thought well'.⁽⁵³⁾ Yet as is usual in the History, Charles is not compromised as the 'good' man.

Clarendon was obviously aware of some of the faults in Charles character, but on most occasions he was also sympathetic to the difficult position in which the King often found himself. He was clearly aware of the forces arraigned against the King, as he points out in his discussion of the Parliament which met on November 3, 1640.⁽⁵⁴⁾ This Parliament he says, 'met with a fuller appearance than could be reasonably expected for the short time for elections after the issuing of the writs'.⁽⁵⁵⁾ This together with 'the marvellous elated countenance'⁽⁵⁶⁾ of the members before they met in the House, combined with a less moderate temper and no desire to apply gentle remedies to the nation's problems, boded ill for the King. Pym spoke of the need to 'sweep the house clean',⁽⁵⁷⁾ and of the grievances long held by the government, which he said deprived the nation of its liberty.⁽⁵⁸⁾ But he did not blame the King. Instead he named the Earl of Strafford, whose power and credit with the King he said had perverted Charles's judgement. Strafford was subsequently accused of high treason and brought to trial.⁽⁵⁹⁾ In regard to the proceedings against Strafford, Clarendon makes quite a point of his dismay at Charles's ready acceptance of the examination of the Privy Councillors by Parliament, upon such matters as had passed at the Council table. (Parliament's fear was that the Privy Councillors would insist on standing by the oath they had taken, and thus could not be made to reveal what Strafford was alleged to have said in Council, concerning the Scots).⁽⁶⁰⁾ The King, thinking that his refusal would be a tacit confession that matters which should not be revealed, had been discussed in Council, yielded. Clarendon says that Charles did not weigh the consequences of his action, and the damage to his cause was irreparable.⁽⁶¹⁾ Not only was it proved that the Earl spoke

53 ibid., Vol. I, p. 217.

54 In this Parliament, Hyde served for Saltash, Cornwall. ibid., Vol. I, p. 222.

55 ibid., Vol. I, pp. 215-219.

56 ibid., Vol. I, p. 222.

57 ibid.

58 ibid.

59 ibid., Vol. I, pp. 225-235.

60 ibid., Vol. I, p. 256.

61 ibid., Vol. I, p. 257.

those words which Sir Harry Vane had remembered, ⁽⁶²⁾ but the Councillors were horrified to find that they might be arraigned for every rash, even inconsiderate expression or word used in Council. Charles's consent had banished forever the freedom to give the King what advice the Councillors thought fit. ⁽⁶³⁾ By his unthinking action Charles had dispensed with that part of the oath, which permitted the keeping secret, matters which if revealed, could damage his cause or that of others. ⁽⁶⁴⁾ Charles then according to Clarendon, compounded this mistake by allowing the swearing-in of new Privy Councillors, all of whom had been either in disfavour with the Court, or were especially liked by the Scots or the 'people'. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ Clarendon says that the King did not realize the problems which the choice of these particular Councillors would bring. He saw that any advice they gave the King regarding the law, particularly important where Royal assent was part of that law, would not be impartial, let alone in the King's interest. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ He thought that these Privy Councillors would seek only to make themselves agreeable to Parliament, but Charles, though he was aware of their affiliations, nevertheless thought that 'the light of his grace would reform or at least restrain [them]'. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ This act so prejudicial to his own interests, the King did 'very cheerfully'. ⁽⁶⁸⁾ Clarendon recognizes the King's naivety, but it is his choice of words, not direct criticism which allows the reader to understand this. That he was also aware of the potential damage to the Monarchy, can be seen in the lesson which he gives on 'how Privy Councillors should be chosen' ⁽⁶⁹⁾ which follows his tale of Charles's misreading of a situation, the effect of which is to put him at further disadvantage in more difficult times.

Clarendon is again only indirectly critical of Charles in relation to the Earl of Strafford's trial, and the bill which took his life. Yet it is difficult to see Charles's part in the event as anything but a clear breach of honour. Clarendon however spends more time on the circumstances surrounding the passing of the bill, ⁽⁷⁰⁾ and on the reaction of the

⁶² Concerning a paper taken from his father's cabinet, the contents of which were prejudicial to Strafford's case. *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 301-303.

⁶³ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 258-259.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 257-258.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 259.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 262.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 259.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 259-261.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 226-228, pp. 239-240, pp. 303-306.

‘rabble’ to Charles’s supposed breach of privilege of Parliament, ⁽⁷¹⁾ than he does to the actual role the King played in having Strafford beheaded. The trial is covered at considerable length, ⁽⁷²⁾ as is the story of the various persuasions applied to Charles which finally saw him give his consent to the fatal measure. ⁽⁷³⁾ Clarendon’s ‘story’ includes a supposed secret promise given to the King by the Earl of Bedford that Strafford’s life would be preserved. ⁽⁷⁴⁾ But Bedford died soon after this. Then Lord Say, according to Clarendon, promised Charles that ‘he would not be pressed in the matter of the Earl of Strafford’s life’. ⁽⁷⁵⁾ He then deceived the King into presenting an address to the House of Peers on the question of Strafford’s fitness for public office. This action raised the House of Commons to a fury, and they declared his act to be ‘the most unparalleled breach of privilege that had ever happened’. ⁽⁷⁶⁾ A great disturbance of the ‘people’ followed, with those Peers suspected of not favouring the bill being harassed, and then being afraid, they were absent when the bill was passed. ⁽⁷⁷⁾ But Charles was yet resolved to deny his consent to the bill, even when besieged by many thousands of people demanding justice. ⁽⁷⁸⁾ The Privy Council was called to advise on how to suppress the riots. Their answer was that the King must pass the bill for the safety of himself and the kingdom. ⁽⁷⁹⁾ Then the Archbishop of York told Charles that the lives of his wife and children were in danger. ⁽⁸⁰⁾ Finally Strafford himself wrote to the King telling him not to defer his consent any longer, so that his death could free the Kingdom from its present troubles. ⁽⁸¹⁾ After telling the Privy Councillors that what they wished him to do was ‘in diameter contrary opposed to his conscience’, ⁽⁸²⁾ Charles signed the commission to the Lords to pass the bill. This was as valid as if he had signed the consent to the actual bill, but, and here Clarendon makes an ambiguous remark, ‘they comforted him even with that circumstance that his own hand was not in it’. ⁽⁸³⁾ It is

71 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 336-339.

72 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 285-300.

73 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 338-340.

74 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 334.

75 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 335.

76 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 336.

77 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 337.

78 *ibid.*

79 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 338.

80 *ibid.*

81 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 339.

82 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 338.

83 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 339.

difficult to know whether Clarendon is here absolving the King from blame, or whether he is suggesting that Charles's distress was alleviated by the fact that it was not the actual death warrant which he signed. Clarendon is not critical of Charles's part in Strafford's death; his position is one of considerable sympathy for the position in which Charles was placed. He considers whether dissolving Parliament or gathering an army were realistic options for the King at this time, but decides that given the existing state of affairs, Charles had no means to free himself 'from the labyrinth in which he was involved'.⁽⁸⁴⁾ My discussion on Strafford's death may seem longer than could be warranted, but it is one of the most important events in the reign by which Charles's conduct can be judged. Yet Clarendon passes no judgement on him. So to this point in the History, Clarendon's model of the 'good' prince still stands.

However, if Clarendon has not so far censured the King for his conduct, he does not extend this 'courtesy' to the Queen. Clarendon makes several references to the temper of the Court, the disorder of which prevented Charles from enjoying 'the quiet which his condition required'.⁽⁸⁵⁾ On more than one occasion he points his finger at Henrietta Maria as the person most involved in increasing the King's difficulties. Firstly, she sought to increase her own power and authority with both King and Courtiers. At the time of Strafford's impeachment, she was persuaded by those she favoured to undermine the position of both Strafford and Archbishop Laud. They convinced her that her own authority would be enhanced by the removal of these great ministers.⁽⁸⁶⁾ But the most unfortunate affair in which her influence with the King had disastrous (if unintended) consequences for Charles, concerns the removal of the Earls of Holland and Essex from their offices at Court. When the King arrived at York in March 1642, his reception was so favourable that he decided to become less amenable to Parliament's demands.⁽⁸⁷⁾ He thought also that he would now put into effect some of the resolutions he had made with the Queen before her departure for Holland.⁽⁸⁸⁾ The first concerns the two Earls. Clarendon, while more critical of Holland than of Essex, says that while no man could speak in justification of either of them, 'yet no man thought them equally culpable'.⁽⁸⁹⁾

84 ibid., Vol. I. p. 340.

85 ibid., Vol. III, p.192.

86 ibid., Vol. I, p. 217.

87 ibid., Vol. II, p. 1.

88 ibid., Vol. II, p. 14.

89 ibid.

But he recognizes that the damage to the King's cause was greater by the removal of Essex. Further, he saw it a folly to make either of them desperate men, and being deprived of office would allow them to do more mischief. ⁽⁹⁰⁾ Clarendon says that without doubt, had Essex retained the staff by which he was charged with the defence and security of the King's person, he would have remained loyal to Charles, and thus Parliament would never have had the Earl of Essex as commander of its army. ⁽⁹¹⁾ But says Clarendon, despite vigorous attempts to persuade Charles against Essex's dismissal, having given his promise to the Queen on their parting, he was 'inexorable on this point'.⁽⁹²⁾ (This is one of the rare occasions in which we see Charles as standing firm on a decision.) ⁽⁹³⁾ A further disastrous consequence of the Queen's influence on Charles, stems from her intercession with the King at the time of the bill to remove the bishops from Parliament. Though Charles's advisers must take some blame here, as they advised him that the only way to preserve the Church was to pass the bill, ⁽⁹⁴⁾ their arguments prevailed less with the King than did Henrietta Maria's persuasions. ⁽⁹⁵⁾ Clarendon was acutely aware of the damage this measure did to the King's cause. He saw it as not only weakening Charles's 'party' in Parliament, but he said that such an anti-Monarchical act would inevitably cause a great deal of loss of confidence in the King himself. ⁽⁹⁶⁾ Those who were devoted to the King withdrew themselves absolutely from the House of Peers, or allowed themselves to be carried by the stream of consent to whatever proposals were then put to Parliament. ⁽⁹⁷⁾ Despite his obvious dismay at the King's action Clarendon does not criticize him, but instead censures the Queen for her unfortunate influence over him, saying that she persuaded Charles to acquiesce to her demand even though it was 'contrary to his most positive resolution'. ⁽⁹⁸⁾ Here Clarendon provided some reasons for the Queen's insistence on Charles passing the bill. He sees her as convinced by her priests and advisers from France, that her own safety depended on the bill's passing. ⁽⁹⁹⁾

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 16.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ That Charles did recognize his own indecisiveness, we know from Clarendon's comment after the King's refusal to sign the Militia Bill. Here he says that the King 'was well pleased that he had gone through one of his resolutions'. *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 45.

⁹⁴ Because they were not 'sufficiently acquainted with the constitution', *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 565.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 566.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 568.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 567-568.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 567.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 566.

Further, she thought her own reputation would be enhanced by the knowledge that it was her influence which brought the King to accept the measure. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Clarendon has here drawn attention to the unfortunate effect Henrietta Maria's religion had on the King's affairs.

This is not the only specific instance of the Queen's religion causing Charles either difficulties or disquiet at a time of particular trouble. While the King was a prisoner of the Scots, she sent Sir William Davenant to him to persuade Charles to desert his own church – a move which brought a passionate and indignant response from the King. ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Her action in bringing arms and troops to the King from the Continent in 1643 also proved unfortunate, in that the army was then styled the 'Queens Army' and the 'Catholic Army', thereby exposing the army to prejudice, in that the King's enemies said that it consisted only of professed Papists who intended to destroy Protestants and establish their own religion. ⁽¹⁰²⁾ When the rebellion broke out in Ireland in 1641, an event which Clarendon says proved of infinite disadvantage to the King's affairs at a time they were improving, it was the Queen's religion which allowed Parliament to insinuate that it was contrived or fomented by the King, or at least the Queen for the advancement of Popery. ⁽¹⁰³⁾ Later, early in 1642, the King was again accused of countenancing the rebellion in Ireland, and accused of not levying men and not sending provisions, though he had made an offer to send ten thousand volunteers. ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Thus the Queen through her religion inevitably aligned Charles with the Irish cause. Henrietta Maria's desire for power, her habit of prevailing on the King to advantage her favourites, coupled with her desire for revenge when they displeased her caused the King much anxiety. Clarendon clearly shows his dislike for her influence with Charles, but he does not criticize him for succumbing to her persuasions. Nor does he censure the King for his marriage with a Catholic princess, though her religion was so damaging to his cause.

The Queen however was not the only member of the Court who brought difficulties to Charles's cause. Clarendon portrays an unhappy, divided, faction-ridden

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 566-567.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 205-206.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 467.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 399.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 558-559.

Court with those in it more concerned with their own ambitions and rivalries than the welfare of their sovereign. He sees Charles compelled to gratify undeserving men, to whom often he bore no good-will, simply because in earlier times of importunity he had given them promises of favour. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ But the recipients of his favour were not satisfied, and those denied honours were provoked to envy, even seeing their service to the Crown as undervalued. ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ That Clarendon thought that the difficulties Charles faced with his Court were to some extent of his own making, can be surmised from the brief lesson he gives in his discussion of the state of the Court at Oxford. He says that princes should not confer reward at a time when they can only gratify few, and when many stand ‘upon the same level of pretences, and are apt to feel the preferring of one as an affront and disobligation to the rest’. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ He does make one direct criticism of Charles’s conduct in regard to the Court. It is however extremely brief and mild; indeed the reader could easily miss it. It is found in Clarendon’s discussion of the King’s supporters who contributed to his ruin. In what is arguably the most dramatic language in the work, Clarendon makes it abundantly clear how he feels about those about the King who despite having no intention of disloyalty or infidelity to the Crown nevertheless helped destroy it. ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ He saw them as sacrificing ‘the public peace and security of their master to their own passions and appetites, [and] their ambition and animosities against each other’. ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ In so doing they produce as much mischief ‘as the most bare-faced villany could have done’. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾ The lamentable effects their actions produced sprang from weakness and wilfulness, and from pride and passion, and their memories should be ‘charged with their own evil actions’. ⁽¹¹¹⁾ These phrases stand in stark contrast to Clarendon’s almost imperceptible reference to the possible blame attached to Charles. He says merely that he cannot discuss this subject of the harm done to the King’s cause by his supporters, without ‘opening a door for such reflections as shall seem to call both his wisdom and courage into question’. ⁽¹¹²⁾ Since wisdom and courage are two of the usual qualities found in the ‘ideal’ prince, Clarendon would appear to have put a slight dent in the

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 193.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 198.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 2-3.

model, but he quickly attempts to mend it. Very shortly after this mild censure, he says that he does not wish to absolve the King from the mistakes and weakness to which he was liable, but that Charles will be found 'not only a prince of admirable virtue and piety, but of great parts of knowledge, wisdom and judgement'.¹¹³ So Clarendon has once more made amends, even though his criticism of the King is so brief and mild. It is however a rare instance of Clarendon's censure of Charles where his personal qualities are concerned. It is more usual for the reader to come to an understanding of the King's faults through his own interpretation of the situation, rather than through Clarendon's own words.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 4.

Chapter 6.

Clarendon's Portrait of Charles I – Part B.

There are several examples in the History of the Rebellion where the reader may gain an impression of Charles I as a less than honourable man, despite Clarendon's apparent lack of recognition of this aspect of his character. We find this situation in regard to the dissolution of the Parliament of April-May 1640. Clarendon clearly recognizes the King's political mistake in dissolving Parliament when he describes the joy of those members who opposed Charles. They knew he says, that the King would be compelled to call another Parliament shortly, and that there would be no chance of so many unbiased men being elected again. ⁽¹⁾ Charles recognized his mistake, and sought advice as to whether he could recall Parliament after dissolving it. ⁽²⁾ This proved impossible, and Charles was then heartily sorry for what he had done. He then angrily declared that he had never given authority to dissolve Parliament, and charged Sir Henry Vane with hindering the vote of supply when he well knew that the King would have accepted it. ⁽³⁾ Surely there is a hint of dishonesty in the King's behaviour here, but Clarendon does not comment on it.

Should the readers of Clarendon's History be still unsure of Charles's less than perfect fit for the model of the 'good' prince, there is undoubtedly one particular incident which should make them question it. ⁽⁴⁾ It concerns the notorious 'Five Members Incident', in which the King after accusing five members of the Commons ⁽⁵⁾ and Lord Mandeville of high treason, went to the House of Commons accompanied by Prince Rupert, and his own guard. On finding the accused members absent, (they had been forewarned of the King's intention), Charles addressed the House on his reasons for being there. Although he sought to justify his action because 'in cases of treason, no man had privilege', ⁽⁶⁾ the Commons looked upon going to the House, (and with a guard), as the highest breach of privilege that could be possibly imagined. ⁽⁷⁾ Clarendon was well

¹ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 183.

² ibid.

³ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 183-184.

⁴ This point is raised by Macgillivray, op. cit., p. 217. He says that this incident could be interpreted by the suspicious reader as evidence of Charles's duplicity.

⁵ Hollis, Haselrigg, Hampden, Pym and Stroude.

⁶ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 483.

⁷ ibid., Vol. I, p. 487.

aware of the great advantage gained by the King's opponents through Charles's action, and he dwells on the unfortunate consequences of it at some considerable length. This quotation sums up his feelings; 'they who had formerly used to appear for all the rights and authority which belonged to the King, not knowing what to say between grief and anger, that the violent party had by these late unskilful actions of the Court gotten great advantage and recovered new spirits'.⁽⁸⁾ Clarendon was by this time advising the King (along with Falkland and Colepepper). They were he said, inclined to take on no more business in the House, because they would be blamed for giving Charles this advice, whereas they not only detested his action, but were completely unaware of his intentions.

⁽⁹⁾ This was despite Charles having promised them that he would take no more action without first communicating it to them.⁽¹⁰⁾ Yet Clarendon makes no suggestion that Charles deceived them, but instead blames Lord Digby for advising the King to take this action. Charles he says was the unfittest person alive to be served by such a counsellor, being 'too easily inclined to sudden enterprises, and as easily amazed when they were entered upon'.⁽¹¹⁾ Perhaps we can see some implicit criticism of Charles here, but only for a minor fault in his character, not for any dishonourable action. While the combination of Digby's advice to the King, and Charles's acceptance of it was always likely to have unfortunate consequences, Clarendon thought that the House of Peers was still well disposed to the King. He also thought that they might have managed 'with a little patience, to have blasted all the extravagances of the Commons'.⁽¹²⁾ Thus if Charles himself could have exercised sufficient patience to have sat still, a spectator of the dissensions between the two Houses, the outcome could have been to his advantage.⁽¹³⁾ He should also according to Clarendon, have proceeded by law against seditious persons for preaching and printing against the peace of the Kingdom.⁽¹⁴⁾ But Charles, feeling his safety threatened after his opponents had inflamed the people against him, had fled

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 463.

¹¹ *ibid.* Clarendon is more critical of Digby. Of him he says that it was his fatal infirmity to think difficult things easy and not to consider the possible consequences of his actions, particularly where he thought he could reap some glory, of which he was 'immoderately ambitious'. *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 462.

¹² *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 524.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 525.

with his family from Whitehall. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Thus he compounded his difficulties. At the time when the King was at Windsor, Clarendon said that he had fallen in only ten days 'from a height and greatness that his enemies feared, to a lowness that his own servants durst hardly avow the waiting on him'. ⁽¹⁶⁾ But Clarendon's tone is regretful not critical, and the censure, implicit though it is, concerns the King's lack of political skill and not his deceitful behaviour.

This is not the only occasion on which Clarendon refers to Charles's inept handling of a situation. After the treaty with the Scots in 1639, the King disbanded the army without peace being achieved. ⁽¹⁷⁾ He then dismissed the army in such a manner that it was unlikely to come together willingly the next time its service would be required.⁽¹⁸⁾ Charles erred in his dismissal of the Earl of Essex, as Clarendon puts it 'in a manner which disoblged him, in a crowd, without ordinary ceremony'. ⁽¹⁹⁾ According to Clarendon, Essex had served the King faithfully and well, and this treatment, combined with the perceived snub given him by the King at this time, 'wrought very much upon his proud nature', ⁽²⁰⁾ and made him susceptible to Parliament's later submissions to him. ⁽²¹⁾ Essex was also at this time denied command of the Forest of Needwood which was the Kings to dispose, and which Essex may reasonably have expected. ⁽²²⁾ This was not the last occasion on which Charles alienated Essex. In 1641, he was again disoblged when the Earl of Holland was preferred over him as General of the Army. Though the post was only to oversee its disbanding, Essex who was expecting the post felt that Charles no longer trusted him. ⁽²³⁾ Clarendon thought that a more skilful handling of the situation, would have made Essex the King's 'perfect creature,.....something very easy, if skilfully attempted'. ⁽²⁴⁾ Clarendon was particularly regretful about the alienation of Essex to the King's cause. Though proud and ambitious, he saw Essex as having no ill-nature in his make-up, capable of

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 507.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 524.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 164.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 359.

²⁴ *ibid.*

performing his obligations, faithful and constant in any trust given him, an enemy of the Scots, and constant in upholding the honour of his master or the nation. ⁽²⁵⁾ Yet despite his respect for Essex, and his awareness of the damage the King had wrought by his own ineptitude, Clarendon does not criticize Charles. It is again left to the reader to discern Clarendon's opinion of the King's actions.

Clarendon's comments on the King as regards the events leading up to the Civil War are instructive, though again the reader himself must make the connection between what is actually written in the History, and what Clarendon may really be thinking about Charles I. His 'story' of the King's attempt to gain possession of the fleet is a sorry tale of ineptitude. Firstly, Charles delayed long beyond the time many thought appropriate, ⁽²⁶⁾ the catalyst for the King's action being the perceived dishonour to him of Parliament chasing one of his own ships as if it were an enemy. ⁽²⁷⁾ However, the actual attempt to secure the fleet was a disastrous failure, resulting from confusion surrounding the orders of command. A mismanaged and inept campaign saw delayed instructions and changed plans, which allowed the Earl of Warwick to successfully regain command. ⁽²⁸⁾ Thus the King suffered the loss of the whole navy with 'unspeakable ill consequences', ⁽²⁹⁾ which included the low opinion of his possible allies overseas. ⁽³⁰⁾ Clarendon attempts to explain Charles's failures, but only manages to increase the reader's perception of the King's naivety. He says that the King was so confident of the loyalty and affection of the seamen to him, that he thought them obliged to him despite his not being able to pay them. He did not recognize that Parliament having seized all his revenue was the only body who could do so, and thus could demand their service. ⁽³¹⁾ This incident certainly suggests that Charles was a king who was out of touch with the 'real world', yet Clarendon is as usual, regretful and dismayed, but not critical of the King's actions.

This is not the only example in the History of Charles being out of touch with the 'real world'. Clarendon again allows the reader to see Charles's naivety in regard to his

²⁵ ibid.

²⁶ ibid., Vol. II, p. 215.

²⁷ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 215-216.

²⁸ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 216-223.

²⁹ ibid., Vol. II, p. 224.

³⁰ ibid.

³¹ ibid., Vol. II, p. 225.

agreement to the removal of his right to levy Tonnage and Poundage (May/June, 1641). Here the King was persuaded not to enter into any dispute concerning the bill, because he was assured that he was 'sure to have whatsoever he or his progenitors had enjoyed, and frankly given, and granted to him within two months'.⁽³²⁾ This was despite the preamble to the bill which declared against the power of the Crown to levy this charge without the express consent of Parliament.⁽³³⁾ Clarendon says that Charles, expecting no difficulty with the bill, 'in expectation and confidence that they would make glorious additions to his state and revenue, suffered himself to be stripped of all that he had left'.⁽³⁴⁾ This meant that he had also lost the sole stock of credit on which he could borrow money, (which Clarendon put at forty or fifty thousand pounds).⁽³⁵⁾ Thus once again Charles had brought disaster upon himself through not understanding the real situation. This unfortunate situation followed shortly after the Subsidy Bill of February 1641, which the King 'made no pause in passing, himself not considering the consequences of it'.⁽³⁶⁾ None of the funds raised could be applied 'to the King's use, or by his direction',⁽³⁷⁾ yet the people were not aware that the King's coffers were not any fuller through the money so raised.⁽³⁸⁾

The King also found his coffers empty at several points during the war. There is an interesting story here which reflects on Charles character in a quite unfavourable way, this time not a political mistake, but concerning his moral qualities. September 1647, after the King returned from Shrewsbury, was a time of particular financial necessity. But an expedient for raising money offered itself. It concerns Sir Richard Newport who was loyal to the King, but wished to become a baron. His eldest son Francis initiated a proposal for the King to grant this, for 'a good sum of money'.⁽³⁹⁾ Clarendon says that Charles 'had no mind to embrace the proposition'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ He had often spoken against 'making merchandise for honour'⁽⁴¹⁾ as had been done in Buckingham's time. He did

³² *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 347.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 348.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 277.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 278.

³⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 339.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

so again on this occasion, saying that he had not taken a firmer resolution against many things ‘than against this particular expedient of raising money’.⁽⁴²⁾ Nevertheless he was prevailed upon to raise Sir Richard Newport to Baron Newport, and was duly rewarded with a sum of six thousand pounds.⁽⁴³⁾ Clarendon is most understanding about the situation. He explains that Charles reconsidered his former position because of the ‘indispensable want of money and the merit and ability of the person involved’.⁽⁴⁴⁾ He does not challenge the King’s honour, though many readers may do so. Instead, he remarks with apparent satisfaction that after Newport’s gift ‘all preparations for the army were [then] prosecuted with effect’.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Many questions arise concerning Charles and the prosecution of the war. The History contains several messages and declarations exchanged between the parties to the war, including various peace proposals. That Clarendon thought that Charles was not responsible for beginning the war, we know from his reply to Parliament’s claim that it entered the war only for its own defence, in which he says this was ‘so contrary to known truth’.⁽⁴⁶⁾ But he also indicates his view that Parliament was the aggressor at several other points in the work. A few examples will indicate this: the discussion surrounding the Militia Bill,⁽⁴⁷⁾ the votes concerning Hull taken by Parliament,⁽⁴⁸⁾ the desire by Parliament to appoint the Admiral of the Fleet without consulting the King,⁽⁴⁹⁾ and the vote by the two Houses that the King intended war against them.⁽⁵⁰⁾ He also includes the declaration of the King’s peaceable intentions of June 16, 1642.⁽⁵¹⁾ It however became necessary for Charles to declare war at the time when Portsmouth under the command of Colonel Goring declared for the King. Charles then set up his standard at Nottingham. The choice of this site was a mistake according to Clarendon: York would have been a better choice.⁽⁵²⁾ However when giving his own opinion, he uses

42 ibid., Vol. II, pp. 339-340.

43 ibid., Vol. II, p. 340.

44 ibid.

45 ibid.

46 ibid., Vol. IV, p. 434.

47 ibid., Vol. I, pp. 570-571, pp. 573-574, pp. 577-580.

48 ibid., Vol. II, pp. 51-52.

49 ibid., Vol. II, pp. 18-19.

50 ibid., Vol. II, pp. 81-85.

51 ibid., Vol. II, pp. 188-190.

52 ibid., Vol. II, p. 284.

the words 'many were of the opinion', ⁽⁵³⁾ but the reader can discern that it is Clarendon's view from the discussion of 'the very important considerations which ought to have prevailed'. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ These considerations include Clarendon's opinion that it would have been easier to raise men in the northern counties, and that Newcastle, being the only port at the King's command, was the convenient entry point for the supplies which were expected from overseas. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ There is some minor criticism of Charles's move to Nottingham. Clarendon says Charles took the resolution 'without enough weighing the objections. ⁽⁵⁶⁾ He also mentions another error in the leaving at liberty Lord Fairfax and his son Thomas, who were the chief of the men of quality disaffected to the King's cause. Charles had resolved to have them put into custody, but was prevailed upon to leave them free so that he would not appear 'ungracious and unpopular'. ⁽⁵⁷⁾ This says Clarendon was 'a sad presage of all the misfortunes which followed'. ⁽⁵⁸⁾ Yet another mistake is pointed out by Clarendon in the journey from York to Nottingham. On the way Charles attempted to take Coventry, but retreated when he found the gates shut against him with shots fired at his men. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ Clarendon says that had he delayed his attempt he most likely would have been successful, because the next day he met Parliament's army which was small in number, and it retreated without giving charge. ⁽⁶⁰⁾ This unhappy event and the rebellious nature of Coventry made the King very melancholic, which was also the state of affairs when he set up his standard. ⁽⁶¹⁾

Clarendon's history of the war itself is an uneven account of the campaigns, of triumphs, defeats and retreats by the forces of both sides. However of interest here is the King's actual involvement in the war. Clarendon does make reference to the King being actually in the field, Edgehill being one of note. This battle is discussed at length with considerable detail given. ⁽⁶²⁾ He gives an account of the hardships faced by the men,

53 *ibid.*

54 *ibid.*

55 *ibid.*

56 *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 285.

57 *ibid.*

58 *ibid.*

59 *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 289-290.

60 *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 290.

61 *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 290-291.

62 C. H. Firth, *D.N.B.*, Vol. X, p. 372. says that Clarendon was at the battle of Edgehill, though he took no active part in it.

and the lack of discipline which saw Charles himself in danger of being captured by the enemy. ⁽⁶³⁾ Clarendon suggests that he thought the timing of the attack by the King's army was wrong, being so late in the day. ⁽⁶⁴⁾ He does not say 'I think this', but again uses the words 'some were of the opinion [that the business should have been deferred till the next day]', ⁽⁶⁵⁾ but the reader will most likely see this as Clarendon's own view. He also remarks on the haste with which the battle was begun, and the unfortunate consequences of this. He recalls that the King, having received notice of the intention of many of Parliament's officers to resort to him when they received assurance of pardon, had this declaration printed and ready to be distributed on this day. But in the rush to engage the enemy, these proclamations were forgotten and this opportunity was wasted. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ The King himself however is praised, implicitly for his courage and directly for his honourable action. In the face of impending disaster he was advised to leave the field, but he refused saying that he thought it 'unprincely to forsake them who had forsaken all they had to serve him', ⁽⁶⁷⁾ for he knew that 'the army was raised by his person and presence only'. ⁽⁶⁸⁾ Thus we see again the 'good' king. Though he may have made mistakes his honour is here extolled. Of the battle itself, Clarendon says that the losses on both sides were so great that victory could not be imparted to either side. ⁽⁶⁹⁾ Both armies withdrew, the Earl of Essex to Warwick Castle, the King to Oxford having taken Banbury Castle on the way. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ The King found himself well-provided for at Oxford, and here according to Clarendon, he should have sat still for the winter. Parliament was dismayed by events at Edgehill, some astonished by their army's lack of triumph, and some disliking the actual battle with the King. With Charles's reputation now high and Parliament divided into factions an accomodation seemed likely. ⁽⁷¹⁾ The King however was prevailed on to march to Reading, and then to Colnbrook, where a peace proposition was presented to him. ⁽⁷²⁾ Then an unfortunate event occured. Prince Rupert without the King's knowledge advanced to Hounslow, and from there requested the King to

⁶³ Macray ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. II p. 361.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 358.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 359-360.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 362.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 366.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 374.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 338.

⁷² *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 389-392.

follow so that he would not be cut off by the Earl of Essex's army. ⁽⁷³⁾ The King's forces were victorious at Brentford, but Parliament looked on the King's entering of the town as a deliberate breach of faith which betrayed their forces 'under the specious pretence of a treaty for peace'. ⁽⁷⁴⁾ The King was accused of 'treachery, perfidy and blood', ⁽⁷⁵⁾ and the account of the event which Parliament published made the King and his army 'odious to the Kingdom'. ⁽⁷⁶⁾ Clarendon understands these unfortunate circumstances, and he includes the content of the King's message to Parliament in which he attempts to explain his actions. ⁽⁷⁷⁾ It is indeed difficult to attach blame to the King in this instance, but Prince Rupert does not escape censure. Clarendon sees him as 'exalted with the terror he heard his name gave to the enemy', ⁽⁷⁸⁾ and trusting too much on what his friends in London told him about the probability of success should he march on the city. ⁽⁷⁹⁾ Thus he was eager to advance towards London.

Clarendon allows that Rupert was often successful in war campaigns, as in the engagement at Worcester in September 1642, ⁽⁸⁰⁾ and at Auburn Chase in September 1643, ⁽⁸¹⁾ but he does not give him a favourable 'character'. He sees him as ignorant of the government and manners of the Kingdom of England, unfamiliar with the rights of the King's ministers, and set wholly upon war rather than peaceful pursuits. ⁽⁸²⁾ More importantly, he thought that Charles was too indulgent to him, taking Rupert's advice on all matters relating to the army, often preferring his advice over that of the General who had command of the whole army. ⁽⁸³⁾ Rupert's commission as General of the Horse had a clause inserted in it, whereby he was exempted from receiving orders from anyone but the King himself. ⁽⁸⁴⁾ This made difficulties within the army and with the King's ministers. Firstly it separated the Horse from the general command, ⁽⁸⁵⁾ but also when

⁷³ *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 394-395.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 395.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 399.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 377-378.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 394.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 322-323.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 172-173.

⁸² *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 224.

⁸³ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 351.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 350.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

the King received notice of enemy movements he was bound to communicate directly with his nephew. Clarendon cites an occasion when the King being already in bed, received such intelligence, and sent Lord Falkland to give directions to Rupert. (86) Rupert, whose 'rough nature, which rendered him very ungracious to all men', (87) was extremely angry with Lord Falkland for giving him orders. (Clarendon here notes that Falkland was too loyal to the King to quarrel with Rupert.) (88) But Rupert's expectation that the King would probably favour him in any dispute brought Charles some anxious moments, as in the dispute over the disposition of the Governorship of Bristol. The Marquis of Hertford having been Lord Lieutenant of the town, thought its command was his to dispose of, but Rupert having won it, saw its government as belonging to him. (89) The King recognized the Marquis's affection and loyalty, but had given his word to Rupert. It was only Hertford's own wish to prevent any disturbance within the King's affairs, combined with his reverence for the Queen of Bohemia (whom he had served in war), (90) which saw the dispute resolved without obvious dissention. Clarendon however reports that the King's persuasions to the Marquis 'quieted [rather] than satisfied him', (91) and 'the whisperings and murmurings remained'. (92) Charles later again showed his favour to Rupert, when in 1644 after the second battle of Newbury, at a time when the army was 'less united than ever', (93) he set aside the serving General to give Rupert command. Clarendon says it was an unpopular move. The General (who is not named here), was an officer of considerable experience, had served faithfully and well and was 'willing to hear everything debated'. (94) Rupert was 'rough and passionate, and loved not debate, [and] liked what was proposed as he liked the persons who proposed it'. (95) He regarded Charles's advisers as enemies and deliberately went against anything which they proposed. (96) This is in accord with Clarendon's earlier assessment of Rupert's nature, wherein he praises Rupert's courage, but is critical of his

86 *ibid.*

87 *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 351.

88 *ibid.*

89 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 121.

90 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 125.

91 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 124.

92 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 125.

93 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 443.

94 *ibid.*

95 *ibid.*

96 *ibid.*

high opinion of himself and his judgement in matters not directly associated with the strategy of war campaigns. ⁽⁹⁷⁾

Clarendon is also critical of some of the army commanders such as Sir Richard Grenville and Lord Goring. From his account of their activities they do appear to have been at the least ineffectual, and at the worst treacherous. ⁽⁹⁸⁾ It is not clear from the History, how these men came by their appointments, but since Charles accepted them, in Clarendon's strident criticism of their activities there is an implied criticism of the King himself. However, a direct censure of Charles's appointment of a man to serve him is seen at the time of the proposed treaty of February-March 1643, when the King failed to take the opportunity to nominate the Earl of Northumberland as Lord High Admiral. ⁽⁹⁹⁾ Clarendon thought Charles too wary of preferring a man who had broken trust to him, but he thought that the advantage that the King would receive by re-admitting Northumberland to his service would outweigh any possible chance of this. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Northumberland had privately told friends that he now regretted his stand against the King, and felt much 'distain and indignation against those who [had] got him to tread their ways'. ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Clarendon thought that giving this appointment to Northumberland would have met with real gratitude and faithfulness, as he was a man originally of 'no evil purposes against the King'. ⁽¹⁰²⁾ Further, it would have caused so great a division within Parliament that the treaty would have been continued. Although he did not see peace eventuating at this time, Clarendon nevertheless thought that any additional time for discussion would have produced a more satisfactory result for the King. ⁽¹⁰³⁾ Thus again Clarendon has allowed the reader to see Charles as politically inept, not taking advantage of a situation which could benefit him. To this point we have mainly seen Clarendon's perception of Charles I as being a king who did not understand politics, was unduly influenced by those whose actions or persuasions brought disadvantages to his cause, in the main a moral man with only minor blemishes in his character. That is, the picture drawn of the King conforms closely to the model of the good prince similar to

97 ibid., Vol. III, p. 224.

98 ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 24-29, pp. 56-61, pp. 63-70.

99 ibid., Vol. III, p. 10.

100 ibid.

101 ibid., Vol. III, p. 11.

102 ibid.

103 ibid., Vol. iii, pp. 10-11.

other contemporary Royalist portraits.

Chapter 7.

Clarendon's Portrait of Charles I – Part C.

In the History of the Rebellion Clarendon has generally shown Charles I as a moral man whose honour is not questioned, though some political mistakes are acknowledged. Yet there are glimpses of the King's personal failings in the History, the most notable example apart from his naivety, (as in his perception of the seamen's affection for him,⁽¹⁾ and in his loss of Tonnage and Poundage ⁽²⁾), concerns his lack of confidence in his own judgement. In discussing deliberations of the War Council after the battle of Alresford in 1644, in which very different opinions were offered to the King, Clarendon says that Charles trusted less his own judgement than he should have. Further, he frequently considered the opinion of the person who spoke if he was in his grace, and discounted it if he was prejudiced against him. ⁽³⁾ Yet even here with this mild criticism, Clarendon covers it with a cloak of commendation, saying that Charles should have trusted his own judgement more, because it 'rarely deceived him so much as that of other men'. ⁽⁴⁾ Later in the History in his discussion of past events which had contributed to the King's misfortune, Clarendon notes that the most signal parts of Charles's misfortunes resulted from not trusting himself enough, for he believed 'that others discerned better who were much inferior to him in those faculties'. ⁽⁵⁾ Thus he often departed from his own reasoning, and followed the advice of 'more unskilful men, whose affections he believed to be unquestionable to his service'. ⁽⁶⁾ So Charles is still a 'good' king despite minor flaws in his character, at least in Clarendon's portrait of him.

However, the portrait of the 'good' king, the honourable man (albeit with minor flaws in his character), becomes very difficult to accept when the reader considers the King's dealings with the proponents of the various treaties after he became a prisoner. The Scots pressed him to consent to the extirpation of episcopacy in England as he had done for Scotland. Clarendon says that it was believed that had Charles been induced to satisfy this request, they may have declared for him and come to his defence, or at the

¹ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 224.

² ibid., Vol. I, p. 347.

³ ibid., Vol. III, p. 344.

⁴ ibid.

⁵ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 4.

⁶ ibid.

very least, their party at Westminster would have been satisfied. (7) But says Clarendon, his majesty 'was too conscientious to buy his peace at so profane and sacrilegious a price'. (8) This statement should be kept in mind in the telling of what follows in later negotiations. While in captivity at Carisbrooke Castle after his escape from Hampton Court, Parliament sent four Acts to the King for his consent. (9) The contents of these were such that Charles most likely would not consent to them. He was to confess guilt for the war, he was required to totally dissolve government by bishops and deny them the use of their lands, he was to allow settlement of the militia as Parliament wished, and he was to sacrifice to Parliament, those of his adherents named in the relevant Acts. (10) Charles did not give his consent, and Clarendon commends him for the reasons behind the refusal: they 'opened a door for all intolerable oppressions upon his subjects, by granting such an arbitrary and illimited power to the two Houses'. (11) Cromwell now declared the King to be 'so great a dissembler, and so false a man, that he was not to be trusted', (12) and a vote of 'no more addresses to the King' was passed by Parliament. (13) The Scots however were still prepared to treat with Charles, and sent commissioners to the Isle of Wight to renew the demands they had put to him at Hampton Court. (14) The King had not agreed at that time, because according to Clarendon these demands 'trenched so far upon the honour and interest of the English, that he [the King] utterly refused to consent [to them]'. (15) The terms of this proposed agreement included: the Prince of Wales leading an army into England, the demand for a number of Scotsmen to be always in Court in places of close proximity to the King, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York; Berwick and Carlisle to be put in Scottish hands, and concessions in regard to the northern counties. Further, the King was to confirm the League and Covenant by Act of Parliament in both Kingdoms, with Presbyterian government to be instituted for three years, though a proviso was included, that no-one who was unwilling should be forced to take the Covenant. The King and his household were to be allowed

7 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 203.

8 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 204.

9 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 276-277.

10 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 278.

11 *ibid.*

12 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 281.

13 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 282.

14 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 293-294.

15 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 294.

their own form of worship and certain specified sects were to be suppressed. ⁽¹⁶⁾ In return the King was to have his freedom, with the Scots invading England and restoring his government. ⁽¹⁷⁾ The terms of this treaty Clarendon declared to be ‘the most scandalous and derogatory to the honour and interest of the English nation, and [they] would have been abominated, if known and understood by all men, with all possible indignation’. ⁽¹⁸⁾ The treaty nevertheless was signed by the King on December 26, 1647. Since Clarendon spoke so vehemently against the terms of this agreement, it could be expected that he would challenge the King’s honour in accepting them. However he does not, but instead refers to the ‘infamous circumstances’ ⁽¹⁹⁾ by which the concession were obtained from the King, that is, only four days consideration allowed, with no-one permitted to advise him. Clarendon assures his readers that had Charles been able to ‘advise himself upon so many monstrous particulars as were demanded of him’ he would not have agreed. ⁽²⁰⁾ While the reader most likely now sees the model of the ‘good’ prince as flawed, Clarendon seems determined to keep it intact.

The next treaty proposals which throw light on the King’s character are seen in the treaty begun on September 18, 1648, after the Common Council of London had sent a petition to Parliament requesting a treaty with the King. Their request was accepted by Parliament, and commissioners were sent to Newport to meet the King. The details of this treaty are discussed at length, even to such particulars as to which of the commissioners sent to the Isle of Wight were most desirous of peace, and the changed appearance and apparent good spirits of the King. ⁽²¹⁾ These interesting but less important details are set down clearly, but Clarendon’s discussion of the actual treaty terms is less easy to comprehend, even after several readings. Yet Clarendon’s command of language is such, that at most other points of discussion in the History his meaning is immediately clear. The other exception, Charles’s broken engagement to the Infanta has already been discussed in this context. ⁽²²⁾ As with the Spanish episode, it seems that Clarendon is being deliberately obtuse so as to disguise his real meaning. That is, should

¹⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 297-302.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 299.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 296.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 430.

²² See Chapter 5, p. 74.

he have set out clearly what Charles agreed to, the King's reputation as a man of honour would no longer be valid. It should be noted that Charles did attach conditions to his consent, the one exception being that he did stand firmly against meeting the full requirements of the commissioners in the proposal concerning religion and the Church.

(23) But apart from these qualifications, the terms agreed here were basically those condemned by Clarendon earlier.

The first proposal put to the King required that he revoke all declarations against Parliament and commissions granted by him. (24) However when he had agreed to this, the commissioners insisted that there could be no foundation for a lasting peace without his agreement that Parliament had found it necessary to enter the war for its own 'just and lawful defence'. (25) On being told that his refusal to this proposition would bring an end to the negotiations, Clarendon reports that Charles was inclined to run this risk rather than sacrifice his honour and the justice of his cause until he had consulted those advisers of whose affection and ability he was assured. (26) That is, he would not agree to the resolution until persuaded to do so. I am here reminded of two other instances where Charles was persuaded to take action contrary to his own ideas. The first concerns the bill which took Strafford's life, (27) and the second, the bill which removed the bishop's votes after trusted and faithful advisers persuaded Charles that passing it was the only way to preserve the Church. (28) These instances could be seen by the suspicious reader as attempts by the King to escape blame by hiding behind others. Clarendon however does not offer any criticism of Charles regarding this first proposal, despite describing Parliament's claim to have entered the war only for its own defence, as 'so horrid and monstrous a nature, so contrary to known truth, and so destructive of justice and government that it seemed to naturalize rebellion and to make it current in the Kingdom to all posterity'. (29) The next proposal in the treaty concerned religion and the Church. It necessitated Charles agreeing to abolishing episcopacy, the alienating of Church land and the imposing of the Covenant on all. That is there were to be no exceptions including

23 The King's final answer is given Macray ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 452.

24 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 431-432.

25 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 433.

26 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 435.

27 *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 337-338.

28 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 565. Though the Queen does share the blame here, *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 434.

those concerning Charles himself as opposed to the terms put forward by the Scots. ⁽³⁰⁾ Clarendon reports that Charles had agreed to Scottish terms with ‘much reluctance’, ⁽³¹⁾ and that his arguments against the present measures were put with ‘wonderful acuteness’.⁽³²⁾ He gave his consent, but only because he hoped that it would not be in his power to implement the changes proposed in this resolution. ⁽³³⁾ Will the reader see this as honourable? What Charles did agree to in this proposal, was that he would suspend episcopal power until he and Parliament could agree on the form of government to be adopted, and he would accept only ninety-nine year leases over the Bishops’ lands, not total alienation. ⁽³⁴⁾ Otherwise his answers were in accord with what he had earlier offered. The next proposal concerning the militia seems to have troubled the King less than the other resolutions, though he did send some limitations to Parliament (they were not accepted). Clarendon explains that he did this so that he might ‘at least leave some monument and record of his care and tenderness of his people’: ⁽³⁵⁾ the ‘good’ prince again. The next proposition concerned Ireland and the Marquis of Ormonde. Charles at first prevaricated against condemning Ormonde, but he did finally agree to publish a declaration against his authority as was required by the commissioners. The terms of this proposal wherein the peace was to be declared void, was according to Clarendon, for the purpose of Parliament taking revenge against Ormonde. ⁽³⁶⁾ But says Clarendon, ‘it cannot be expressed with what grief and trouble of mind he received these importunities, and without doubt, he would at that time with much more willingness have died than submitted to it’. ⁽³⁷⁾ Yet submit he did. The ever charitable Clarendon does note however, that the King only consented because he was pressed by his friends to do so for the peace and security of the Kingdom. ⁽³⁸⁾ The proposal concerning the ‘delinquents’ appears to have caused the King considerable uneasiness of mind. Parliament proposed that seven named persons should be excepted from pardon and their estates forfeited and that certain others should pay part of their estates to Parliament, that none who had been against Parliament should be permitted at Court or serve Parliament for three years, and

³⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 440.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 439.

³³ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 440.

³⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 439.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 442.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 443.

³⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 444.

³⁸ *ibid.*

clergymen were to be deprived of their livings. (39) The King replied that he could not 'in justice and in honour' (40) agree to any act which took the life or estate of any who had adhered to him. Yet he did agree that he would allow them to be proceeded against without his active intervention. (41) This answer will not fit every reader's idea of Charles I as a man of honour, but Clarendon by his lack of criticism gives tacit acceptance of the King's actions. He reserves his criticism for the commissioners referring to their 'refractory obstinate adherence to their own will', (42) whereas the King's concessions were made for 'the benefit and peace of his dominions'. (43) That Charles saw himself in the same light, is shown in his letter to the Prince of Wales dated November 25, 1648, when he says 'you see how long we have laboured in search of peace', (44) and 'the price is great, but the commodity was security for us, peace for our people'. (45) Clarendon, in a final attempt to portray Charles as the 'good' prince, says of the passage in the letter, of which the above is part, that it deserves 'to be printed in letters of gold, and gives the best character of that excellent prince'. (46)

Parliament however rejected the treaty to which 'that excellent prince' was a somewhat reluctant party, with those triumphant in the Commons seeing Charles in a different perspective from Clarendon's expressed view. They called him 'a man of blood', (47) and decided that he, whom they saw as the cause of the misery in the Kingdom, should be brought to justice. A charge of high treason was subsequently prepared against him. (48) Clarendon discusses the charge against the King and the constitution of the court which was to try him, both of these at some length. This stands in contrast to his coverage of the actual trial. Except for two colourful but unimportant details, (the disturbance caused by Lady Fairfax, and the reference to the un-named person who spat in the King's face) (49) the discussion is confined to the charges against

39 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 449.

40 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 450.

41 *ibid.*

42 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 434.

43 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 436.

44 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 454.

45 *ibid.*

46 *ibid.*

47 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 469.

48 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 473.

49 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 486-487.

the King, and his replies, and even these are briefly reported. Clarendon does excuse himself from further discussion of the trial and execution by saying that ‘all particulars [are] so well known, and have been enlarged upon in a treatise peculiarly applied to that purpose, that the further mentioning of it in this place would affect and pain the reader, and make the relation itself odious’.⁽⁵⁰⁾ In place of the discussion of the two most notable events in Charles’s reign, which could reasonably be expected to be included, Clarendon then presents a short eulogy on Charles I. He remarks on the King’s ‘majestic behaviour under so much insolence’,⁽⁵¹⁾ and recalls how Charles was ‘resolute insisting on his own dignity, and defending it by manifest authorities in the law, as well as by the clearest deductions of reason’.⁽⁵²⁾ Of the execution itself there is only one brief reference. He refers to it as ‘the most execrable murder’,⁽⁵³⁾ and to Charles’s ‘Christian courage and patience at his death’.⁽⁵⁴⁾ How then is Clarendon’s ‘strangely cursory treatment’⁽⁵⁵⁾ of the King’s trial and execution to be explained? Did he lack sufficient information to adequately present a more detailed and vivid discussion of the last events in Charles’s life? Some support for this premise stems from the contrast in his reporting of Charles’s trial and that of Strafford, which took place while Clarendon was in England, and for which he helped draw up the articles of impeachment.⁽⁵⁶⁾ If we accept this premise, that is that he was reluctant to report an event of which he was unsure of the accuracy of details, this gives recognition to his principles as an historian. We can see from the History itself that Clarendon writes with greater confidence on events for which he has personal knowledge⁽⁵⁷⁾ than as here in Charles’s trial and execution, the details of the last days of the King’s life would have been related to Clarendon from a source quite possibly removed from the event.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Macgillivray raises a second point for consideration when he comments that Clarendon may have felt that he lacked the literary grasp to paint the last terrible scenes of the King’s life.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Brownley’s comments on

⁵⁰ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 458. A note to this page suggests either the second part of Bate’s Elenchus Motuum or England’s Black Tribunal, both published in 1660.

⁵¹ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 488.

⁵² ibid.

⁵³ ibid.

⁵⁴ ibid.

⁵⁵ R. Macgillivray, op. cit., p. 216.

⁵⁶ C. H. Firth, D.N.B., Vol X, p. 371.

⁵⁷ As in his giving insight into the factions in the Court. Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 192-194.

⁵⁸ I note the difference with Sir Philip Warwick who had his information from Juxon who attended the King in the last days of his life. See Chapter 2, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁹ Macgillivray, op. cit. p. 216.

Clarendon's literary art lend some support to this contention, in that we do not find in the History of the Rebellion the great scenes of the period. She notes Clarendon as 'the least pictorial of the great English historiographers'.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Indeed he is more interested in analyzing events rather than depicting them. However he failed conspicuously in regard to analyzing the character of Charles I, despite being able to allow his readers an understanding of the characters of other figures in the rebellion, through his analysis of both the actions of the men themselves and the situations confronting them. The function of Charles I in the History is quite different. The King is not meant to be a living figure but the representation of the 'good' king whose character and actions do not bear the close scrutiny which Clarendon gives the lesser figures of his times. What we have in the History of the Rebellion is a presentation of Charles's more admirable qualities, not the depiction of a man who has both faults and virtues.

The 'character' of Charles I which appears at the point in the History after his execution, is still in line with a presentation of qualities rather than any analyzing of them. Clarendon says that he is presenting this 'character' so that posterity will know the inestimable loss which the nation experienced when it was deprived of a prince 'who would have had greater influence on the manners and piety of the nation than the most strict laws can have'.⁽⁶¹⁾ Of the King's personal qualities Clarendon says:

He was, if ever any, the most worthy of the title of an honest man; so great a lover of justice, that no temptation could dispose him to a wrongful action, except it were so disguised to him that he believed it to be just. He had a tenderness and compassion of nature, which restrained him from ever doing a hard-hearted thing; and therefore he was so apt to grant pardon to malefactors, that his judges represented to him the damage and insecurity to the public that flowed from such his indulgence.⁽⁶²⁾

Clarendon refers particularly to Charles I's piety saying he was punctual and

⁶⁰ Brownley, op. cit., p. 39.

⁶¹ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 489.

⁶² ibid.

regular in his devotions, and severe with those who did not revere religion. ⁽⁶³⁾ He was also a great example of conjugal affection, abhorred vice and prosecuted it without favour to any person. ⁽⁶⁴⁾ This picture of the King's personal qualities is without blemish, though there is a hint of criticism in Clarendon's presentation of Charles's kingly qualities. He says that Charles's kingly virtues 'had some alloy which prevented them from shining in full lustre'. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ He was also not bountiful and paused too long in giving, so that the recipients were less grateful than they may have been. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ His Court was orderly, with each knowing and keeping his place. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ He speaks of Charles's skill as a mediator, and his personal courage, but says that he was not enterprising. ⁽⁶⁸⁾ He mentions Charles's lack of confidence in himself which made him often follow the advice of others less capable than he was. ⁽⁶⁹⁾ He says that had he been more imperious he would have been more respected, and that his lenient and tender nature made him take the 'softer way, and not hearken to severe counsels'. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ Clarendon here gives the example of the Scots against whom Charles did not pursue his advantage. ⁽⁷¹⁾ That his downfall was not his own fault is shown in the words, 'so many miraculous circumstances contributed to his ruin, that men might think that heaven and earth conspired it,..... and that the stars designed it'. ⁽⁷²⁾ Charles was betrayed by his own servants, but their treachery sprang from their animosity to each other, and their wish to escape Parliament's wrath, rather than from any wish to harm him. That is in preserving themselves, the cost was the King's destruction. ⁽⁷³⁾ Yet Clarendon says that at the time of his death, Charles I was as much loved and esteemed by the three nations of Ireland, Scotland and England, as any of his predecessors had been. ⁽⁷⁴⁾ He concludes his 'character' of the King with this contention:—

63 *ibid.*

64 *ibid.*

65 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 490.

66 *ibid.*

67 *ibid.*

68 *ibid.*

69 *ibid.*

70 *ibid.*

71 *ibid.*

72 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 491.

73 *ibid.*

74 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 492.

He was the worthiest gentleman, the best master, the best friend, the best husband, the best father, and the best Christian that the age in which he lived had produced. And if he was not the best King, if he was without some parts and qualities which have made some kings great and happy, no other prince was ever unhappy who was possessed of half his virtues and endowments, and so much without any kind of vice. (75)

We can see that this ‘character’ really adds nothing to the portrait of Charles I already drawn in the earlier volumes of the History of the Rebellion, Clarendon has here allowed some minor faults to appear in the King’s character, but at the same time he manages to draw a veil of virtue over them. He tries extremely hard in this ‘character’ as throughout the work itself to leave the model of the ‘good’ prince intact. There are no references to aspects of the King’s behaviour in which Charles’s honour could be challenged. The reader may well question Clarendon’s claim that the King was ‘most worthy of the title of an honest man, (76) or that he never could be tempted to a wrongful act ‘unless he believed it to be just’. (77) In fact consideration of the various treaty provisions to which Charles I agreed, nullifies these claims. By omitting any reference to any acts which do not allow the King to preserve his virtuous reputation, Charles’s ‘good’ qualities are the only ones seen. However this one-sided picture accounts for the King emerging from the History of the Rebellion as the ‘dim figure’ (78) which Macgillivray finds disappointing. It is however not only disappointing but inevitable, when the reasons for which Clarendon wrote the History are considered and evaluated.

75 ibid.

76 ibid., Vol. IV, p. 489.

77 ibid.

78 Macgillivray, op. cit., p. 216.

Chapter 8.

The Reasons Why Clarendon Wrote the History of the Rebellion – First Stage of Writing 1646 -1648.

My contention here is that the reasons why Clarendon wrote the History of the Rebellion explain the somewhat puzzling situation in which Charles I emerges from the work as only a 'dim figure'.⁽¹⁾ As has been shown, despite his opportunities to give his readers a revealing picture of Charles I, Clarendon fails to do so. ⁽²⁾ The King's motives quite frequently remain unclear, and even important events which could provide clues to Charles's character, are often presented in a manner which does not enlighten the reader of the History. At times insufficient detail is given, on other occasions the significance of the events is masked so that issues in which the King is involved are not easily understood. These aspects of Clarendon's treatment of Charles I will be considered below. My immediate aim here is to discover Clarendon's motives and objectives in writing the History. They explain why, given his obvious advantages in drawing a realistic and life-like portrait of the King, he provides only a model of kingly 'goodness' similar to his contemporaries who knew the King less well than he did. I intend to show that Clarendon either chose to, or was forced by circumstances to portray Charles I in the most favourable light, giving only a single dimension and vague picture which in fact amounted to a non-portrait of the King. However, since Clarendon's aims and objectives were different in each stage of the writing of the History, I will begin by considering his motives and intentions at the time he began the work on Jersey in 1646.

Clarendon, then Sir Edward Hyde, sat down to write the History of the Rebellion during his first period of exile. He had fled the English mainland with the Prince of Wales in 1646, going first to Scilly on March 4. They moved to Jersey some six weeks later after the Parliamentary fleet had threatened their safety. ⁽³⁾ Clarendon had been sent to the west of England by Charles I as one of the Council attending the Prince. While no doubt the King was anxious to have such a trustworthy servant as Clarendon attend his son, Charles may yet have been glad to see him depart. Clarendon's policy of appealing

¹ Macgillivray, op. cit., p. 216.

² See Chapters 5, 6, 7.

³ C. H. Firth, D.N.B. Vol. X, p. 374.

to the 'known laws of the land', though successful in gathering support for the King, had not been successful in healing the breach between Charles and the Parliament. (4) In the History Clarendon defined the position he wished the King to adopt as,

The King's resolution was to shelter himself wholly under the law, to grant anything that by law he was obliged to grant, and to deny what by law was in his power and which he found inconvenient to consent to, and to oppose and punish any extravagant attempt by the force and power of the law; presuming that the King and the law together would be strong enough for any encounter that could happen. (5)

While it is clear that the King was never a whole-hearted supporter of the policy Clarendon advocated, it is difficult to assess the degree of influence Clarendon had with Charles I. The King seems to have seen Clarendon's usefulness to the Royalist side, firstly as spokesman for the Royalist cause, and secondly as negotiator on issues which Charles used to gain time. Whatever the degree of Clarendon's influence in the earlier days of their relationship, after the Oxford Parliament Charles was definitely more inclined to listen to the advice of those whose ideas differed greatly from Clarendon's. As an active figure in the political world, Clarendon was no doubt reluctant to leave the King. However he was able to gain some consolation writing about the events he had witnessed, after the Prince of Wales (against the advice of his Council) obeyed a summons from his mother to join her in France. The leisure time Clarendon now had was occupied in keeping up a voluminous correspondence, and by working on a history of his times. In February 1648 Clarendon broke off writing the History of the Rebellion, to compose a vindication of his former master, after the Long Parliament had voted 'no further addresses to the King'. At the outbreak of the second Civil War, the History had been carried down to the commencement of the war campaign of 1644. (6) Clarendon left Jersey on June 26, 1648, and after an eventful journey, including capture by pirates, joined the Prince of Wales at The Hague in September. (7) No more material which later

4 ibid.

5 Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 7.

6 C. H. Firth, D.N.B., Vol. X, p. 374.

7 ibid., Vol. X, p.375.

formed part of the History of the Rebellion was written until after Clarendon's second exile in 1667 when he wrote his autobiography, much of which forms part of the published History. New material was incorporated after it was brought to him from England by his son Laurence in 1671. ⁽⁸⁾ The final work then resulted from the fusion of two separate works, with the addition of new material left behind in England, and therefore not available to Clarendon when he took up his pen to write his autobiography. This lack of material is frequently referred to by historians who write on the accuracy of the History, ⁽⁹⁾ but since it is not relevant to my overall theme, I will refer to it only if it affects Clarendon's treatment of Charles I.

When he began the History of the Rebellion, Clarendon did not intend that it should be published in its original form in his lifetime as his letters written at this time indicate. ⁽¹⁰⁾ It was however his wish that at least some part of the work would be published at a later date as the terms of his will of April 4, 1647 show. In this, he gives the King the right to direct what should be done with the manuscript after Clarendon's death, should he die before the work was completed. ⁽¹¹⁾ Thus we know that Clarendon expected Charles I to see the manuscript. Even though he expected to be dead when the King was reading about himself in the work, he would surely not be prepared to place Charles I's personal failings under too strong a light. Close scrutiny of the King's actions were not then advisable. This accounts for the cloak of virtue with which Clarendon covers specific incidents in which the King was involved. On other occasions the best possible light is shone on the King's questionable motives. ⁽¹²⁾ These efforts to keep the reader from seeing Charles I as anything other than the 'good' prince, do not allow the true character of the King to emerge in the work. While Clarendon does at times show the King's political ineptness, there is not necessarily any contradiction here. While wisdom is one of the qualities of the 'good' prince, it is a quality considerably removed from political astuteness or shrewdness which have overtones of less than moral

⁸ C.H. Firth, 'Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"', E.H.R., 19, Part III, The 'History of the Rebellion', p. 464.

⁹ C. H. Firth is a noted critic of this aspect of the History in his articles in, E.H.R. 19, see Part III, particularly pp. 473-474.

¹⁰ He wrote to Sir John Berkeley in August 1646, saying that the work would be 'unfit in this age for communication', and to Secretary Nicholas that it would 'make mad work among friends and foes if it were published', cited in ibid., p. 27.

¹¹ 'Clarendon State Papers' II, p.259, cited in ibid., p. 28.

¹² As shown in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

behaviour, implying some kind of trickery. Thus it is quite in keeping with the model of the 'good' prince to portray Charles I as politically inept, since this suggests that he put honour before political expediency. Indeed in regard to morality such as in questions of honour, at no point in the History does Clarendon question this. As the internal evidence of the work itself shows, the History of the Rebellion is a vindication of Charles I, and here I am in agreement with Firth when he says that the vindication of Charles I was one of Clarendon's objectives in writing the work, but not the primary one.⁽¹³⁾

Firth sees the History of the Rebellion as having a didactic purpose, the work being intended for the instruction of Charles I and his ministers.⁽¹⁴⁾ We might wonder why Clarendon would sit down to write a work of advice to the King or his ministers, at a time when Charles was in such a precarious position both militarily and politically. Clarendon however expected to be recalled to service. In a letter to Secretary Nicholas written in 1646, he referred to the 'new business' to which he expected to be called.⁽¹⁵⁾ Trevor-Roper acknowledges this situation when he says that with Charles I still alive though in considerable difficulty, the 'King could yet profit from Clarendon's advice'.⁽¹⁶⁾ That is though he may have lost the war, Charles could still win the peace if advised properly.⁽¹⁷⁾ Thus we can see that although the Kingdom had fallen into a low state with the King himself in a desperate situation, Clarendon could see himself giving Charles advice from which he could profit. He makes this clear in the History itself, when he says that the work may serve 'to inform myself and some others what we are to do, as well as to comfort us in what we have done'.⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet in the work the King's political mistakes are not always blamed on Charles personally. It is more usual for Clarendon to censure the King's advisers rather than the King himself, particularly in the early days of the reign before Clarendon had become one of Charles's advisers. His own later position on the Privy Council provides a further motive for writing the History of the Rebellion, because Charles then had the opportunity to listen to, and take his 'superior'

¹³ C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"', E.H.R., 19, Part I – The Original 'History', p. 28.

¹⁴ ibid., P. 20.

¹⁵ 'Clarendon State Papers', Vol. II, P. 289, cited in ibid., p. 28.

¹⁶ H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"', History Today, No. 29, February 1979, p. 74.

¹⁷ S. R. Gardiner presents a quite different view of this aspect, see Vol. III, p. 121 of The History of the Great Civil War, 1642-1649, 4 Vols., Longman, Green and Co., London, 1894.

¹⁸ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 3.

advice, but often failed to do so. Indeed this motive was a far more pressing one than the mere giving of advice for future policy. Clarendon wished to remind the King and posterity, that had he been listened to and his advice preferred over that of others, then the Monarchy would not be in its present precarious position. He set out to explain the policy pursued by Charles I, policy for which he was not always responsible despite his name being associated with it. This is to see the History as a vindication of his own position as one of the King's advisers. His political experience and knowledge of many of the most important and even tumultuous events of the reign had placed him in a position to gain insight into the mistakes which had led to the disastrous situation the King was facing in 1646. These were mistakes from which Clarendon wished to distance himself. The History of the Rebellion was a means of doing this.

The first books of the History of the Rebellion are largely a catalogue of Royalist errors made in the early years of Charles's reign. Clarendon's criticism of Royal policy begins at the time when he was only an interested spectator of Charles's government. He saw the original cause of the discontent in the Kingdom, which ultimately led to the present situation, as being found in the first three Parliaments of the reign, that is in the mistakes made by the King and his ministers in their inept handling of Parliament, particularly in regard to the rapid dissolutions. He says, 'no man can show me a source from whence these waters of bitterness we now taste, have more possibly flowed, than from this unseasonable, unskilful and precipitate dissolution of Parliaments'.⁽¹⁹⁾ However, a further cause of discontent was to be found in the supplemental acts of state to which the King resorted, when he was in financial need and he had failed to gain the necessary funds from Parliament. The Judge's upholding of the King's right to levy funds was also censured. Yet these errors were not to be imputed to the Court.²⁰ Instead Clarendon blames the lawyers Noy and Finch who he said had brought the law into disrepute.⁽²¹⁾ Similarly, the clumsy statecraft of Charles's early Parliamentary dealings was not the King's fault, but that of his advisers, particularly Buckingham. This is made clear in the long 'character' of the Duke, which is largely an exposition of his unfortunate influence on Charles I.⁽²²⁾ The breaking of the first two Parliaments is

¹⁹ ibid., Vol. I., p. 5.

²⁰ ibid.

²¹ ibid., Vol. I, p. 91.

²² ibid., Vol. I, pp. 39-51.

wholly imputed to him, and the third to Weston, then Lord High Treasurer of England. (23) In pointing out these mistakes but blaming the King's advisers for them, Clarendon is showing the King, that he had chosen his ministers unwisely. Unlike Clarendon himself, they were not men suited to advancing the King's cause, and through them Charles had set himself on the course to disaster. So while one of the purposes of the History may well have been the didactic one of instruction for future policy, Clarendon had a more personal objective in beginning the work. He saw his own service to Charles I as more conducive to supporting the Royal prerogative, than the King's early ministers had been. He then set out to remind both Charles himself and posterity, that the outcome would have been more favourable if the King had not succumbed to the influence of these men.

Clarendon held a particular view of government which was opposed to the King taking advice from either his favourites, or other men unskilled in, or unsuited to supporting his prerogative. In his view, the Privy Council of which he had been a member prior to his sojourn on Jersey had an extremely important role to play in giving advice to the King. In the History Clarendon presents his views on the calling and admitting of men to the Privy Council. Charles had appointed new Privy Councillors in late 1640, (24) and Clarendon is critical of his choice of men to serve him. He said that the calling and admitting of men to the Privy council 'is not a work that can be indifferent [for] the reputation, if not the government of the state [is] so much depending on it'. (25) Certain opinions, propositions and general principals should pertain to those accepted for office. In particular, men should not be admitted unless they are 'fixed to monarchic grounds, the preservation and upholding whereof is the chief end of such a council'. (26) According to Clarendon, one of the reasons for the disaffected party growing so powerful in Parliament, was because certain members of the Council did not defend the King's rights in Parliament. He notes the disservice to Charles's cause by Sir Harry Vane, and Mr. St. John, whose acts of 'undutifulness' towards the King are particularly mentioned. (27) Clarendon thought ministers should be chosen for their honesty and wisdom, and

23 ibid., Vol. I, p. 6.

24 At the time of the proceedings against Strafford.

25 Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 259.

26 ibid.

27 ibid., Vol. I, p. 430.

then through their own knowledge and integrity they would give the King wise guidance, and support his prerogative. (28) Indeed, the imprudent choice of men to serve as Privy Councillors was ‘the root and spring of all the calamities that have ensued’. (29) While the above lesson does seem to be advice to the King, Clarendon was also mindful of his own less than appreciated service. He notes that not only must the King choose men to serve him wisely, but having done so, he must then trust his Council. If he did not he says, resentment would build up, the result would be seen in the ‘many sad inconveniences [which] have befallen the King’. (30) Clarendon is no doubt referring to the instances in which the King either did not consult his Council, or did not take their advice.

Clarendon is however also critical of the advice which the King received from those who were faithful to his service, such as is seen in his discussion of the bill for removing the bishops from Parliament. This measure he said weakened the King’s party to a very great extent. It not only perpetually swept away from the House of Peers a considerable number of men devoted to the King, it made an impression on others ‘whose minds were in suspense and shaken, as when foundations are dissolved’. (31) While Clarendon lays some blame on the Queen for the King’s consent to this unfortunate measure, he notes that those who gave him advice on this occasion were ‘exceedingly deceived in their judgements, and not sufficiently acquainted with the constitution of the Kingdom’. (32) This statement is designed to tell the reader of the History that Clarendon would not have made this error. That is, he saw himself as more capable of giving advice suited to preserving the King’s power in Parliament than his present advisers had given, despite their desire to provide faithful service.

When the bill for removing the bishops from Parliament was put forward, Clarendon was not officially in the King’s service, but the History does include examples of incidents which took place after he joined Charles in 1642, where his ‘superior’ advice was not taken. On occasions when the advice of others was preferred over his, he

28 ibid., Vol. I, p. 261.

29 ibid., Vol. I, p. 260.

30 ibid., Vol. I, p. 261.

31 ibid., Vol. I, p. 568.

32 ibid., Vol. I, p. 565.

reminds his readers and the King, that the outcome was not to Charles's advantage. The most notable example of this situation concerns the Earls of Holland and Bedford who travelled north to join the King at Oxford in 1643. While they were awaiting the King's pleasure at Wallingford, Charles requested advice from his Privy Council on how they should be received. Opinions varied. Some thought they should be received graciously, with at least an outward appearance of accepting their return to the King's service, so that others might be encouraged to leave Parliament. ⁽³³⁾ Others were outraged at their taking the Covenant ⁽³⁴⁾ which made their loyalty suspect. This saw them joining the King only because his position seemed stronger than Parliament's did. A third opinion fell between these two extremes. That is, they should be neither courted nor neglected, with their actions determining the ultimate outcome. In the meantime however, they should be received by the King and Queen, being permitted to kiss their hands. ⁽³⁵⁾ Clarendon who had been sworn a Privy Councillor previously in that year, said he was the only man (excepting Lord Savill, who he said 'brought no credit to the opinion'), ⁽³⁶⁾ who advised confidently that the entertainment which the two Earls received, should be gracious enough from both their majesties and the Council to encourage others to join the King. ⁽³⁷⁾ Clarendon's reasoning was that Parliament accepted all those who wished to join it: to reject these men would only oblige the Parliament. ⁽³⁸⁾ Clarendon's advice did not prevail, and both men returned to London. He does note however that in Holland's case, the Earl did not apologize to the King for his previous conduct as Clarendon himself had advised him to do, and this contributed somewhat to his being treated less favourably than he had expected. ⁽³⁹⁾ The Earl of Northumberland, who according to Clarendon had intended to join Charles from his home at Petworth, returned to Parliament, being received there with great respect. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ Clarendon points out the error made by those men in the King's Council whose point of view differed from his. In treating the Earl of Holland in what Clarendon regarded as inappropriate to the circumstances, the King and

³³ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 148.

³⁴ One of its clauses said they must assist Parliament's army against the King, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 147.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 148.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 151.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 198.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 200.

his advisers were 'looked upon as implacable'.⁽⁴¹⁾ Thus he said that many who abhorred the war chose to acquiesce to Parliament's demands, rather than expose themselves to 'unseasonable and unwelcome addresses'.⁽⁴²⁾ This is a further example in which Clarendon is telling both the King and posterity, that had his advice been accepted, the outcome would have proved more advantageous to Charles's cause than the policy that was adopted.

However, beyond this objective of absolving himself from blame for the King's policy, Clarendon had other motives for writing the History of the Rebellion. At the beginning of the work, he tells his readers that he is writing it so that posterity may not be deceived into believing that there was a 'universal apostasy in the whole nation from their religion and allegiance'.⁽⁴³⁾ He also wrote for the memory of those few who 'out of duty and conscience, have opposed and resisted that torrent which hath overwhelmed them'.⁽⁴⁴⁾ As he makes clear in the work, this torrent was set in motion by the minority group in the Parliament who sought originally to limit the King's prerogative. But Clarendon opposed these men and their aims, so he was not then part of the 'universal apostasy'.⁽⁴⁵⁾ He was one of the few who knew his duty and followed his conscience in resisting the torrent. The History of the Rebellion not only explains the King's policy, it is also an explanation of Clarendon's role as supporter of the King's side. It may also have been written to reassure its author that he had supported a just and righteous cause. Clarendon needed to vindicate his own apparent change of sides⁽⁴⁶⁾ from 'reformer' against the excesses of Charles's government, to spokesman and negotiator for the King's cause. In his autobiography, Clarendon makes it clear that some of his former colleagues in Parliament came to detest him when he deserted their cause, when he no longer saw it as being in the nation's interest.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Clarendon first sat in Parliament in 1640 being elected for the seat of Wotton

41 ibid., Vol. III, p. 199.

42 ibid., Vol. III, p. 200.

43 ibid., Vol. I, p. 1.

44 ibid.

45 ibid.

46 For discussion of this topic, see B. H. G. Wormald, Clarendon : Politics, Historiography and Religion 1640-1660, University Press, Cambridge, 1964, pp. 12-14, 16-18, 84.

47 The Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon by Himself, 2 Vols., University Press, Oxford, 1857 edition, Vol. I, p. 83. Hereafter called the Life.

Basset in Wiltshire. At this time he supported those who opposed many aspects of the King's rule. His position was consistent with 'the Country' – a loose collection of peers and gentry whose values were affronted by the King's policies. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Though accepting Monarchical government, these men were concerned with what they saw as abuses of power which violated the law. They saw themselves as contesting those invasions of power which sought to destroy the right of the subject. For the King to levy impositions on merchandise, to exact forced loans and benevolences, to commit men to prison without showing lawful cause, to lay a direct charge on his people without common consent in Parliament – these things done by the King were condemned as illegal. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ In the Short Parliament Clarendon served on several committees concerned with checking the power of the prerogative courts. In the Long Parliament in which he represented Saltash, Clarendon again directed his efforts to questions concerning the administration of the law. The abolition of the Earl Marshall's Court was brought about partly through his efforts. ⁽⁵⁰⁾ He was chairman of the committee which examined the Council of Wales and the Council of the North, ⁽⁵¹⁾ and according to Firth, took a leading part in the proceedings against the Barons of the Exchequer. ⁽⁵²⁾ He also played an active role in bringing the Earl of Strafford to trial, though he took no part in the actual management of the trial itself. It does appear however that he did vote for Strafford's attainder, since his name does not appear on the list of those voting against it. ⁽⁵³⁾ However, he became increasingly concerned with the actions of some of his fellow members of Parliament. The speed and nature of the change in their attitude to the King's government required him to reassess his position towards their reforms. He began to see these reforms as a dangerous shift in the opposite direction. Thus Royalist abuses of power came to concern him less than the situation he now saw developing. Questions about the Church particularly in regard to episcopacy, led him to separate from the 'popular' party. He opposed the petition against episcopacy, and the Scottish demand for assimilation of the English ecclesiastical system into theirs. He opposed the bill for excluding the clergy

⁴⁸ See P. Zagorin, The Court and the Country, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969, pp. 74-118 for this topic.

⁴⁹ ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁰ Clarendon, Life, Vol. I, pp. 70-71.

⁵¹ ibid., Vol. I, p. 72.

⁵² C. H. Firth, D.N.B., Vol. X, p. 371.

⁵³ R. Harris, Clarendon and the English Revolution, Chatto and Windus, London, 1983, pp. 55-56.

from secular office, and was an indefatigable adversary of the Root and Branch Bill. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ He led the opposition to the Grand Remonstrance, and sought to prevent its publication. The answer he wrote to it was shown to the King by Lord Digby. Charles adopted it and published it as his own. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ Clarendon's attitude in Parliament attracted the King's attention, and Charles sent for him shortly before he left for Scotland in 1641, to thank him for his efforts on behalf of the Church. ⁽⁵⁶⁾ In January 1642, the King offered him the post of Solicitor-General in place of St. John. He declined, saying that he could serve the King better in his present capacity. ⁽⁵⁷⁾ Around this time Charles promised Lord Falkland, Sir John Colepepper, and Clarendon himself, that he would make no move in dealing with Parliament without consulting them. ⁽⁵⁸⁾ The King however did not keep his promise, and unbeknown to them made an attempt to arrest five members of Parliament – an action which was to have unfortunate repercussions for the Monarchy. Although they had not favoured the King's move, Falkland, Colepepper and Clarendon were blamed in the House of Commons for its occurrence. It did not help Clarendon's cause of supporting the Royal Prerogative in the Parliament. While in his autobiography he says that it was from the night of the Protestation that he was detested by the minority group in Parliament, ⁽⁵⁹⁾ at this time there already existed considerable prejudice against him from the 'reformers', firstly because of his affection for Archbishop Laud, and also for what he calls his 'unalterable devotion to the government of the Church'. ⁽⁶⁰⁾ According to Clarendon, after the King left Whitehall, there was a plot to seize him along with Falkland and Colepepper and send them to the Tower. ⁽⁶¹⁾ He also claims that it was becoming increasingly difficult for any member of Parliament to speak against proposals put forward by the minority group. ⁽⁶²⁾ So when at the end of April 1642 Clarendon received a letter from the King asking him to join him, he stayed only a short time longer in London, arriving in York around May 19. These brief excerpts from Clarendon's parliamentary days, present him as being first what has been described as

54 Firth, *loc. cit.*

55 Clarendon, *Life*, Vol. I, pp. 79-80.

56 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 77.

57 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 82.

58 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 83.

59 *ibid.*

60 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 70.

61 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 111.

62 *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 112.

‘an enemy to Charles I from the Royal standpoint’, ⁽⁶³⁾ to an adviser to the King, if unofficially at this time. He became spokesman for the Royalist cause, composing all the important declarations and messages on the King’s behalf until he left the King to go with the Prince of Wales to safety in the west of England. ⁽⁶⁴⁾

Clarendon’s former allies in the Parliament later referred to him as one of the ‘malignant persons who gave the King advice’. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ When he came to write that part of the History of the Rebellion concerned with the time in the Long Parliament after he began to support the King, Clarendon considered them in the same terms. Those whose reforms he had formerly supported are bitterly castigated as ‘contrivers of mischief’. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ He portrays them as progressing from a desire to control Parliament, to rebellion against the King. His bitter invective stemmed from his desire to exonerate his own actions in seeming to change sides from supporter of Parliament, to supporter of the King. He wished to let posterity know that he, not his former allies, had followed the just cause, because their actions had eventually led to rebellion. In the History, Clarendon goes into considerable detail as to the means by which the ‘malignant party’ ⁽⁶⁷⁾ sought to achieve their aims. He makes it quite clear to the reader that he detested the actions of his former colleagues in the Parliament. In seeking to control Parliament the minority group packed the House with men of their own faction, ⁽⁶⁸⁾ achieving this through various nefarious means. They removed those members not inclined to their view, ⁽⁶⁹⁾ and used ‘artifices’ to bring in more ‘sanctified members’ (those of similar views to theirs). They practised ‘strange ingenuity and mountebankry’ ⁽⁷⁰⁾ to procure petitions favourable to their policies. This amounted to men signing their names to petitions to which they were familiar, this part then being cut off. That part of the petition with the signatures on it was then attached to another petition of a different nature, the provisions of which they had not seen. ⁽⁷¹⁾ At this time, the minority group in Parliament also punished those

⁶³ Wormald, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶⁴ He did not write the answer to the Nineteen Propositions, (composed by Falkland and Colepepper) nor the reply to the attack on Brentford, (written by Falkland). Miller op. cit., p. 7.

⁶⁵ Clarendon, Life, Vol. I, p. 95.

⁶⁶ ibid., Vol. I, p. 403.

⁶⁷ ibid., Vol. I, p. 522.

⁶⁸ ibid., Vol. I, p. 228.

⁶⁹ ibid., Vol. I, p. 250.

⁷⁰ ibid., Vol. I, p. 271.

⁷¹ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 271-272.

who presented petitions which they did not like. ⁽⁷²⁾ According to Clarendon, insurrection was helped considerably by the licensing of the printing of scurrilous matter, and the preaching from the pulpit of seditious sermons. ⁽⁷³⁾ Further the people were encouraged against clergy of learning and unblemished lives ⁽⁷⁴⁾ All these measures Clarendon said, were the result of great industry and deliberate policy. ⁽⁷⁵⁾ When the Militia Bill was passed, the minority group caused those who did not support them to be so afraid for their safety, that they either stayed away from Westminster, or agreed to the provisions of the bill. ⁽⁷⁶⁾ When the Bill of Attainder against Strafford was passed, the names of those voting against the bill were put up in prominent places in the City, and noted as ‘enemies of their country’. ⁽⁷⁷⁾ This move was described by Clarendon as, ‘as great and destructive a violation of the privileges and freedom of Parliament as can be imagined’. ⁽⁷⁸⁾ At the time of the Common’s intention to remove the Governor of the Tower, the declaration which was issued was according to Clarendon, ‘contrary to the known proceedings of Parliament’. ⁽⁷⁹⁾ These are only some of the examples in the History which are intended to acquaint Clarendon’s readers with the wrongful actions of the ‘malignant party’. ⁽⁸⁰⁾ While the examples themselves point the blame for the breach between the King and Parliament to the minority group in Parliament, it is interesting to consider the language Clarendon uses when writing about his former allies in Parliament. Words and phrases such as ‘odious enormities’, ⁽⁸¹⁾ ‘seditious and scurrilous’, ⁽⁸²⁾ and ‘envy and animosity’, ⁽⁸³⁾ heighten his obvious intention to present the minority group as mischievous, unlawful even violent. That is, he wishes the reader to clearly understand that it was the actions of those few individuals who sought to destroy the Royal prerogative, which forced the King ultimately to resort to arms. Charles then at least by inference, is not guilty of any unlawful action in regard to the war. He was

⁷² ibid., Vol. I, p. 269.

⁷³ ibid., Vol. I, p. 264.

⁷⁴ ibid.

⁷⁵ ibid., Vol. I, p. 269.

⁷⁶ ibid., Vol. I, p. 522.

⁷⁷ ibid., Vol. I, p. 307. Note to this page says that Rushworth Vol. III, p. 248, says ‘betrayers [not enemies] of their country’.

⁷⁸ ibid., Vol. I, p. 304.

⁷⁹ ibid., Vol. I, p. 504.

⁸⁰ ibid., Vol. I, p. 522.

⁸¹ ibid., Vol. I, p. 250.

⁸² ibid., Vol. I, p. 269.

⁸³ ibid., Vol. I, p. 271.

forced into the conflict to protect his prerogative. Thus his is the negative role in the Civil War: it was only because dishonourable and unlawful men had usurped the King's rightful power that he was drawn into the conflict. Concepts of guilt and innocence emerge, with Charles I the innocent victim of attempts by the minority group to destroy his government. But Clarendon himself supported the King, standing against would-be usurpers of the King's rightful power. That is in the moral conflict, Charles and Clarendon stand together on the 'right' side. One of the aims of the History then, is to remind readers of the work of Clarendon's own righteous action in resisting the torrent which later overwhelmed the Kingdom, this torrent being set in motion by the actions of the 'malignant party' ⁽⁸⁴⁾ in Parliament.

That part of the History of the Rebellion which discusses the activities of the malignant party in Parliament is arguably the most vivid part of the work. Clarendon's clear exposition of their purported wrong-doing stands in contrast to his presentation of many of the events in which the King was involved. Clarendon employs various strategies to cover actions where the King's motives and objectives can be questioned. At the conclusion of those volumes concerned with Charles I, the King's moral 'goodness' remains virtually intact. Indeed after Charles's death, Clarendon finds himself able to say that Charles I was a king 'most worthy of the title of an honest man; so great a lover of justice, that no temptation could dispose him to a wrongful action, except it were so disguised to him that he believed it to be just'. ⁽⁸⁵⁾ However in constantly portraying Charles I as a figure whose personal qualities fit the model of the 'good' prince, particularly in regard to the righteousness of his role in the rebellion, there is some cost to Clarendon's impartiality as an historian.

Clarendon's representation of the action of his former allies in the Parliament has been questioned by Firth. He clearly blames the King for the breach with Parliament. His view is that it was the King's double-dealing and repeated attempts to resort to force which rendered confidence in him impossible. ⁽⁸⁶⁾ Thus the minority group in

⁸⁴ ibid., Vol. I, p. 522.

⁸⁵ ibid., Vol. IV, P. 489. This aspect of the King's character has been discussed in a different context in the previous chapter, see Chapter 7, p. 107.

⁸⁶ Firth, 'Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"', E.H.R., XIX, Part I – The Original 'History', p.36.

Parliament (Clarendon's 'contrivers of mischief')⁽⁸⁷⁾ were forced to continually demand stronger securities from him, and it was Charles's actions which 'raised the popular excitement to fever heat'.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Firth provides no evidence for these contentions, but there are specific events in the History of the Rebellion in the time leading up to the war, which can be examined as to Clarendon's misinterpretation of the events in order to conceal the King's culpability. Clarendon does manage to mask the significance of some of the King's actions so that the connection between his policy, and the breach with Parliament is not readily apparent. One example is Charles's attempts to secure the port of Hull. Clarendon's emphasis is on the behaviour of the Governor (Hotham) rather than the King's actions. The reasons for the Governor's refusal to allow Charles entry to the port are discussed at length, but the significance of the event as a measure of the war itself is not easily recognized. Further the move itself is portrayed as an act of courtesy by the King to the gentlemen of Yorkshire, rather than as a means to receive supplies from abroad. Clarendon says that the Yorkshire gentlemen beseeched the King to 'cast his eyes and thoughts upon the safety of his own person, and his princely issue, and that [of the] whole country'.⁽⁸⁹⁾ Thus the significance of this episode as a war measure is effectively played down because of the emphasis on side issues rather than the main event. Another example of Clarendon's obscuring of the real significance of an event concerned with the war, is seen in the selling of the Crown jewels to buy ammunition. This story is overly concerned with the Queen's difficulties in obtaining supplies abroad and sending them to England.⁽⁹⁰⁾ The importance of her action in the actual move in the war, is further minimized by Clarendon noting that at this time the King seemed to be without any thought of making war, and that Charles hoped that Parliament would at last 'incline to some accomodation'.⁽⁹¹⁾ Further, it was less than a month after the King's declaration of peaceful intentions (June 16, 1642) that Charles made his attempt to gain control of the fleet. The retelling of this episode is concerned only with the ineptness of the attempt, with no reference as to its significance in the King's intention to wage war.⁽⁹²⁾ Charles's actual declaration of peaceful intention is worth noting. He said that, "he had upon all occasions with all possible expressions, professed his fast and unshaken

⁸⁷ Macray ed. op. cit., Vol. I, p. 403.

⁸⁸ Firth, loc. cit.

⁸⁹ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 47.

⁹⁰ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 212-214.

⁹¹ ibid., Vol. II, p. 212.

⁹² ibid., Vol. II, pp. 219-223.

resolutions for peace”. And he said, “he did again, in the presence of Almighty God, his Maker and Redeemer, assure the world that he had no more thought of making war against his Parliament than against his own children”.⁽⁹³⁾ Yet it was only two months later that Charles raised his standard at Nottingham. The reader of the History might well be surprised by the actual declaration of war, since there was no sequence of events preceding it to prepare him for it. The prior discussion focusses on relatively minor issues such as the consequences of leaving the Fairfaxes at liberty,⁽⁹⁴⁾ and the reasons why York was not chosen over Nottingham for the formal declaration of war.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Even the taking of Portsmouth for the King by Colonel Goring is disguised as a relatively insignificant event in the lead up to the war. While Clarendon does tell the reader that the King ‘was not surprised by the event’,⁽⁹⁶⁾ he describes it as ‘an accident which fell out’⁽⁹⁷⁾ that made it absolutely necessary to declare war. Discussion of the event itself is concerned only with Goring’s behaviour towards Parliament, and Parliament’s reaction to his action.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Thus the importance of its meaning in regard to the war is minimized. So we can see from these examples, that by various means Clarendon manages to conceal the general policy of the King in the progress of the breach between him and Parliament. He does this in order to avoid casting any blame on the King in regard to the war.

In his attempt to absolve Charles I from blame in the war, Clarendon adopts the same Royalist perspective as is found in the other Royalist writings in my survey. These works vary in the degree to which they openly state their cases for the King’s lack of guilt for the war. Clarendon’s method is different. What he does, is deny his readers a clear and unobstructed view of those events in which the King’s culpability might be discerned. This stands at variance with Clarendon’s portrayal of other figures in the conflict in which he allows the complexity of both the difficult situation, and the man’s personality to be seen clearly – Hotham and Newcastle being examples of this.⁽⁹⁹⁾ That is, his method is quite different when he is dealing with the King’s difficulties. Further it is a method which ensures that Charles I remains a shadowy figure in the History of the

⁹³ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 187-188.

⁹⁴ ibid., Vol. II, p. 287.

⁹⁵ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 284-285.

⁹⁶ ibid., Vol. II, p. 283.

⁹⁷ ibid., Vol. II, p. 268.

⁹⁸ ibid., Vol. II, pp. 272-282.

⁹⁹ See Chapter 4 for the ‘characters’ of these two men.

Rebellion. However Clarendon's different treatment of the King becomes understandable when his reasons for writing the work are taken into account. These reasons are mostly concerned with vindication – the King's and his own. Clarendon needed to vindicate Charles I in order to justify his own role in the rebellion, as one of the King's advisers who was not always listened to, but who was associated with his policy. To show that he had followed the 'right' path, he needed a 'good' king. Thus Charles I became as close as Clarendon could make him, to the model of the 'good' prince as found in traditional princely literature, and as was presented in the other Royalist works in my survey. Though it was many years later when he again took up his pen to complete the history of his times, we could expect that his life experiences would again provide motives and objectives which would influence what he wrote on Charles I. It remains to be seen if in fact this is what occurred.

Chapter 9

The Reasons Why Clarendon Wrote the History of the Rebellion. Second Stage of Writing 1671-72.

When Clarendon took up his pen again in 1671 to complete the History of the Rebellion, his motives were different from those in the earlier stage of writing the work. He left Jersey in 1648 after he had completed the first seven books of the History; ⁽¹⁾ the second stage of writing then consists of Books VIII to XVI. Book VIII opens with details of campaigns in the west of England in the year 1644. ⁽²⁾ Book XI is the last book concerned with the life of Charles I, his trial and execution coming almost at the end of this book. Mostly due to the content of these books Charles I is not the main subject in them, however there are some instances and episodes in them which are of interest for my discussion. The first concerns Clarendon's account of the trial of Archbishop Laud, the focus here being the King's reaction to it as reported by Clarendon. Laud had served Charles I faithfully in regard to the reform of the Church, the same service which brought about his present predicament. He had been imprisoned in the Tower for four years previous to the charge of high treason now brought against him. While I recognize that during these years of Laud's imprisonment Charles I had troubles of his own, it is nevertheless surprising to find how coolly the King apparently reacted to the Archbishop's situation. From Clarendon's relation of the event, it was he, not the King, who thought to send Laud a pardon under the Great Seal, though he does note that the King was 'wonderfully pleased with the proposition'. ⁽³⁾ However except to remark that Charles commended the 'piety and virtue of the Archbishop with extraordinary affection', ⁽⁴⁾ there is no mention of any other reaction or feeling on the King's part. In what could be an ironic comment, Clarendon reports that Laud received the Seal with great joy, interpreting it 'as a testimony of the King's affection to him and care of him'. ⁽⁵⁾ Clarendon shows his own dismay at the course of events, and expresses outrage at the

¹ See C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"', E.H.R., 19, Part III, The 'History of the Rebellion', for this aspect of the writing of the History.

² I have accepted Firth's evidence for Book VIII being part of the second stage of the writing of the History. See The 'History of the Rebellion' in E.H.R., 19, Part III p. 471.

³ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 466.

⁴ ibid., Vol. III, p. 467.

⁵ ibid., Parliament however declared the King's pardon of no effect, ibid.

‘passion, animosity and malice of the prosecutors’,⁽⁶⁾ who treated Laud with all the ‘rudeness, reproach, and barbarity imaginable’.⁽⁷⁾ He also praises the Archbishop’s courage and integrity, and his learning, piety and virtue.⁽⁸⁾ It is difficult to know why if the King was troubled by Laud’s predicament, Clarendon did not report it. The assumption must be that since no ‘princely’ qualities were evident Clarendon remains silent. However in allowing the reader to see his own feelings, it is Clarendon who has briefly taken centre stage leaving Charles I in the wings.

Charles I does not even take centre stage in Clarendon’s presentation of the King’s trial and execution. The possible reasons for this situation have been considered above along with some discussion of this dramatic event.⁽⁹⁾ Here I note only that it is Bradshaw, President of the Court which tried the King, not Charles I who comes alive for the reader. Clarendon’s railing at his insolence, impudence and arrogance⁽¹⁰⁾ stands in contrast to his noting of the King’s quiet dignity, knowledge of the law and clear reasoning.⁽¹¹⁾ Charles I then remains a passive figure resigned to his fate, rather than a tragic figure under the spotlight in the centre of the stage. Clarendon’s focus is never on the King himself but on those prosecuting him, the charges against him and the manner of their being brought forward rather than on the main character in the drama. Yet Clarendon’s relation of the conditions at St. James where Charles I was kept in custody before his trial does arouse pity in the reader. The indignities the King suffered are described in colourful language, and this scene unlike the more dramatic later events, does come alive. Yet these details must also have been relayed to Clarendon by another party as were those of the trial and execution. Whatever the reason for Clarendon’s less than dramatic coverage of Charles’s final days, the author of the *History* allows slip the opportunity of placing the King under the spotlight. The ‘character’ of Charles I which follows does not, as I have noted in Chapter 7⁽¹²⁾, increase the reader’s understanding of the King’s character. It only reinforces the model of the ‘good’ prince which has been so carefully constructed in the earlier part of the work.

6 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 465.

7 *ibid.*

8 *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 466.

9 See Chapter 7, pp. 105-106.

10 Macray ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 485-486.

11 *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 485.

12 See Chapter 7, p. 107, p. 109.

That part of the History which contains Charles I's 'character' was written in the later stage of composition. While what Clarendon wrote in 1671-72 on Charles I is generally consistent with the picture of earlier times, there are some slight variations in his assessment of the King. We should remember that in 1671-72 Clarendon knew the outcome of the Civil War. He was no longer in doubt as to the fate of his first Royal master, or even whether the Monarchy itself could survive. While he had seen Charles II restored to the throne, the world as he had known it under Charles I was gone. Thus at the time of writing Books VIII to XI he had a different perspective, not only on his former role as servant to the Monarchy, but on his first Royal master personally. As he reflects on the collapse of the Monarchy under Charles I, Clarendon's tone becomes less critical of the mistakes made by the King and his ministers, and more critical of those who could have helped Charles I but did not. He questions their stock of affection, loyalty and courage, though he does not see their actions as deliberate policy designed to cause the King harm. ⁽¹³⁾ However in regard to Charles I himself his tone is now regretful. He looks back in sorrow at the King's irresolution and his lack of constancy, but also with more understanding of the difficulties he faced. ⁽¹⁴⁾ The first glimpse of this new view of Charles I, and it is only a glimpse, comes after the failure of the Oxford Parliament in 1644, in the first book written in the later period of composition. Charles I had sought the advice of his advisers about the state of the Royal garrisons. Clarendon himself was not consulted, Digby and Colepepper being the only Privy Councillors who were. But Clarendon (still drawing attention to his own ability as adviser) says that he knew what should be done. ⁽¹⁵⁾ But he says not only were the King's advisers 'irresolute and inconstant', ⁽¹⁶⁾ but the King himself was in such a state that it was impossible to give him 'good' advice. Charles he said, frequently considered more the person who spoke 'as was in his grace or prejudice, than the counsel itself that was given'. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Further, the King always 'suspected or at least trusted less to his own judgement than he ought to have done; which rarely deceived him so much as that of

¹³ This aspect has been referred to above, see Chapter 7, p. 108.

¹⁴ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 4

¹⁵ Some of the garrisons should be strengthened, some of the horse should remain at Oxford, the rest sent to the west. ibid., Vol. III, p. 344.

¹⁶ ibid.

¹⁷ ibid.

other men'.⁽¹⁸⁾ The last book of the History concerned with Charles I, Book XI, also contains some reflection on the King's irresolution. Clarendon again notes that Charles often followed the advice of men simply because he believed their affection to him to be unquestionable.⁽¹⁹⁾ He also notes that at times the King's wisdom and courage, two notable qualities in the 'good' prince could be called into question. But he refrains from providing examples, and no later part of the work allows the reader to see to what he might have been alluding. Perhaps the fact that Charles II was alive, and Clarendon hoped he might intercede to allow him to return to England, provides the reason why the model of the 'good' prince remains so nearly intact. Indeed one of the reasons he completed the work seems to have been a desire to influence Charles II to allow the repeal of his banishment.

Clarendon left England in disgrace in November 1667 after his fall from power in what for him were most tragic circumstances. While his ultimate fall from a powerful position in the years after the Restoration was the result of a combination of circumstances,⁽²⁰⁾ Clarendon was dismayed by the attitude of Charles II towards him. However in his autobiography he laid the direct blame for his downfall entirely on the hostility and envy of others.⁽²¹⁾ He did have enemies both in the Parliament and the Court, particularly the King's mistress, Lady Castlemaine. But it was his own character, his inability to come to terms with the situation which had changed from earlier times which finally saw him lose Parliament's confidence. His view of government was out of step with the times, indeed it is most likely such a government as he envisaged had never existed. His concept of how government should be carried out was centred around a strong Privy Council, not only providing sound advice to the King, but also acting to restrain the encroachments of Parliament.⁽²²⁾ In resisting all attempts at administrative reform, and actively opposing many moves by Parliament to extend its authority, Clarendon helped the many eager place-seekers anxious for his removal to bring him down. Finally, his self-righteous attitude, both politically and morally contributed to

18 ibid.

19 ibid., Vol. IV, p. 4.

20 These included Charles II's marriage to a Catholic princess who failed to bear a child, the sale of Dunkirk, the Anglo-Dutch war, and the building of his mansion in Piccadilly.

21 Clarendon, Life, Vol. II, pp. 430,432,441,446,453,455,461,463.

22 E. Carlyle, 'Clarendon and the Privy Council 1660-1667', English Historical Review, 27, 1912, pp. 251-253.

Charles II's growing dissatisfaction with him, and the King decided to remove him. In a much quoted letter to Ormonde, Charles II explained –

The truth is, his behaviour and humour was grown so unsupportable to myself, and to all the world else, that I could no longer endure it, and it was impossible for me to live with it, and to do those things with the Parliament that must be done, or the government will be lost. (23)

Charles II tried to persuade Clarendon to resign, but confident of his innocence and his ability to defend his reputation, he refused. Shortly after Parliament opened in October 1667, it appointed a committee to draw up charges of high treason against him. The Lords refused to commit, but with the Houses deadlocked Charles II made it clear that he wished Clarendon to leave England. Though he delayed, confident that he would not be found guilty, he finally fled England on November 27, 1667.

The first months of Clarendon's exile were traumatic with problems with his health, and from the French government contributing to his anxiety. However by July 1668 he had settled in Montpellier in more comfortable circumstances. He then began a vindication of himself from the charge of high treason which had made his flight from England necessary. He also at this time began his autobiography intended for his friends and relatives. (24) In the early part of his exile, none of his relatives had been permitted to visit him, and even correspondence with him was considered treasonable. (25) But in 1671 his son Laurence was permitted to visit him, and he brought with him certain papers, and the original manuscript of the History begun on Jersey in 1646. Access to these papers allowed Clarendon to complete the work. But in so doing, he set aside his autobiography, (though much of it was incorporated into the history he was now working on). We should ask why Clarendon left off writing the story of his life to finish the story of his times. Firth's contention is that one of his motives at this time was the desire to earn literary fame as an historian. This claim can be supported. During this second period of exile, one of the subjects which had occupied Clarendon's mind was the writing

²³ H. Ellis ed. 'Original Letters' 2nd series, Vol. IV, p. 39, Harding and Lepard, London, 1827, cited in G. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁴ Clarendon, 'Continuation' of 'Life' section 1243 cited in C. H. Firth, E.H.R., 19, Part II – The 'Life' by Himself, p. 246.

²⁵ C. H. Firth, D.N.B., Vol. X, p. 374.

of history. In an essay written during this period he discusses the qualifications of a 'good' historian. He analyses the works of the historians Shada, Grotius, Bentivoglio and D'Avila who wrote contemporary works which contained lively characters. ⁽²⁶⁾ Clarendon thought that good English history had not been written to this time. Good history he said, could only be written by men who were conversant with business, and had the best and most liberal education. They should be familiar with the courts, and the most active and eminent men in government. ⁽²⁷⁾ Clarendon must have seen himself as having these qualities in even greater abundance than when he began the History. Thus when Laurence arrived with papers which allowed Clarendon to complete the work begun over twenty years before, we can see him anxious to sit down and work again on the history of his times. It appears that he began almost immediately the necessary material was available. Although Book IX is the first part of the second stage of the History which is dated – Moulins, 12 August, 1671, Book VIII was written in July of that year. ⁽²⁸⁾ So Firth's contention, the desire by Clarendon to earn literary fame as an historian, was most likely one of the motivations which caused him to leave his autobiography in order to complete the History of the Rebellion.

However the arrival of the material necessary to complete the work provided a further motive for doing so. The circumstances of his son's visit, that is, that it was permitted after such a long time of forbidden contact no doubt fed Clarendon's hope of an end to his exile. This relaxation in the terms of banishment most likely encouraged him to think that further favour might be forthcoming. The repeal of his banishment required the consent of both Houses of Parliament, but he could expect that Charles II would overcome that barrier if he desired to do so. The King had spoken against him in Parliament in 1667, thus precipitating his final fall from an already shaky position. It must have seemed possible then, that Charles II might intercede now on his behalf to allow what he so earnestly desired – to be allowed to return to England. He wrote to Charles II in June 1671, pleading to be allowed home to spend his remaining years in the company of his children. There are also letters extant expressing a similar desire, written to the King, and Queen Catherine and the Duke of York. These were written in August

²⁶ Clarendon, 'On an Active and on a Contemplative Life', cited in C. H. Firth E. H. R., 19, Part III – The 'History of the Rebellion', p. 465.

²⁷ 'Miscellaneous Tracts', 1727, pp. 179-182, cited in ibid.

²⁸ ibid., pp. 470-471.

1674 shortly before his death later that year. ⁽²⁹⁾ Can we then see him as completing the History in the hope that the work might purchase a pardon? We know that Clarendon hoped that Charles II would see the work: he attempted to draw the King's attention to it in a dedication addressed to Charles II, dated May 10, 1673. In this he told the King that he had written the History, a work which would honour both the memory of Charles I, and 'your own magnanimous sufferings'. ⁽³⁰⁾ This work was begun he said, with the approbation and encouragement of Charles I, and that Charles II himself had approved it. ⁽³¹⁾ He took the opportunity to prick the King's conscience by asking Charles II to recall to memory his own long and uncorrupted service to him. ⁽³²⁾ (The manuscript to which these pleas belong was taken to England by Clarendon's son Laurence after his second visit in 1673.) ⁽³³⁾ We can see then that Clarendon acquainted Charles II with the fact that he had completed the History of the Rebellion, a work he hoped the King would read. Most likely he also thought the contents of the work would soften the King's stand against him. Clarendon had been Charles II's closest adviser during the difficult times of the Interregnum, and he was principally responsible for the terms, if not the means of the King's restoration. Part of what he wrote in the second stage of the History is largely a depiction of himself as a faithful and long-serving servant in those desperately hard years of exile before 1660. This part of the History can be seen as an appeal both to posterity and to Charles II to recognize not only Clarendon's contribution to the Monarchy, but his service to the King himself. Thus he would be unlikely to make any unfavourable comment on Charles I or his son, in what he wrote in the History in 1671-72. As we have seen, except for the slightest references to Charles I's lack of resolution, ⁽³⁴⁾ the model of the 'good' prince remains much as it was in the earlier part of the writing of the History. We must remember also that discussion of the treaties between Charles I and the Scots, and the commissioners who attended him on the Isle of Wight, belong to this stage of the History. In discussion of these treaties, Clarendon's view of Charles I appears at

²⁹ Letters to Charles II, in 'Clarendon State Papers' III, Supp. XL and XLIV-XLV, cited in W. G. Roebuck, 'Charles II: The Missing Portrait', Huntington Library Quarterly, 38, May 1975, p. 221 - 223.

³⁰ Dedication to 'A Brief View and Survey of the Dangerous and Pernicious Errors to Church and State in Mr. Hobber's Book Entitled "Leviathan"', cited in C. H. Firth, E.H.R. Part III - The 'History of the Rebellion', p. 466.

³¹ ibid.

³² ibid.

³³ Miller, op. cit., p. 116.

³⁴ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 344 and Vol. IV, p. 4.

its most distorted. This aspect has been extensively discussed in Chapter 7,⁽³⁵⁾ but at times his ability to ‘double-think’ is almost unbelievable. I will give only one example here, but it is sufficient to show just how myopic Clarendon’s vision could be. This concerns the terms which Charles I accepted at the treaty on the Isle of Wight, in particular the proposal concerning the ‘delinquents’. The Parliamentary commissioners put forward the proposition that certain persons who had adhered to the King against Parliament should be exempt from any pardon. (Other ‘delinquents’ it was proposed could compound for their estates.) The King replied that provided these men were ‘proceeded against according to the ancient established laws, and could not justify and defend themselves, he would not intercede on their behalf’.⁽³⁶⁾ He could not however he continued, ‘in justice or honour, join in any act for the taking away the life or estate of any that had adhered to him’.⁽³⁷⁾ Surely at this point, if not before, the reader of the History must question the King’s honour.⁽³⁸⁾

There is however, a wider question to consider in regard to the treaty as a whole. Can we see the King agreeing to its terms simply because he recognized it as a ‘mock treaty’ and therefore not binding on him, and so felt free to agree to whatever was asked of him? That is Charles I felt free to rescind it at a later date. Clarendon himself does not explicitly recognize this situation in the History, but this is not to say that he did not see it in this light. He does note that this treaty came about because the Common Council of London petitioned Parliament to attempt a personal treaty with Charles I.⁽³⁹⁾ He also says that there was such a desire in the City for the treaty that Parliament did not dare refuse it.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Further, he recognizes the apparently farcical situation in which the commissioners had no authority to freely discuss Charles’s own propositions, but at the same time refused to send them to Parliament. However to accept that the King acceded to what was asked of him because he saw himself as not in honour bound by the treaty terms, would be for Clarendon to accept Charles I as less than a morally ‘good’ man.

³⁵ See Chapter 7, pp. 100-105.

³⁶ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 449-450.

³⁷ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 450.

³⁸ My view will conflict with that of those who see Charles I as being clever as opposed to *devious*. An alternative view would see that in insisting that people must be proceeded against according to the ancient and established law, Charles I was protecting his supporters.

³⁹ ibid., Vol. IV, p. 390.

⁴⁰ ibid.

Throughout the History, Clarendon was unwilling to do this, including that part of the work written in 1671-2. That is he did not allow any real deviation from the model of the 'good' prince, despite some recognition of Charles I's personal failings when his lack of resolution, and reliance on the advice of those he trusted is briefly mentioned. (41) The situation is then, that despite the different perspective, which time, the knowledge of how the rebellion turned out, and his own traumatic experiences gave him, Clarendon continued to portray Charles I as the 'good' prince, allowing only the slightest crack to appear in the model. The reason for this stems from his desire to win favour from Charles II, the one person who could grant what he so earnestly wished – to return to England from exile.

While any extensive discussion of Clarendon's treatment of Charles II in the History is outside the parameters of this thesis, there are two points worth noting. Firstly, as Roebuck mentions in his article on Clarendon in relation to Charles II, wherever it is possible in the work, the King's courage, sense of justice and resourcefulness, as he once possessed them are emphasized – and wherever this is not possible, Clarendon is discreetly silent. (42) Roebuck portrays Clarendon as tenaciously optimistic in the face of loneliness, age, ill-health and despair, continuing to petition for a recall to England, and continuing also to 'aver his belief in Charles II's justice and mercy'. (43) The second point which Roebuck makes concerning Clarendon's treatment of Charles II is that the second part of the History contains no portrait of Charles II. He finds this surprising, since in his view, the symmetry of the work requires a 'character' of Charles II to complement the commemoration of his father (presented after the execution of Charles I). (44) It could be argued that because Charles II was still alive at the close of the History of the Rebellion, it was not appropriate to present a 'character' of him: that is the symmetry of the work would have been destroyed by the insertion of his 'character'. However the more pertinent point is that the fact of Charles II being alive when Clarendon was completing the work is responsible for the omission. As Roebuck notes, a portrait of Charles II could not be included while the author of the History, 'the

41 ibid., Vol. III, p. 344 and Vol. IV, p. 4.

42 Roebuck, op. cit., p. 220.

43 ibid.

44 ibid.

epitome of the faithful servant' (45) languished in exile. He sees Clarendon existing in an unhappy state of indecision. If he had been wholly resigned to his fate, Clarendon might have included a realistic and therefore uncomplimentary portrait of his negligent master. (46) However had he done this, Clarendon would have denied himself his chance of returning from exile, so he decided not to include any material which might offend Charles II whether about him or his father. Thus while we find no characterization of Charles II in the second part of the History, no clearer picture of Charles I emerges from that part of the work written in the years 1671-2 than in the earlier part written in 1646-48.

The reasons for the disappointing picture of Charles I are far more complex than those applicable to Clarendon's portrait of Charles II. However as we have seen, in both stages of the work's writing, it was Clarendon's own life experiences which were responsible for his treatment in the History of the Rebellion of both his Royal masters. He either chose to, or was forced by circumstances to keep the focus away from both kings, but what he did present in each case put the best possible interpretation on their actions. I have recognized the significance of Roebuck's comments in regard to the lack of characterization of Charles II in the History, but I cannot agree with his contention that Clarendon's treatment of Charles II in the work 'stands in pointed contrast to that afforded Charles I'. (47) I did not find as did Roebuck, that Clarendon's 'objectivity empowered him to record and censure that king's weaknesses almost as extensively as to laud his virtues. (48) I found Charles I's virtues to be the predominant characteristic of Clarendon's view of his first Royal master, with the spotlight turned away from his weaknesses. The result was that Clarendon produced only a model of the 'good' prince, not a portrait of a living figure with all the complexity which the author of the History of the Rebellion understood men's natures to be.

45 ibid.

46 ibid.

47 ibid., p. 217.

48 ibid.

Chapter 10.

Further Observations on the Reasons Why Clarendon Wrote the History of the Rebellion.

I have argued in my previous chapters that Clarendon wrote the History of the Rebellion for personal causes including the vindication of Charles I and himself. In this chapter I consider other motives not only for the work's composition, but for Clarendon's presentation of Charles I as the 'good' king. These added objectives do not contradict my basic premise that Clarendon's cause was mainly personal: rather they expand on this view, adding to our understanding of the author himself. The first point of discussion concerns Clarendon's relationship with his first Royal master. What is notable here is the difference in the interpretation of his relationship with Charles I in the History of the Rebellion written between 1646 and 1648, and his autobiography begun in 1668. The History written close to the time of Clarendon's association with Charles I, gives a picture of himself as one of the king's advisers who was not always listened to, or indeed whose advice was not always sought. This is seen in the example of Charles's treatment of the Earls of Holland and Bedford. Clarendon's tone is one of regret that the advice of others was preferred over his, with a reminder that the outcome would have been more favourable to Charles I if his advice had been taken. ⁽¹⁾ Indeed it is one of the themes of the History that the King should have listened to him, and followed policy he thought suitable instead of favouring others, whether it was the Queen, Lord Digby or the Militarists. Clarendon's autobiography was written for a different purpose: the rebuttal of the charges which led to his exile being a prominent feature of the second part of it. ⁽²⁾ The style of writing is not vastly different between the two works despite the different aims in their composition. To some extent they were both compensatory exercises. The History of the Rebellion written in 1646-48 was undertaken when its author was no longer in active political service, and it provided some consolation to Clarendon, firstly because of his interest in history itself, and secondly as a substitute for political activity now denied him. The Life was a compensatory exercise begun in Clarendon's final exile when the materials necessary to complete the History were not available to him. It is significant however that on the day after he began his

¹ See Chapter 8, pp. 116-118.

² Clarendon himself says that he wrote it as a debt due to his children and posterity, Clarendon, Life, Vol II, p. 525.

autobiography Clarendon began a separate vindication to answer those charges which led to his banishment from England. (3) An interesting feature of the Life is that Charles II is not blamed for Clarendon's downfall, though something of the dismay he felt when the King deserted him is perceived by the reader of the work. The disappointment and confusion Clarendon must have felt no doubt affected his view of Charles II, but it also coloured his view of his first Royal master who had used him more kindly than had his son. Charles I may not always have taken his advice, but their parting had been such that Clarendon kept his pride. He saw himself as accepting a trust in being chosen to accompany the Prince of Wales to safety. This at least was how he construed his dismissal when writing his autobiography so many years after the event. (4)

When Clarendon looked back on those happier days, he reflected on the relatively close relationship he had enjoyed with Charles I after he had joined the King in 1642. In his autobiography he recalled with obvious pride those occasions on which Charles I had expressed or shown trust in him, or had acknowledged the value of the advice he had given. The many times in the Life in which he refers to conversations he had with the King, or to remarks Charles I made about him, indicates how flattered he was by this attention. (This provides an interesting contrast to the relatively few times he refers to Charles II's recognition of his service.) Clarendon lacked the noble birth or substantial wealth usually associated with those who rose to prominence in the Court. Because of this he took particular pride in the King's apparent confidence in him. It was more important and more gratifying to be recognized by Charles I, than it would be for those who could expect contact with the King through their station in life. He remained an outsider even after he joined the King's service, never abandoning the basic values of the country gentry. His outlook saw him at odds with what can be termed the Royal absolutists and the Militarists. His class distanced him from the aristocrats who made up the King's court, as much as did his constitutional principles which were different from theirs. Despite his association with the Monarchy, Clarendon's views differed very little in this regard from the views of the Parliamentary opposition, both placing reliance on the paramountcy of the Common Law. (5) This meant that Clarendon maintained uneasy and

³ C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"', E. H. R., 19, Part II – The 'Life' of Himself, p.259.

⁴ Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 591.

⁵ Analysis of this aspect of Clarendon's constitutional outlook is unfortunately outside the parameters of my thesis. In fact this topic could be a thesis in itself.

anomalous relationships with many of the King's supporters. Thus when the King consulted him or took notice of his views, he was gratified to a degree out of all proportion to the King's intended goodwill towards him. This explains why, in a work written so many years after their relationship ended, Clarendon records in much detail those occasions on which Charles I sought his opinion, or trusted him on different missions on his behalf.

The first occasion recorded in Clarendon's autobiography in which Charles I took notice of him, is found at the time when the actions of his fellow 'reformers' in Parliament led him to distance himself from their cause (1641). Clarendon both privately and in the House supported the existing government of the Church, at the time of the discussion of the Bill for the Extirpation of Episcopacy.⁽⁶⁾ The King sent for Clarendon and commended him for his affection for the Church. Writing over twenty years later, he records in some detail what the King said to him, noting that Charles was well pleased with the stand he had taken, and that he dismissed him with 'very gracious expressions'.⁽⁷⁾ Similarly, after the King had been shown Clarendon's answer to the Grand Remonstrance, he records this event in detail, again noting that Charles made 'many expressions of grace towards him'.⁽⁸⁾ Soon after this Charles offered Clarendon some evidence of his favour, by telling him that he intended to make him Solicitor-General in place of St. John. Again we find this instance recorded in detail.⁽⁹⁾ Indeed it is a notable feature of the early part of the Life, that any circumstance in which Charles showed interest in Clarendon, or goodwill towards him is recorded in considerably more detail than other instances concerning the author. Clarendon refused the post of Solicitor-General claiming unsuitability for the position. He again declared himself unfit for the post of Secretary of State the next year, and appeared reluctant in 1643 to accept the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁽¹⁰⁾ This apparent reluctance to accept office raises interesting questions, firstly of whether Clarendon was really unwilling to take office, or whether he wished to be seen as unwilling. However the more pertinent point is why he would not accept office when one of his complaints in the History of the

⁶ Clarendon, Life, Vol. I, pp. 75-76.

⁷ ibid., Vol. I, p. 77.

⁸ ibid., Vol. I, p. 80.

⁹ ibid., Vol. I, p. 82.

¹⁰ ibid., Vol. I, p. 143, p. 145.

Rebellion, was that often his advice was not taken, or he was not even consulted regarding matters where he thought his contribution would be most helpful. ⁽¹¹⁾ It might simply be that he was at that time unsure of his ability, that he was modest in his own assessment of his capability to perform well in the positions offered to him. He was however not so modest when he wrote his autobiography; he claimed that together with Falkland and Colepepper, he had in a very short time raised the reputation of the King and his cause ‘to a very great degree’. ⁽¹²⁾ It seems that here he was reminding posterity, and consoling himself with the thought that his service to Charles I had been important. In fact it was his own service rather than that of the other two he wished to point out as being valuable. He says that before he had the same access to Charles I which Falkland and Colepepper had, some things might have been left undone ‘the doing whereof brought much prejudice to the King’. ⁽¹³⁾ The reasons he puts forward for making this statement reinforce the perception of his own desire to be seen to be important to the King. He says that ‘all his principles were much more agreeable to his Majesty’s own judgement, than either of the others’. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Further, when any advice was given to the King by either Falkland or Colepepper, he says that the King usually asked whether ‘Ned Hyde were of that opinion’. ⁽¹⁵⁾

This emphasis on, even boasting of the King’s favour to him is a recurring theme in the early part of the Life. After he officially joined the King’s service in 1642, Charles he said ‘bade him welcome very graciously’, ⁽¹⁶⁾ using expressions of kindness to him, and praising the service he had already given him. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Charles told him of the great benefit his service to him had already brought, and discussed with him matters concerning the state of the country, including the apparent disservice he had received from the Lord Keeper. Clarendon reports that he was able to reconcile the King to the other’s behaviour, ⁽¹⁸⁾ again giving a reminder of his service to the Kingdom. On a more personal note, Clarendon records the occasion on which the King showed him a

¹¹ See Chapter 8, pp. 116-118.

¹² ibid., Vol. I, p. 84.

¹³ ibid., Vol. I, p. 90.

¹⁴ ibid.

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ ibid., Vol. I, p. 123.

¹⁷ ibid.

¹⁸ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 123-125.

Diurnal in which were printed words including these: ‘Ned Hyde had grown so familiar with the King that he used to play with his band-strings’. ⁽¹⁹⁾ We might wonder why this incident of so little importance in a long and busy political life, a life of often considerable hardship, followed by more lately a great deal of power and wealth, should be reported in detail so many years after its occurrence. The answer lies in Clarendon’s pride in his relatively close association with Charles I, the memory of it still being vivid after all his experiences in the intervening years.

Clarendon also remembered with considerable pride those occasions on which Charles I displayed trust in him. After the King had settled into his Winter quarters in 1643, (after his retreat from Brentford), Clarendon says that there was a change in his fortune, through a preferment the King conferred on him, and that ‘everybody knew that he was trusted by the King in his most secret transactions’. ⁽²⁰⁾ He reports proudly that Charles said ‘I must make Ned Hyde Secretary of State for the truth is, I can trust nobody else’. ⁽²¹⁾ This is the first of many instances where Clarendon records that the confidence that one of his Royal masters showed in him caused envy towards him. He again notes the envy of others when he accepted the Office of Chancellor of the Exchequer at the age of thirty-three. He says that he had ‘great enviers.....who thought he had run too fast’. ⁽²²⁾ While the envy or jealousy of others is a theme of his downfall in the time of his service to Charles II, it seems likely that here he was again reminding his readers of Charles I’s particular recognition of his service and the special position which he, a man born without substantial wealth or noble connections had achieved. It is also a reminder that he recognized himself to be an outsider. This gave his relatively close position to Charles I much importance in his own mind. Indeed when his background is taken into account, it is easy to understand that such confidence as the King did place in him would be most gratifying.

Clarendon was born Edward Hyde, in Dinton in the county of Wiltshire near Salisbury in 1609. He was descended from a family of landowners, some members of

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 133.

²⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 142.

²¹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 143.

²² *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 146.

which had studied law. ⁽²³⁾ He was educated by the local schoolmaster and his father, whom he refers to as an excellent scholar who contributed more to his education than the school did. ⁽²⁴⁾ He was sent to Oxford soon after he turned thirteen, to make his own way because he was the younger son of a younger brother and therefore could expect only a small patrimony. ⁽²⁵⁾ He went to Oxford at election time, the expectation being that he would be chosen 'demy' of Magdalen college. He was not successful despite being recommended by a letter from King James to the President of the college, Dr. Langton. ⁽²⁶⁾ This obviously rankled with him. Although it is difficult from a present-day perspective to know the importance of this lack of favour to him, Clarendon's recording of the event in his autobiography, in which details of his early life are few indeed, indicates that it mattered to him. In fact he includes details of the purported reasons why King James's letter was, as he puts it, 'given no more respect'. ⁽²⁷⁾ So we can understand that since his Life was written so many years after the event, the remembering of this incident which Clarendon seems to interpret as a 'slight' to him or his family, gives readers a clue as to how important it must have been to him to later be praised and even trusted by the King. He took the degree B. A., then became a student at Middle Temple where his uncle Nicholas was treasurer. ⁽²⁸⁾ This uncle was later Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and Clarendon benefited by his encouragement and support, even riding with him in the Norfolk circuit. ⁽²⁹⁾ But Clarendon's time at Middle Temple was not fully occupied in study of the law: he notes that he preferred what he terms 'polite learning' and History (especially Roman). ⁽³⁰⁾ He also recalls that instead of pursuing his studies industriously, he spent much time in the company of soldiers returned from the wars with France and Spain. While he notes that he was not sorry to have had experience of their conversation and the licence of those times, he also had the good fortune that his reputation did not suffer from this contact. ⁽³¹⁾ He later chose his companions more astutely, and reports with considerable pride that he made the acquaintance of members of the nobility such as the Marquis of Hamilton and Viscount

²³ ibid., Vol. I, p. 6.

²⁴ ibid.

²⁵ ibid.

²⁶ ibid.

²⁷ ibid.

²⁸ ibid., Vol. I, p. 9.

²⁹ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 8-9.

³⁰ ibid., Vol. I, p. 8.

³¹ ibid., Vol. I, p.12.

Grandison. ⁽³²⁾ He married the daughter of Sir George Ayliffe whom he describes as ‘a gentleman of good name and fortune’. ⁽³³⁾ Her mother he notes as ‘nearly allied to many noble families’. ⁽³⁴⁾ After his first wife’s death his second marriage was to the daughter of Sir Thomas Alyesbury, Master of Requests to the King. ⁽³⁵⁾ By this time he was taking his profession seriously, and he attracted the attention of Archbishop Laud, who in Clarendon’s own words ‘ever after used him kindly’. ⁽³⁶⁾ Laud’s patronage helped his law practice to the extent that at the age of twenty-six, he was able to say that he was generally esteemed by most persons of ‘condition and reputation’, ⁽³⁷⁾ that he had friends at Court, and that ‘great people were kind to him’. ⁽³⁸⁾ At the time when his practice was thriving through Laud’s patronage, he makes an interesting comment about himself: he says that he ‘well knew how to cultivate those advantages [which his contact with the Archbishop had brought]’. ⁽³⁹⁾ So we have the profile of a young man who necessarily had to make his own way in life, and who saw himself as being well on the way to doing this. He no doubt had some help from his family, such as his uncle Nicholas, and his father-in-law, and he was pleased with his contacts with the nobility. He takes pride in reporting his success, saying that his practice and his estate had increased ‘more than men of his rank and pretences [could expect]’. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

Clarendon refers to these days as the ‘calm part of his life’. ⁽⁴¹⁾ Then after a short presentation of his own ‘character’, which is understandably mostly favourable, ⁽⁴²⁾ he begins to give some account of his service in Parliament. He was he says ‘the greatest chairman in the committees of the greatest moment’, ⁽⁴³⁾ and he mentions those aspects of the Royal government which he opposed. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ However his position changed with the extirpation of the episcopacy in Parliament. Some of his former friends warned him

³² *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 11.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 15.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 25.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 26.

³⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 25.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 61.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 62.

⁴² *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 63-65.

⁴³ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 72.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 72-73.

against adherence to the Court: he replied that he was concerned only 'to maintain the government and preserve the law'.⁽⁴⁵⁾ However as referred to above,⁽⁴⁶⁾ when the King sent for him through the Earl of Northumberland's brother to thank him for his support for the Church, he is pleased to report that Charles praised the great zeal Clarendon had shown to his service.⁽⁴⁷⁾ In his discussion of the King's consideration of whether he should pass the bill against the bishops, which Colepepper advised Charles to do, saying it could easily be repealed, Clarendon remarks proudly that the King asked whether he was of that mind. He was not, but his view did not prevail.⁽⁴⁸⁾ This is a rare example in the Life where Charles I and Clarendon are not shown as being in accord. The view of their relationship is presented as one in which the King trusts Clarendon's judgement as well as appreciating his service to him. He is presenting a picture of their relationship which is considerably different from that in the History of the Rebellion which was begun closer to the events he discusses. Charles I may have appreciated Clarendon's loyalty and faithful service, (and even this can be questioned) but the reader of the History would not see Clarendon as the close confidante of Charles I which is his proud boast in his autobiography. Part of the explanation for the discrepancy in the two accounts may stem from the Life presenting only a short period in their relationship, though it seems more likely that Clarendon's selection of scenes in which he and Charles I came together give a particular interpretation – the one Clarendon wished his readers to see. But could he really have forgotten how he felt in 1646? At this time he wrote to his friend Nicholas saying, 'I have not been well used since you and I parted.....I have deserved to be more trusted than I have been'.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Perhaps Clarendon really did forget that his service to Charles I was not always appreciated, and when he looked back to an earlier and happier time in his life, his view was coloured by the bitter experience of his service to his second Royal master who had deserted him at a critical point in his life. The present unhappy circumstances of disgrace in exile contrasted with the time when he began the history of his times, a period in which though disaster had struck, some hope remained. His parting with Charles I had allowed him to keep his pride intact whereas the later days of his service with Charles II had brought not only anxiety, but despair and

⁴⁵ ibid., Vol. I, p. 76.

⁴⁶ See this chapter p. 139.

⁴⁷ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁸ ibid., Vol. I, pp. 90-91.

⁴⁹ 'Clarendon State Papers' Vol. II, p. 236, cited in I. Coltman, Private Men and Public Causes, Faber and Faber, London, 1962, p. 116.

humiliation. Though both the Stuart kings he had served used him rather than showed appreciation for his loyalty, Charles I had used him less unkindly than his son. This in his old age coloured his reflection of the days when he served Charles I. He may have seen himself in a different role in the two works, but he did not see Charles I differently in the History and the Life. Just as he portrayed his relationship with Charles I in his autobiography as he wished it to be, so he portrayed this king in the History of the Rebellion as he wished him to be. He became the 'good' prince as is found in the model familiar from ancient times.

As discussed in my previous chapter, there is no 'character' of Charles II in the History of the Rebellion,⁽⁵⁰⁾ but something of what Clarendon thought of him is glimpsed in his autobiography. While he is reticent on the King's part in his downfall, he is critical of some aspects of Charles II's behaviour. This criticism focusses on the King's lack of interest in the business of government, the immorality of the Court and Charles II himself, and the lack of piety and attention to religious duties by both the Court and the King. In discussion of the first days of the Restoration, Clarendon offers some praise of Charles II, such as saying he was 'a just and prudent king'.⁽⁵¹⁾ (This is not surprising as he was reflecting on the King's 'goodness' to him at the time Charles II had made him a Baron).⁽⁵²⁾ Clarendon is also pleased to reflect that just as he was trusted by Charles I, so did his son trust him in the early days of the Restoration. He speaks of being 'the highest in the place, and thought to be so in trust',⁽⁵³⁾ and later of having the 'most credit with his master'.⁵⁴ However even when discussing events of this time, there is comment on Charles II's lack of industry in regard to business matters. Clarendon says that the King

grew more disposed to leave things to their natural course; and by degrees unbent his mind from the knotty and ungrateful part of his business, grew more remiss in his application to it, and indulged his youth and appetite that licence and satisfaction that it desired, and

⁵⁰ See Chapter 9, p. 135.

⁵¹ Clarendon, Life, Vol. I, P. 268.

⁵² ibid., Vol. I, p. 331.

⁵³ ibid., Vol. I, p. 270.

⁵⁴ ibid., Vol. I, p. 309. He also notes his own 'indefatigable industry' in his service to the King, ibid.

for which there was opportunity enough. ⁽⁵⁵⁾

Also referring to 1660, Clarendon is critical of the atmosphere in the Court, and the customs of the nobility generally. He says that young women were without circumspection and modesty, and people of both sexes took all 'liberty of vice without reprehension or restraint'. ⁽⁵⁶⁾ By 1661 Clarendon was lecturing the king for spending too much time on his pleasure, but particularly for being negligent in his religious duties. This criticism he says was accepted by Charles II because of the 'long knowledge he had of his fidelity, and the esteem he had of his virtue'. ⁽⁵⁷⁾ By 1662, Clarendon was much concerned by the notoriety which Charles's amorous activities brought, warning the King of the lessening of his good reputation with his people. ⁽⁵⁸⁾ He reports the difficulty which Charles's new Queen had in accepting his mistress, and his own efforts to reconcile the two. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ While Lady Castlemaine, (whom Clarendon simply calls 'the lady') later became his enemy, in 1662 she did not speak openly against him, but he does note her skill in mimicry with which she amused the King, Clarendon himself being the butt of it. ⁶⁰ By 1666, Charles's favourite mistress, 'the lady' had grown influential, and according to Clarendon attempted to set both the King and the Duke of York against the Treasurer, the Earl of Southampton and himself. We see some further criticism of Charles II here when he says that neither the King nor his brother 'loved the conversation of men of many more years than themselves, and thought age not only troublesome but impertinent'. However the main focus of Clarendon's criticism of Charles II centres on his moral laxity both personally and in the Court, and the negligence of religious practice which the King made no attempt to stem. These are not criticisms which could be made in regard to the Court of Charles I or to him personally. Even the Republican writer Lucy Hutchinson recognizes some virtue in the Court of Charles I – though she was comparing it with that of his father. Nor does she deny Charles I's attention to the Church though she thought it was for his own benefit rather than seeing him as a religious man. ⁽⁶¹⁾ But Clarendon who was closer to Charles I in both personal relationship and religious

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 305.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 583.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 583-607.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 265.

⁶¹ See Chapter 3, p. 57.

outlook, and whose sexual morality seems to be unquestioned, did accept these were aspects of this King's character which he could unreservedly praise. In the History of the Rebellion he says,

He was very punctual and regular in his devotions; so that he was never known to enter upon his recreations or sports, though never so early in the morning, before he had been at public prayers; so that on hunting-days his chaplains were bound to a very early attendance. And he was likewise very strict in observing the hours of his private cabinet devotions; and was so severe an exactor of gravity and reverence in all mention of religion, that he could never endure any light or profane word in religion, with what sharpness of wit soever it was covered. ⁽⁶²⁾

Clarendon also mentions Charles I's faithfulness to his Queen, and how he directed the prosecution of 'scandalous vices' even against those close to him. ⁽⁶³⁾ While my chapters on Clarendon's treatment of Charles I in the History of the Rebellion have questioned some of the qualities which Clarendon attributed to him, there is no doubt that Charles I's sexual morality, and the order and morality in his Court were such that Clarendon could easily identify with them. They stood in contrast to the scandalous behaviour which Clarendon criticized in Charles II's Court. Nor did Charles II devote such attention to the Church as his father had done. So we can see that Charles I did have at least some of the qualities which Clarendon thought important in a King, indeed worthwhile in any man.

In the second stage of the composition of the History then, Clarendon felt no need to revise his picture of Charles I as the 'good' king which he had so carefully constructed in his writing of the work between 1646 and 1648. When he began the History his mood was one of dismay at the events which had overtaken the Kingdom, and he sought to explain them. Yet he had some hope of a happier future for both England and himself. When he came to complete the work, Charles I was long since dead, executed by his own

⁶² Macray ed., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 489.

⁶³ ibid.

people. His son, after many years in exile which Clarendon shared, had returned to a mainly welcoming nation. Clarendon returning with him occupied a position of much prestige and power, being secure in his position because he undertook the tasks which Charles II found tedious. While the King's attitude dismayed Clarendon it was the source of his own value to Charles II. However the England of the years from 1660 to 1667 were considerably changed from those Clarendon left behind in 1646. Both the morality of the Court, and the administration of government were such that he could neither relate to or approve of them. He failed to adapt to the new situation, even being openly critical of what displeased him, particularly in regard to the King's own behaviour. Clarendon then was a man out of tune with his times, but by 1667 he was an old man whose criticisms had become increasingly a source of irritation to the King. When the clamour of his enemies became too loud to be ignored, Charles II was willing to sacrifice him. Clarendon was left without dignity or pride, his name and honour besmirched, living in poverty in exile, and despairing of seeing his homeland again. It is understandable then, that Clarendon closes that part of the History of the Rebellion concerned with Charles I, who had been less unkind to him than his son, with a 'character' of him which reinforces the picture of the 'good' king which he has built up during the work. We should not be surprised that Clarendon is at his most myopic regarding Charles I in his composition of the later stage of the work.⁽⁶⁴⁾ When he began the History, it was mainly for his own vindication in supporting the Royalist cause, and thus he needed a 'good' king to justify his actions. (This remains so despite his having other objectives which were secondary to his own cause.) When he came to write his autobiography, he reflected on his service to Charles I, and in his own mind saw it as having been more appreciated than was the case. This allowed his now damaged pride to be somewhat restored. It would indeed be surprising then if Charles I did not remain the 'good' prince, the pattern of which is the typical one found in other contemporary Royalist works on the King.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 7, pp. 103-107.

Conclusion.

Clarendon's History of the Rebellion is not only a history of the events of his time, part of the work is also a history of one of the chief protagonists of the Civil War, Charles I. As such it is disappointing in that in the work the King remains a dim figure. Clarendon's History has proven to be no more enlightening as to the King's character than the works of Clarendon's contemporaries, none of whom knew the King as well as he did. My detailed analysis of relevant contemporary works show that anti-Monarchists present a picture of Charles I as the tyrant oppressing his people, while Royalists present a picture of the 'good' prince familiar from traditional princely literature. These works serve as a template by which Clarendon's portrait of Charles I can be compared. The pattern used is the same: Royalists find that Charles I's qualities fits the pattern of the 'good' prince, while anti-Monarchists show that these virtuous qualities were not those Charles I exhibited. Clarendon himself a writer in the Royalist mode, also presents Charles I according to the model of the 'good' prince. This however is both surprising and disappointing given his particular opportunities and attributes to enlighten the reader of the History of the Rebellion on the King's personal qualities, which he must have observed in the relatively close contact he had with Charles I over a number of years. This interesting feature of Clarendon's History provided the topic for my research.

In this thesis I have firstly compared Clarendon's portrait of Charles I with several of those of his contemporaries. Secondly I have shown that the King emerges from Clarendon's work as such a dim figure that this portrait amounts to a non-portrait. Thirdly I have set out to discover why no life-like portrait of the King can be found in the History of the Rebellion, despite Clarendon's skill in drawing pen-pictures in the work, and his close contact with Charles I.

As a spectator and participant in the tumultuous events in the reign of Charles I, Clarendon was qualified to write an authoritative history. As one who observed the King in both his Parliamentary dealings and during the Civil War, he was qualified also to let his readers know how the King behaved in both peace-time and war. As a man who took considerable interest in his fellow man, and as an acknowledged writer of lively 'characters' of many of those who took both sides in the conflict between the King and

Parliament, the reader of Clarendon's work could expect to come to some understanding of the King himself. Yet Clarendon's portraits of figures of lesser importance in his time are far more revealing than is that of Charles I. The aim of my work has been to show not only that this has in fact occurred, but I have also been concerned to discover the methods which Clarendon used, whether consciously or not, to keep his readers from being able to assess the King's character for themselves. At the same time I have also set out to point out the several occasions on which Clarendon has been able to fit Charles I to the model of the 'good' prince, often at times when the reader of the History would not be able to do this.

Clarendon at no point in the History of the Rebellion allows that Charles I's character is other than honourable. In tracing the events which concern the King, Clarendon does present mistakes Charles I made, but these are mistakes of political judgement, not lapses in moral integrity. Many of the King's actions which do not reflect favourably on his character are presented in a manner which either disguises their relevance to the outcome, or misinterprets their significance. Even in situations where it is obvious to the reader that the King's actions are at least suspect as to his honesty or virtue, Clarendon does not acknowledge this. At times he even manages to cover Charles's questionable motives with a cloak of morality. On occasions where the King's personal failings do not bear close scrutiny his actions are kept in shadow. By these means Clarendon keeps the model of the 'good' prince intact, but in so doing, no realistic picture of Charles I emerges from the History of the Rebellion.

The reasons behind Clarendon's disappointing picture of Charles I are concerned with Clarendon's own personal difficulties in his public life. To some extent the History of the Rebellion is a vindication of Charles I, but it is to a greater extent a vindication of Clarendon himself. He wished to vindicate his role as Royalist spokesman to his former allies in Parliament, from the days when he too sought to mitigate the excesses of the Royal prerogative. He wished also to let both the King and posterity know that had Charles I listened to, and taken his advice instead of that of the King's favourites, the outcome for Charles I would have been more favourable to the Royalist cause. In this vein, the work was intended also to instruct the King and his ministers on how the Kingdom should be ruled, should Charles I be able to extricate himself from his present

difficulties. But this in itself is a reflection on Clarendon's own lack of power in the reign of Charles I, where the Militarists and Royal Absolutists were of greater influence than he was on the King's decision making. Clarendon also wished to show that his master's cause was a just one, that he himself was on the 'right' side. This meant that Parliament and not the King must be portrayed as the aggressor in the conflict between them. In pointing to his former fellow 'reformers' in the Parliament as the wrong-doers, the King emerges as the innocent victim. However in this scenario, it becomes necessary for Clarendon to be obtuse in certain circumstances involving the King, in order to keep the model of the 'good' prince intact.

When Clarendon resumed work on the History of the Rebellion over twenty years after beginning it, his life experiences also influenced what he wrote on Charles I, and on his son. One of Clarendon's motives for the work's completion appears to have been the desire to earn literary fame as an historian. But a more pressing motive was to present a work which would win the favour of his second Royal master, Charles II. It is significant that Clarendon left off writing his autobiography, a private vindication of the charges which saw him exiled, to complete the History when the opportunity to do so presented itself. His son Laurence brought the necessary papers from England when finally allowed to visit his father. This encouraged Clarendon to think that since the terms of his banishment had been relaxed, he might yet be allowed to return home. Part of the History is a reminder to Charles II of Clarendon's faithful service, with no criticism of this King being found in the work. But we also find that the model of the 'good' prince which comprises such a portrait of Charles I as does exist in the work is not compromised in that part of the History of the Rebellion written in Clarendon's second exile. After such tragic circumstances which service to Charles II brought him, Clarendon retained some affection for the memory of Charles I. In his later years he looked back in reflection on his first master's favour to him, at least as he remembered it. These memories coloured his view of Charles I causing the myopic view which we see particularly in the re-telling of the circumstances of the Treaty of Newport. It is at this point in the History of the Rebellion where Charles I's actions are most suspect in regard to his virtuous qualities. The 'character' of the King written shortly after this relation does not enlighten the reader of the work as to Charles's character: it merely serves to reinforce the picture of the 'good' king which Clarendon has constructed so carefully.

Thus at his death, the model of the 'good' prince has not been compromised, but nor does the reader of the work come closer to understanding Charles I.

It is true to say that the History of the Rebellion as it pertains to Charles I reflects Clarendon's own life experience, particularly the disappointments of his political life. He served two Stuart kings, both of whom used him rather than appreciate the service he gave, despite his later reflection in his autobiography of Charles I's apparent recognition of his abilities. Clarendon's portrait of Charles I in the History reflects how he wished his first Royal master to have been, rather than the reality of the King's character as he knew it. Where mistakes are acknowledged, they are imputed to unsuitable advice from that circle of advisers from which Clarendon was excluded, and on occasions where it is possible to extol the King's virtue, whether justified or not, Clarendon takes the opportunity to do so. This is in line with what other Royalist writers did, but none of them had the same opportunity as Clarendon to present a more life-like portrait of Charles I. Thus it is particularly disappointing for readers of the History of the Rebellion to find that Clarendon too relied on the model of the 'good' prince rather than present his readers with a realistic picture of the King. This is however understandable and perhaps inevitable when the relevant aspects of his life are taken into consideration.

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